



Veterans First: Pioneering Efforts to Support Aging and Disabled Homeless Heroes

VA Homeless Aging and Disabled Veterans Initiative

A HUD-VA Supportive Housing-VA Geriatrics and Extended Care Programs Partnership



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Homelessness as a Top VA Priority

- No Veteran should be homeless in the country they fought to defend
- VA is committed to ending homelessness among Veterans because it is our nation's duty to ensure all Veterans have a place to call home



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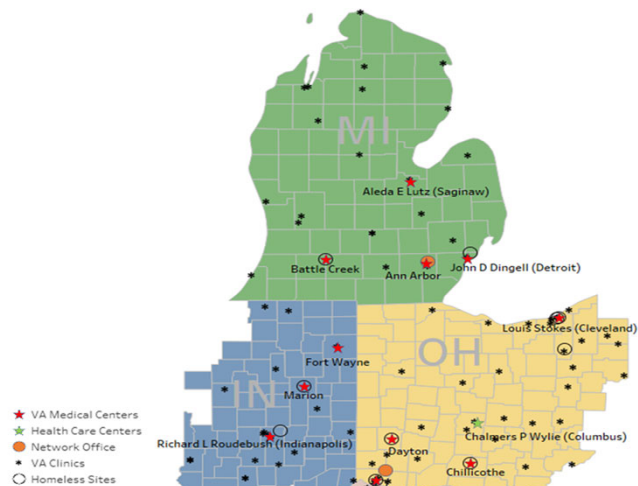
Homelessness as a Top VA Priority

- Veteran homelessness is trending down
- It has declined by 52% since 2010
- Within the last three years alone, it has been reduced by about 4%



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VISN 10



VA Healthcare System Serving Ohio, Indiana and Michigan



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FY 2024 Homeless Goals and Results



Unique Veterans
Housed Goal: 3200



Returns to
Homelessness
Goal: <5%



Unsheltered
Engagement Goal:
2792



National Goal:
House 41,000
Veterans

- Unique Veterans Housed:
3621
- Returns to Homelessness:
3.6%
- Unsheltered Engagement:
2999
- **46,552 Veterans Housed**

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VA Resources to End Veteran Homelessness

- **Outreach, engagement, assessment, and referral services** are the [front doors](#) to homeless programs and the broader VA health care system
- **Residential services** provide temporary placement through [emergency](#) or [transitional](#) housing
- **Permanent housing** services connect Veterans to [affordable housing](#) in their communities, including rental subsidies, case management, and wraparound support

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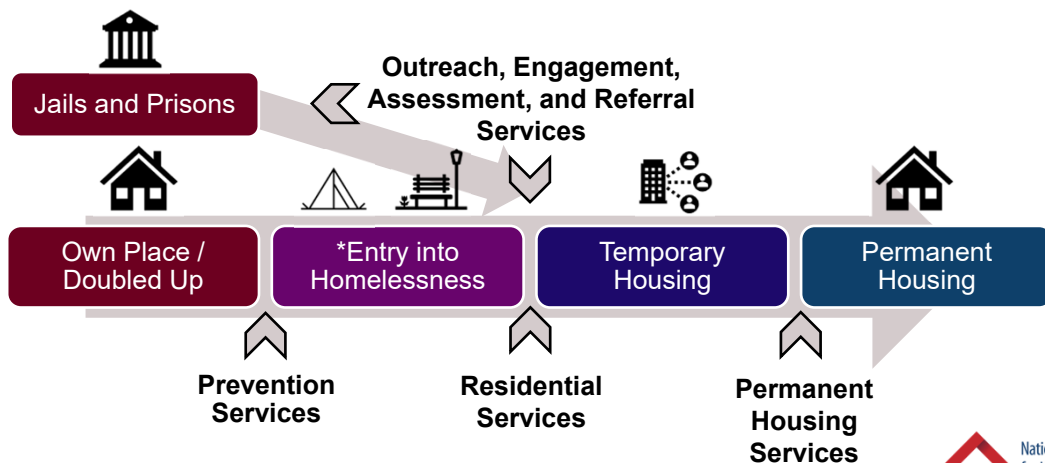
VA Resources to End Veteran Homelessness

- VA also has programs to:
 - Assist Veterans in the [criminal justice system](#) with access VA services
 - Help gain [meaningful employment](#)
 - Take care of health needs through uniquely tailored [primary care](#)



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The Homeless Veterans Services System



*Shelter, outreach engagements a drop-in center, VA, a coordinated entry access point, wherever people are most likely to present asking for help.



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What is Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH)?

- HUD-VASH pairs HUD Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance with VA case management and supportive services
- These services help homeless Veterans and their families obtain permanent housing and access the health care, mental health treatment, and other support they need

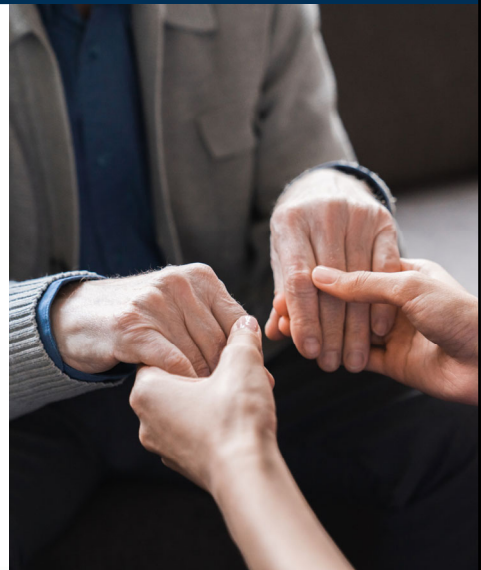


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The Critical Issue of Aging and Disabled Homeless Veterans

There is an aging trend among homeless Veterans who require additional support from VA to address complex care needs, including:

- Increased levels of disability
- Chronic physical and mental health conditions
- Substance use disorders



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The Critical Issue of Aging and Disabled Homeless Veterans

- Homelessness takes a toll on the body and mind
- Prolonged exposure to extreme poverty and homelessness can lead to faster aging
- Weathering effect: Studies report mortality rates for people experiencing homelessness (PEH) 3-to-12 times higher than the age-standardized general population rate.

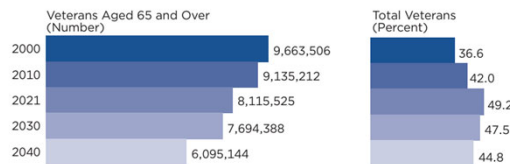
[Accelerated aging in people experiencing homelessness: A rapid review of frailty prevalence and determinants - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)



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Understanding the Challenge

Number of Veterans Aged 65 and Over: 2000 to 2021 and Projected Number: 2030 to 2040
 Nearly One-Half of Veterans Are Aged 65 and Over



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, Summary File 3; 2010 and 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates; for projections, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2018 VetPop Model.

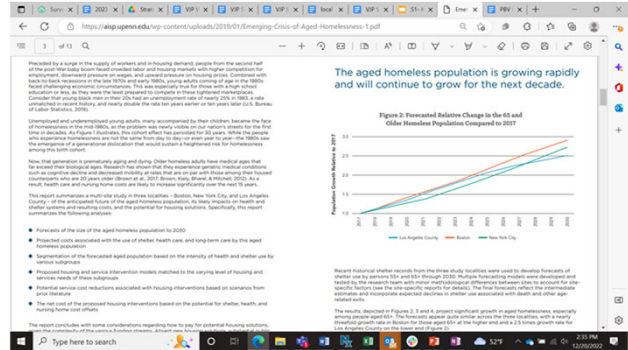
- Nearly half of all Veterans enrolled in VA care are over the age of 65
- More than 60% of Veterans enrolled in HUD-VASH are older than 60
- The number of Veterans over age 75 with a service-connected disability rating of greater than 70% is expected to triple from 2022-2028



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Future Projections: A Growing Need

- Research shows the population of seniors 65+ experiencing homelessness will double or even triple 2017 levels in some places before peaking around 2030



[Emerging-Crisis-of-Aged-Homelessness-1.pdf \(upenn.edu\)](https://works.bepress.com/dennis_Culhane/223/)

Source: Dennis Culhane, professor and social science researcher, University of Pennsylvania, https://works.bepress.com/dennis_Culhane/223/



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Aging of the Homeless Population and Emerging Clinical Issues

- According to Dr. Kushel and her colleagues at the University of California San Francisco in 2015 several clinical issues have been found in the gaining homeless population
 - Managing Chronic Diseases
 - High rates of heart disease, diabetes, and stroke
 - Substance Use
 - Raising rates of substance use to include illicit drug use (cocaine and heroin) remain higher in the homeless population than the general population
 - Older homeless Veterans have higher rates of Geriatric Conditions:
 - 39% had difficulty with one or more ADLs and 17% with three or more ADLs
 - 49% reported difficulty with at least one IADL
 - 27% reported difficulty walking
 - 38% showed global cognitive impairment
 - 40 % demonstrated executive function impairment
 - 34% reported one or more falls in the past 6 months
 - 48% screened positive for incontinence
 - 45% had visual impairments and 36% were hearing impaired" (O'Toole et al, 2016).



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Why This Matters



Everyone deserves a safe place to call home



Homelessness is **not** a personal failing



We serve **all Veterans** regardless of housing status



You can make an **immeasurable difference** in a homeless Veteran's life



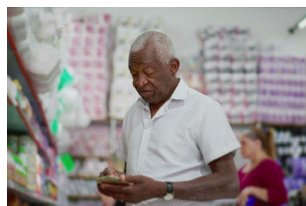
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A Partnership in the making

A partnership between HUD-VA Supportive Housing and VA's Geriatrics and Extended Care programs, the **Homeless Aging and Disabled Veterans Initiative**, seeks innovative ways to address the health care needs of Veterans so they can:



Age in place in their home



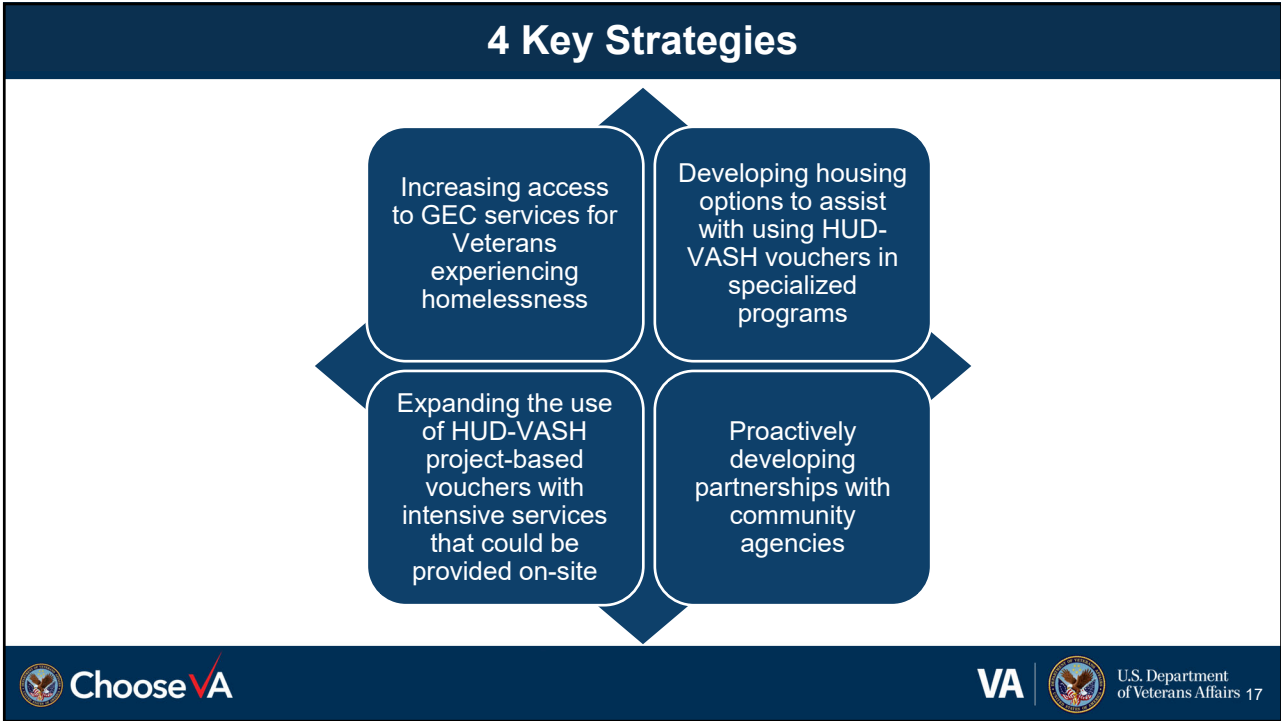
Remain as independent as possible



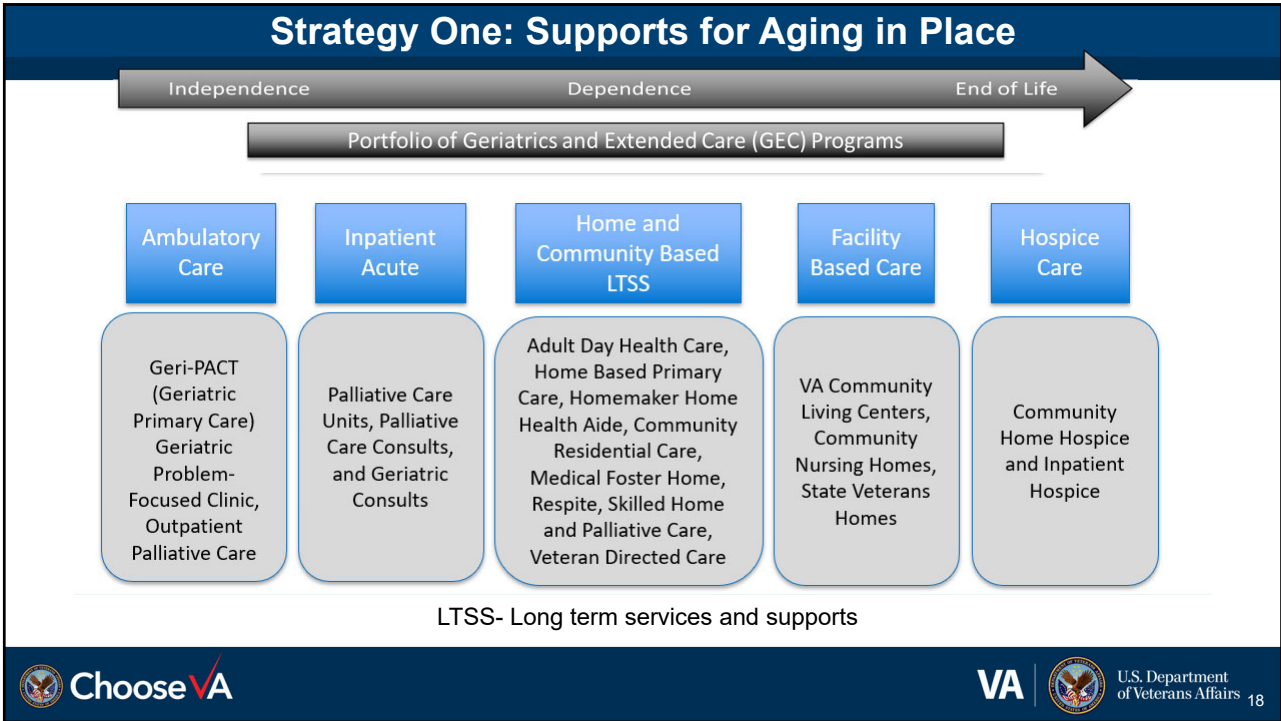
Avoid costly institutional care



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Strategy Two: Special Housing Types



Special housing types can be particularly useful to HUD-VASH clients, as it can increase the availability of housing, and for some Veterans, can be a better, more supportive housing environment than a single-family unit



Public Housing Authority (PHA) must permit HUD-VASH clients to use special housing types for tenant-based HUD-VASH assistance
September 27, 2021, Federal Register
24 CFR Parts 982 and 983



Special Housing Types (single room occupancy, congregate housing, shared housing, assisted living, or group homes)

Special Housing Types



Profile of a Veteran Appropriate for Special Housing Types

Typically 60+, disabled, and/or experiencing cognitive decline

Entered HUD-VASH with multiple chronic health conditions

History of housing in HUD-VASH

History of hospitalizations and emergency room visits

Multiple medical crises requiring more intensive case management than can be provided by HUD-VASH team-based care

Need a higher level of care, but prefer to remain in a community setting



Strategy Three: Project Based/Enhanced Project Based

Project Based Voucher Development

Project-Based Options

- Project-based vouchers are a component of a public housing agency's (PHAs) Housing Choice Voucher program. PHAs are not allocated additional funding for PBV units; the PHA uses its tenant-based voucher funding to allocate project-based units to a project. Projects are typically selected for PBVs through a competitive process managed by the PHA; although in certain cases projects may be selected non-competitively
- Enhanced Used Lease/Greenhouse Models (These models require capital funding)

Project-Based Housing with HUD-VASH Staffing Enhancements:

- HUD-VASH is supporting PBV development to address aging and disabled Veterans through enhanced staffing models that provide site-based care provided by multidisciplinary teams
- One such model is the development of project-based housing with enhanced on-site services for the aging population. An example of this model in action may be found in the COLMA Veterans Village project discussed in this Vantage Point article: [HUD-VASH program provides comprehensive care for aging Veterans facing homelessness - Vantage Point](#)



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Strategy Four: Community Partnerships

Proactively Develop Partnerships with Community Agencies:

- Area Agency on Aging/Councils on Aging/PACE
- Assisted Living Facilities
- Adult Care Homes/Family Care Homes
- Group Homes
- Veteran Service Organizations
- Faith Based Organizations
- Senior Programs/Centers
- Day Breaks
- Nonprofit community agencies
- Transit Authorities/Transportation agencies
- Meals on Wheels
- Food Banks/Centers/Pantries/Hubs
- Health and Humans Services
- Social Security Offices
- Adult Protective Services
- Local Emergency and Law Enforcement Services
- Animal Shelters/Rescues/Animal Protection Agencies



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From the Field...

How do you connect with the VA?

- Regular meetings with VA
- Consistent assignment of work to develop relationships
- Shared goal setting
- Community event/outreach activities – participate together
- Collaborate to develop joint presentations
- Education to/from VA (on-going)
- Development/enhancement of VDC program



Connection Opportunities

- Difficulty establishing communication; consistent POC at the VA
- Staying informed on VA policy developments and changes
- No standardized/universal method of identifying Veterans
- Accuracy of data captured regarding Veterans served
- Lack of Veteran subject matter expert internally



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Creative Integration

- 1. Comprehensive Care Coordination**
 - *Holistic Approach*
 - *Continuity of Care*
- 2. Improved Access to Services**
 - *Streamlined Referrals*
 - *Resource Sharing*
- 3. Enhanced Quality of Life**
 - *Tailored Support*
 - *Comprehensive Support Network*
- 4. Increased Efficiency**
 - *Avoiding Duplication*
 - *Leveraging Expertise*
- 5. Enhanced Case Management**
 - *Integrated Case Management Systems*
 - *Comprehensive Needs Assessments*
- 6. Improved Health Outcomes**
 - *Preventive Care*
 - *Chronic Disease Management*
- 7. Enhanced Training & Education**
 - *Cross-Training*
 - *Shared Best Practices*
- 8. Advocacy & Policy Development**
 - *Joint Advocacy*
 - *Informed Policy Making*



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The Path to Success

- For aging and disabled homeless Veterans, the initiative integrates:
 - Home and community health care
 - Social services
 - Permanent supportive housing programs
- With VA assistance, Veterans can age in place, staying in their communities among friends and family where they feel comfortable



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Success means:

- When Veterans can age in place or transition seamlessly to higher levels of care, it:
 - Lessens the burden on them and their families and caregivers
 - Maximizes their independence
 - Decreases their chances of returning to homelessness
 - Keeps the Veteran's goals at the center of the process



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Opportunities and Challenges

- More Veterans are entering homelessness for the first time later in life
- Older Veterans avoid seeking shelters due in part to fear of becoming victim of violence/theft
- Veterans in shelters have increased complex needs; decreased ability to complete self care tasks
- Shelter environments/Transitional housing often not equipped for the needs of mobility challenged individuals; staff not always educated on Veteran/military culture
- Veteran may have a pet; unable to have pet in shelter
- Substance use/abuse and mental health issues create potential barriers; can cause potential housing options to diminish
- Certain Veterans are not eligible for VA healthcare services but may be eligible for homeless program services; struggle to obtain and coordinate community resources
- Increasing services in the home to allow safe and independent aging in place; staffing shortages in community home health agencies
- Identifying housing options in the community that will allow use of housing voucher for those Veterans needing supportive services but who do NOT require nursing home level of care
- Lack of awareness regarding how to access alternative internal and external/community services; what VA and community services are available and how can access to these services be streamlined



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How to Connect with Your VA

- Network Homeless Coordinators
 - [Homeless Coordinators - VA Homeless Programs](#)
- Directory of Social Work Leaders
 - [National Social Work Program - VHA Social Work \(va.gov\)](#)
- Medical Center Directory
 - [Find Locations - Locations \(va.gov\)](#)
- Geriatric and Extended Care Services
 - [Geriatrics and Extended Care Home \(va.gov\)](#)
- Older Veteran Behavioral Health Resource Inventory
 - [Older Veteran Behavioral Health Resource Inventory.pdf \(va.gov\)](#)



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