



Veterans and Homelessness

The federal government assists homeless veterans through a number of targeted federal programs, and in 2009 the Obama Administration announced a plan to end veteran homelessness by FY2015. 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 FY2015 (P.L. 112-154).
- **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 abuse 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 Transitional Residence (TR) component to CWT provides housing to CWT participants who have mental illnesses or chronic substance abuse disorders and who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The TR component of CWT is authorized through FY2015 (P.L. 113-175).
- **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. The program is authorized at \$250 million in FY2015 and subsequent years (P.L. 113-175).
- **GPD for Homeless Veterans with Special Needs:** GPD for homeless veterans with special needs, authorized at \$5 million through FY2015 (P.L. 113-

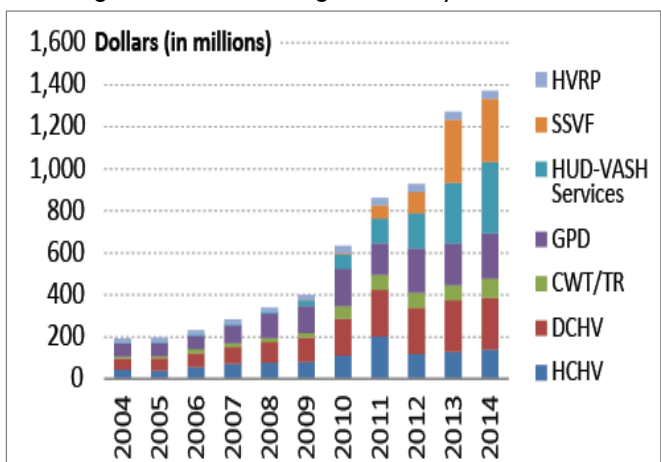
175), targets GPD funds to specific groups of veterans, including women, elderly veterans, terminally or mentally ill veterans, and veterans with children.

- **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 \$300 million through FY2015 by P.L. 113-175.
- **Acquired Property Sales for Homeless Veterans:** The VA is authorized to sell, lease, lease with the option to buy, or donate properties to nonprofit organizations and state government agencies that will use the property as homeless shelters for veterans and their families. The program is authorized through FY2015 by P.L. 113-175.

DOL Programs

- **Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (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 FY2015 (P.L. 113-175). A separate HVRP targets women veterans and veterans with children and is authorized through FY2015 at \$1 million (P.L. 111-275).
- **Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program:** Most recently authorized through FY2015 (P.L. 113-175), grantee organizations through the Incarcerated Veterans Transition program provide job training and placement services to veterans who are leaving prison.

Figure 1. Funding for Select Programs
VA Obligations and DOL Budget Authority, FY2004-FY2014



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 funded new VASH vouchers in each year from FY2008-FY2015. The FY2015 appropriation 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.

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.

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 FY2015, funds are sufficient to support approximately 79,000 vouchers. Funding for HUD-VASH was last authorized in FY2011.

Table 1. HUD-VASH, Funding for New Vouchers

Fiscal Year	Amount Provided (dollars in millions)	Tenant-Based Vouchers	Project-Based Vouchers
1992	17.9	750	—
1993	19.1	750	—
1994	18.4	700	—
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	a	a

Source: Appropriations laws and HUD notices. See CRS Report RL34024, *Veterans and Homelessness*, by Libby Perl for full citations.

a. Not yet distributed.

Plan to End Veteran Homelessness

In 2009 the VA announced a plan to end veteran homelessness by the end of FY2015. 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 an estimated \$1.4 billion in FY2015. (See **Figure 1** for funding for select homeless veteran programs from FY2004 to FY2014. 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 \$5.0 billion. The number of veterans reported to be experiencing homelessness has also declined.

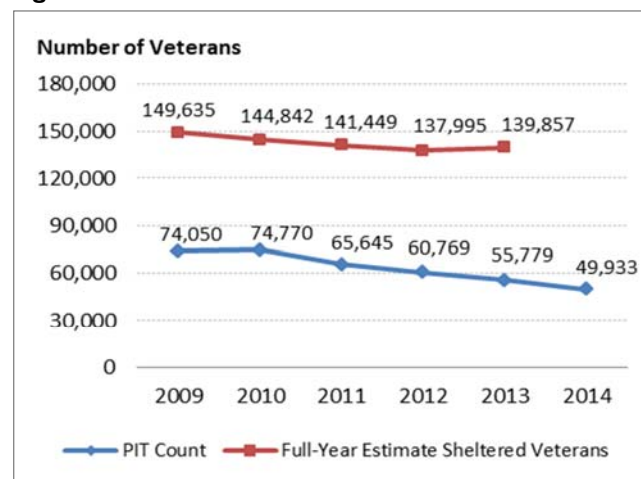
Numbers and Characteristics

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 74,050 in 2009 to 49,933 in 2014. 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 FY2013 the number had decreased to approximately 140,000 veterans.

Figure 2. Number of Homeless Veterans



Source: HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Reports to Congress.

According to HUD data, homeless veterans living in emergency shelter and transitional housing are primarily men (91%) and the majority (54%) have a disability. While more than half of all veterans are age 62 and older (54%), veterans in the 31-50 and 51-61 age groups make up 36% and 43% of the homeless veteran population, respectively. African American veterans are overrepresented compared to their percentages in the overall veteran population—39% of homeless veterans are African American (compared to 11% of all veterans). Non-Hispanic white veterans are underrepresented, making up 80% of all veterans but 50% of homeless veterans.

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