



Veterans and Homelessness

The federal government assists homeless veterans through a number of targeted federal programs. This In Focus describes the major federal programs that assist homeless veterans, funding for select programs, and the number and characteristics of veterans experiencing homelessness. For more information, see CRS Report RL34024, *Veterans and Homelessness*, by Libby Perl.

Federal Programs for Homeless Veterans

Programs to assist homeless veterans are funded through three agencies: the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Labor (DOL), and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

VA Programs

- **Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV):** Through HCHV, VA medical center staff conduct outreach to homeless veterans; provide care and treatment for medical, psychiatric, and substance use disorders; and refer veterans for supportive services. The HCHV program is authorized through FY2020 (P.L. 115-251).
- **Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV):** DCHV (first funded through P.L. 100-71) provides rehabilitative services for physically and mentally ill or aged veterans who need assistance, but are not in need of the level of care offered by hospitals and nursing homes. Through DCHV, veterans receive medical, psychiatric, and substance use treatment, and vocational rehabilitation services.
- **Compensated Work Therapy/ Transitional Residence Program (CWT/TR):** CWT gives veterans with disabilities work experience and skills so that they may re-enter the workforce and maintain employment on their own. The TR component to CWT provides housing to CWT participants who have mental illnesses or chronic substance use disorders and who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The TR component of CWT is authorized through FY2020 (P.L. 115-251).
- **Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD):** GPD authorizes the VA to make grants to public entities or private nonprofit organizations to provide services and transitional housing to homeless veterans, with a focus on achieving permanent housing. The program is authorized at \$258 million in FY2015 and subsequent years (P.L. 114-228).
- **GPD for Homeless Veterans with Special Needs:** GPD for homeless veterans with special needs, authorized at \$5 million through FY2020 (P.L. 115-251), targets GPD funds to specific groups of veterans, including women, elderly veterans, terminally or mentally ill veterans, and veterans with children.

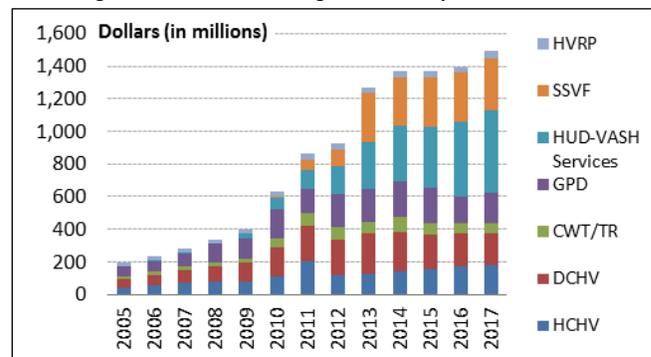
- **Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF):** SSVF funds grants for supportive services to assist very low-income veterans and their families who are either residing in permanent housing or transitioning from homelessness. Eligible services include assistance with rent, utility or moving costs, outreach, case management, and help with obtaining VA and other mainstream benefits. The program is authorized at \$380 million through FY2019 by P.L. 115-251.

DOL Programs

- **Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs (HVRP):** HVRP grantees provide services to veterans including outreach, assistance in interview preparation, job search, job training, and follow-up assistance after placement. The program is authorized at \$50 million through FY2020 (P.L. 115-251). A separate HVRP targets women veterans and veterans with children and is authorized through FY2020 at \$1 million (P.L. 115-251).
- **Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program:** The Incarcerated Veterans Transition program funds grantee organizations to provide job training and placement services to veterans who are leaving prison. It is authorized through FY2020 (P.L. 115-251).

Figure 1. Funding for Select Programs

VA Obligations and DOL Budget Authority, FY2005-FY2017



Source: VA and DOL Budget Justifications.

HUD and VA Collaborative Program

HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH): Through HUD-VASH, homeless veterans receive rental assistance in the form of Section 8 vouchers from HUD and supportive services from the VA. Begun as a three-year inter-agency collaboration in the 1990s, Congress has funded new VASH vouchers in each year from FY2008-FY2018. Appropriations for vouchers exceed amounts authorized in law; funding for HUD-VASH was last authorized in FY2011.

HUD and VA together determine how vouchers are allocated across the country. The majority of HUD-VASH vouchers are tenant-based, meaning that veterans can use them to rent available units on the private rental market (subject to program rules). A portion of the vouchers have been issued competitively as project-based vouchers and are attached to specific units of housing. Funds to renew vouchers after the first year are provided through the general Section 8 account.

The FY2015 appropriations law (P.L. 113-235) provided that funds be set aside for a demonstration for Native American homeless or at-risk veterans who are living on or near reservations. In 2016, vouchers sufficient to serve 500 veterans were awarded to 26 tribes. Funding has been renewed in subsequent appropriations bills.

See **Table 1** for funding and new VASH vouchers allocated in each year. Funding supports VASH vouchers for one year, after which they are absorbed into the Section 8 account. Cumulatively, through FY2018, funds were sufficient to support more than 90,000 vouchers.

Table 1. HUD-VASH, Funding for New Vouchers

Fiscal Year	Amount Provided (dollars in millions)	Tenant-Based Vouchers	Project-Based Vouchers
2008	75.0	10,150	—
2009	75.0	10,290	—
2010	75.0	9,510	676
2011	50.0	6,815	99
2012	75.0	10,450	—
2013	75.0	9,865	956
2014	75.0	8,276	730
2015	75.0	9,333	821
2016	60.0	5,906	2,134
2017	40.0	5,211	—
2018	40.0	4,077	—

Source: Appropriations laws and HUD notices.

Ending Veteran Homelessness

In 2009, the VA announced a plan to end veteran homelessness by the end of FY2015. While the VA did not reach its goal within that time, it continues to focus on reducing the number of veterans experiencing homelessness. From the time the announcement was made to the present, obligations for targeted VA homeless veterans programs have increased from \$376 million in FY2009 to more than \$1.5 billion in FY2017. **Figure 1** shows funding for select homeless veteran programs from FY2005 to FY2017. (Note that the figure does not represent all VA funding and includes DOL budget authority.) During the same period, healthcare obligations for homeless veterans have increased from \$2.5 billion to \$5.3 billion. As funding for homeless veteran programs and healthcare has increased, the number of veterans reported to be

experiencing homelessness has declined, as described in the next section.

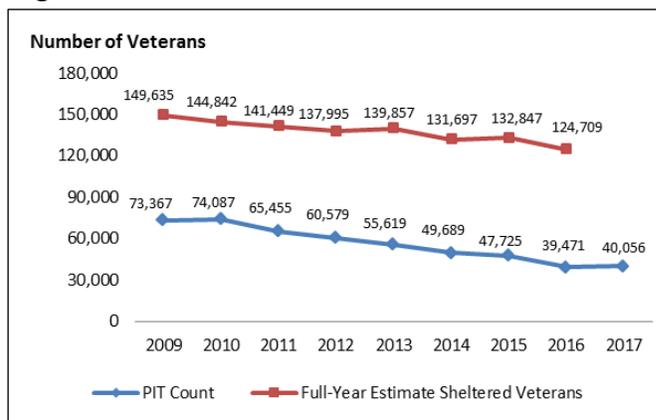
Numbers and Characteristics

Based on HUD annual point-in-time (PIT) counts of homeless individuals (taking place on one day during the last week of January each year), the number of homeless veterans has declined from 73,367 in 2009 to 40,056 in 2017. See **Figure 2**.

Note that the PIT count does not capture veterans who are homeless at other times during the year. HUD uses data from a sample of jurisdictions for full-year estimates of veterans experiencing homelessness, but the data only include veterans who are sheltered (living in emergency shelter or transitional housing), not those living on the street or other places not meant for human habitation.

As seen in **Figure 2**, in FY2009 not-quite 150,000 veterans were estimated to be homeless and living in emergency shelter or transitional housing. By FY2016 the number had decreased to approximately 125,000 veterans.

Figure 2. Number of Homeless Veterans



Source: HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Reports (AHARs) to Congress.

Note: PIT estimates for 2009-2014 were revised as part of the 2015 AHAR.

According to HUD data, homeless veterans living in emergency shelter and transitional housing are primarily men (91%) and the majority (55%) have a disability. While more than half of all veterans are age 62 and older (55%), veterans in the 31-50 and 51-61 age groups make up 32% and 43% of the homeless veteran population, respectively. Veterans age 62 and older make up 16% of the homeless veteran population, and those in the 18-30 age group make up 9% of the total population. African American veterans are overrepresented compared to their percentages in the overall veteran population—38% of homeless veterans are African American (compared to 11% of all veterans). Non-Hispanic white veterans are underrepresented, making up 78% of all veterans but approximately 50% of homeless veterans.

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