

Veteran Homelessness Report

June 25, 2017

US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AWARDS \$43.3M IN GRANTS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYER-DRIVEN TRAINING, SUPPORT REINTEGRATION OF HOMELESS VETERANS

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta announced June 22, 2017 the award of \$43.3 million in grants through the U.S. Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service to provide training to an estimated 21,000 homeless veterans to help them reintegrate into the American workforce. In all, the department’s 2017 award will fund 155 grants in its Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Program.

“The grants we announced today will help thousands of homeless veterans to acquire the skills they need to obtain good-paying jobs and reintegrate themselves into a society whom they defended and served,” said Secretary Acosta.

Funds are being awarded on a competitive basis to state and local workforce development boards, local public agencies and nonprofit organizations, tribal governments and faith-based and community organizations. Homeless veterans may receive occupational skills, apprenticeship opportunities, on-the-job training as well as job search and placement assistance.

Of the 155 grant recipients, 74 are first-time recipients that will provide services to homeless veterans in 40 U.S. states. These grantees under the HVRP program will network and coordinate their efforts through various private and public social service providers.

More information on the department’s unemployment and re-employment programs for veterans can be found at www.dol.gov/vets/. For more information about VETS, visit www.veterans.gov. Follow VETS on Twitter @VETS_DOL.

Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Program: 2017 recipients

Grant applicant	State	Award amount
Real House Recovery Inc.	NJ	\$500,000
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden, Inc.	NJ	\$299,394



Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program

The purpose of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) is to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans.

HVRP was initially authorized under Section 738 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in July 1987. It is currently authorized under Title 38 U.S.C. Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants such as: State and local Workforce Investment Boards, public agencies, for-profit/commercial entities, and non-profit organizations, including faith based and community based organizations.

Grantees provide an array of services utilizing a case management approach that directly assists homeless veterans as well as provide critical linkages for a variety of supportive services available in their local communities. The program is "employment focused" and veterans receive the employment and training services they need in order to re-enter the labor force. Job placement, training, job development, career counseling, resume preparation, are among the services that are provided. Supportive services such as clothing, provision of or referral to temporary, transitional, and permanent housing, referral to medical and substance abuse treatment, and transportation assistance are also provided to meet the needs of this target group.

HUD Budget Cuts Will Reverse Progress In Reducing Veteran Homelessness

The United States has made progress toward its goal of ending veterans' homelessness; however budget cuts threaten the momentum, according to veterans advocates.

The Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies announced a target back in 2010 as part of the Opening Doors campaign, seeking to end chronic and

veterans' homelessness by 2015 and to end homelessness among children, families and youth by 2020. Unfortunately the 2015 target was missed.

Since 2010, veterans experiencing homelessness had fallen by 24 percent across the country, according to a point-in-time report that the Department of Housing and Urban Development released previously in 2013. The assessment measures homelessness on a single night in January each year.

The Trump administration has considered more than \$6 billion in cuts at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The plan would squeeze public housing support and end most federally funded community development grants.

It's the latest evidence that the administration is following through on President Trump's goal to cut domestic spending by \$54 billion to bolster the defense budget. HUD's budget would shrink by about 14 percent to \$40.5 billion in fiscal 2018, which begins in October.

Under the proposal, direct rental assistance payments — including Section 8 Housing and housing vouchers for veterans experiencing homelessness — would be cut by at least \$300 million, to \$19.3 billion. Additionally, housing for the elderly — known as the Section 202 program — would be cut by \$42 million, nearly 10 percent. Section 811 housing for people with disabilities would be cut by \$29 million, nearly 20 percent. Money available for Native American housing block grants would fall by \$150 million, more than 20 percent.

These cuts have the potential to be “devastating and hardhearted,” potentially leading to rent increases for those in subsidized housing. These cuts could increase the number of families and people that are homeless because housing is less affordable.

According to the Washington Post — based on a preliminary agency working document it examined — overall proposed funding cuts to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are about 14 percent, leaving \$40.5 billion for FY2018. The proposed HUD program cuts would press public housing authorities in public housing building maintenance and repair expenses, and eliminate funding for community development projects valuable to cities and counties across the United States.

The document recommended shifting funds to the Trump Administration's promised infrastructure package. While the working document recommended the programs cut should receive funding from other sources, it's unclear what those sources might be. According to a HUD spokesman contacted by the Washington Post, the document may not have been reviewed yet by the Office of Management and Budget, which finalizes the budget proposal before it goes to Congress.

Douglas Rice, a senior policy analyst for the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington, D.C., think tank, reports that the proposed cuts would, in fact, amount to \$7.7 billion dollars, or a 16 percent reduction, in 2018. He arrives at this number by evaluating expected funding levels for 2017, writing: “it’s reasonable to presume that the final budget will be close to the average of the bills the House Appropriations Committee and the full Senate approved last summer.” By contrast, DelReal wrote his story based on 2016 funding levels.

Either way, the cuts are poised to be dramatic. Rice told the Washington Post that 20,000 renters will lose their assistance for every 1 percent slash to the budget of HUD. “The reality is that we’ve been living under these austere budget caps, and budgets like HUD’s have already been pretty much cut to the bone,” Rice said, pointing to the sequestration cuts of 2011. “And when you try to cut below that, you really end up with harmful impacts.”

The proposed cuts would go deep. “Budgets for public housing authorities—city and state agencies that provide subsidized housing and vouchers to local residents—would be among the hardest hit,” writes DelReal. “Under the preliminary budget, those operational funds would be reduced by \$600 million, or 13 percent. Funds for big-ticket repairs at public housing facilities would be cut by an additional \$1.3 billion, about 32 percent.”

Public housing in the United States already faces a backlog of \$26 billion in repairs, according to a 2010 report commissioned by HUD.

The Community Development Block Grant Program, which was budgeted to receive \$3 billion this fiscal year, would be entirely slashed if the proposed changes were implemented. While the budget document reportedly suggests that funds for the program “could come from outside the HUD budget as part of a separate White House bill,” it is not immediately clear where exactly such dollars would come from and whether they would be guaranteed. The HOME Investment Partnerships Program, which helps fund local affordable housing, would also be eliminated.

According to a Congressional Budget Office report released in September 2015, federal housing assistance is already falling far short. “Currently, only about one-quarter of the eligible low-income population receives housing assistance through federal spending programs,” the office stated.

Cities depend on Federal HUD funds for housing services, homelessness and prevention, education and workforce development that helps people and families get out of subsidized housing, blight and housing for the elderly, at-risk youth, disabled people and those in urgent need.

The more than 40-year old CDBG program is a cornerstone tool for cities to pay for affordable housing development, create economic opportunities and ensure suitable living environments for low- and moderate-income residents.

CDBG was cut by more than \$2 billion in 2016

Additional cuts could lead to the elimination of the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). That could then result in the transfer of fiscal responsibility of the major subsidized housing assistance programs including Section 8, HOME and public housing to state governments. Each state would then have to determine how and to what extent it will replace federal housing programs with alternative programs designed and funded by state and local authorities.

What would become of the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers (HUD-VASH), a veteran's assistance program that operates in conjunction with the Housing Choice Voucher program; would hopefully be transferred to the Department of Veterans Affairs, which would require training personnel to handle the administration of the program.

The proposed cuts put increased responsibility on state and local governments and calls for the private sector to do more to meet community needs, a key goal of HUD Secretary Ben Carson. The budget recognizes a greater role for state and local governments and the private sector in addressing community development and affordable housing needs. This seems to ignore that some of those programs exist precisely because private money hasn't stepped up.

As a result of VA's close collaboration with local and national stakeholder organizations, success in ending homelessness among veterans is happening community by community.

The national picture is improving. The 2016 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count—a "snapshot" of homelessness on a given night in America—shows that homelessness among veterans is down by nearly 50 percent since 2010. The data also revealed a 17 percent decrease in Veteran homelessness since 2015—quadruple the previous year's rate of decline.

These gains aside, there is more work to do to address the many causes of homelessness among veterans. These include poverty, lack of access to reasonably priced housing, isolation from family or friends and substance use or mental health challenges that may develop or worsen as a result of service-related trauma or housing instability.

Both independently and in tandem with other federal agencies, VA strives to meet the needs of veterans by providing various services that help veterans secure permanent housing and achieve their full potential.

VA also partners with many other public and private entities to expand access to meaningful employment, affordable housing and move-in essentials. Their work is guided by the Housing First approach, which is based on the premise that when

veterans have a place to call home, they're best able to benefit from the supportive services they need.

In addition to the complex set of factors affecting all homeless -- extreme shortage of affordable housing, livable income, and access to health care -- a large number of displaced and at-risk veterans live with lingering effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and substance abuse, compounded by a lack of family and social support networks.

A top priority is, and needs to remain, secure, safe, clean housing that offers a supportive environment which is free of drugs and alcohol.

About one-third of the adult homeless population has served their country in the Armed Services. Current population estimates suggest that about 58,000 veterans are homeless on any given night and perhaps twice as many experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year. Many other veterans are considered near homeless or at risk because of their poverty, lack of support from family and friends, and dismal living conditions in cheap hotels or in overcrowded or substandard housing.

Currently, the number of homeless male and female Vietnam-era veterans is greater than the number of service persons who died during that war -- and a small number of Desert Storm veterans are also appearing in the homeless population. Although many veterans experiencing homelessness served in combat in Vietnam and suffer from PTSD, at this time, epidemiologic studies do not suggest that there is a causal connection between military service, service in Vietnam, or exposure to combat and homelessness among veterans. Family background, access to support from family and friends, and various personal characteristics (rather than military service) seems to be the stronger indicators of risk of homelessness.

Almost all homeless veterans are male (about 3% are women), the vast majority are single, and most come from poor, disadvantaged backgrounds. Veterans experiencing homelessness tend to be older and more educated than homeless non-veterans. But similar to the general population of homeless adult males, about 45% of veterans experiencing homelessness suffer from mental illness and (with considerable overlap) slightly more than 70% suffer from alcohol or other drug abuse problems. Roughly 56% are African American or Hispanic.

In developing outreach programs to veterans experiencing homelessness, advocates should start with the knowledge that:

- Every medical center has a homeless veteran services coordinator who is responsible for providing outreach and services for homeless or at-risk veterans
- All VA enrolled veterans are entitled to VA payment of hospice care across all settings regardless of their service connection

S312 Establishes grant program for homeless veterans shelters.

1/12/2016 introduced in the Senate, referred to the Senate Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee.

6/15/2017 reported from Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, 2nd Reading.

6/15/2017 referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee.

Identical Bill A782 reported from the Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee 4/4/2016 and referred to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This legislation was initially introduced in both chamber March, 2015.

This bill would require the Adjutant General of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs to award grants to certain southern New Jersey counties to provide veterans with improved access to homeless shelters. Under the bill, Atlantic County, Cape May County, and Cumberland County may submit applications to the Adjutant General proposing locations for homeless veterans shelters and identifying property the county would provide to the State for the development of a shelter.

New Jersey's southern counties are in particular need of shelters for homeless veterans. Because of mobility issues, homeless veterans' access to resources is often limited by geographic location. Various factors may have caused homeless veterans to locate within southern New Jersey counties. However, when conditions, such as extreme cold, require them to seek out temporary shelter, they find themselves isolated from shelters and other facilities that provide resources for veterans. This bill would result in the development of shelters in locations appropriate to meet this need.

There is established in the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs the "Southern New Jersey Homeless Veterans Shelter Grant Program." The purpose of this program is to award grants to the three southern-most counties in this State for identifying and providing appropriate locations and property for the State to develop and operate shelters for homeless veterans. The grants shall be awarded based upon the submission of applications by an eligible county in accordance with a process and criteria developed by the Adjutant General of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs and monies appropriated by the Legislature for this purpose. The application shall, at the minimum, include a description of the proposed location of a homeless veterans shelter and the property to be provided by the county to the State for development of a homeless veterans shelter. The Adjutant General may adopt, in accordance with the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations necessary to effectuate the grant program.

As used in this section, the “three southern-most counties” means the counties of Atlantic, Cape May, and Cumberland.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) states that the nation’s homeless veterans are predominantly male, with roughly 9% being female. The majority are single; live in urban areas; and suffer from mental illness, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders. About 11% of the adult homeless population are veterans.

Roughly 45% of all homeless veterans are African American or Hispanic, despite only accounting for 10.4% and 3.4% of the U.S. veteran population, respectively.

Homeless veterans are younger on average than the total veteran population. Approximately 9% are between the ages of 18 and 30, and 41% are between the ages of 31 and 50. Conversely, only 5% of all veterans are between the ages of 18 and 30, and less than 23% are between 31 and 50.

America’s homeless veterans have served in World War II, the Korean War, Cold War, Vietnam War, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, Persian Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq (OEF/OIF), and the military’s anti-drug cultivation efforts in South America. Nearly half of homeless veterans served during the Vietnam era. Two-thirds served our country for at least three years, and one-third were stationed in a war zone.

About 1.4 million other veterans, meanwhile, are considered at risk of homelessness due to poverty, lack of support networks, and dismal living conditions in overcrowded or substandard housing.

Although flawless counts are impossible to come by – the transient nature of homeless populations presents a major difficulty – the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that 39,471 veterans are homeless on any given night.

Approximately 12,700 veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND) were homeless in 2010. The number of young homeless veterans is increasing, but only constitutes 8.8% of the overall homeless veteran population.

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