



Progress Towards Ending Homelessness among Veterans in California Has Slowed in Recent Years

--After Significant Progress towards Ending Homelessness among Veterans in California throughout the Years 2011 - 2016, the Trend has Reversed during the Past Three Years According to Recent Homeless Counts--

--A Significant Majority of California Continuums of Care Recently Reported Not Having Sufficient Resources to Move Homeless Veterans into Permanent Housing Using a Housing First Approach--

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For most of the past decade, the number of veterans counted as homeless in California decreased when compared to the previous year as noted in Table 1. During the past few years the number of veterans counted as homeless, however, increased twice when compared to the number of veterans counted as homeless during the prior year.

The total number of veterans counted as homeless for the past couple of years has been nearly the same, which may suggest that 10,000+ veterans may be counted as homeless during the next couple of years or more.

Table 1. Comparison of total number of unsheltered and sheltered veterans between 2011 and 2019.

Year	Total Number of Veterans	Difference
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		#	%
2011	16,783	-	-
2012	14,611	-2,172	-12.9
2013	12,895	-1,716	-11.7
2014	12,096	-799	-6.2
2015	11,311	-785	-6.5
2016	9,612	-1,699	-15.0
2017	11,472	+1,860	+19.3
2018	10,836	-636	-5.5
2019	10,980	+144	+1.3

The following map provides a breakdown of the 10,980 veterans counted in 2019 by each of California's 44 Continuum of Care (CoC).

Click [here](#) to download pdf map

California Continuums of Care: Number of Homeless Veterans Counted in 2019



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) asked Continuums of Care (CoCs) the following three questions within a subsection of the 2017, 2018, and 2019 Continuum of Care (CoC) Program application that focused on progress towards ending homelessness among veterans:

- *Does the CoC use an active list or by name list to identify all Veterans experiencing homelessness in the CoC?*

- *Is the CoC actively working with the VA and VA-funded programs to achieve the benchmarks and criteria for ending Veteran homelessness?*
- *Does the CoC have sufficient resources to ensure each Veteran is assisted to quickly move into permanent housing using a Housing First approach?*

Nearly all of the 40+ California CoCs answered "yes" to the first question above about using "an active list or by name list to identify all Veterans" in their 2017, 2018, and 2019 CoC Program application as noted in Table 2.

All (100%) answered "yes" to the second question about "actively working with the VA (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs) and VA-funded programs" in their 2017 and 2019 CoC Program application and 95% in their 2018 application as noted in the table below.

"No" was the response for a significant majority of the 40+ California CoCs to the third question above about having sufficient resources to ensure each Veteran is assisted to quickly move into permanent housing using a Housing First approach in each of the three years. More than half (58%) stated "no" in 2017, more than two-thirds (71%) in 2018, and nearly two-thirds (65%) in 2019.

Table 2. Comparison of responses to HUD continuum of care application questions regarding veterans between 2017 and 2019.

Continuum of Care:		Does the CoC use an active list or by name list to identify all Veterans experiencing homelessness in the CoC?			Is the CoC actively working with the VA and VA-funded programs to achieve the benchmarks and criteria for ending Veteran homelessness?			Does the CoC have sufficient resources to ensure each Veteran is assisted to quickly move into permanent housing using a Housing First approach?		
		Year:	17	18	19	17	18	19	17	18
		Y=Yes	N=No							
CA-500	San Jose/Santa Clara City & County CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
CA-501	San Francisco CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
CA-502	Oakland, Berkeley/Alameda County CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
CA-503	Sacramento City & County CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
CA-504	Santa Rosa, Petaluma/Sonoma County CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
CA-505	Richmond/Contra Costa County CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
CA-506	Salinas/Monterey, San Benito Counties CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
CA-	Marin County CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N

CA-612	Glendale CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
CA-613	Imperial County CoC	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
CA-614	San Luis Obispo County CoC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
	Total: "Yes"	34	39	38	41	40	43	17	12	15
	"Yes" %	83	93	88	100	95	100	42	29	35
	Total: "No"	7	3	5	0	2	0	24	30	28
	"No" %	17	7	12	0	5	0	58	71	65
	Total CoCs that Submitted a CoC Program Application:	41	42	43	41	42	43	41	42	43

Implications for Next Steps

Ending homelessness among Veterans requires rapid access to permanent housing. A Housing First approach follows the philosophy of providing permanent housing as quickly as possible to Veterans and Veteran families experiencing homelessness and then providing supportive services as needed in order for the households to sustain their housing.

Three key components to rapid access are 1) rental subsidies when needed; 2) innovative ways to help move veterans into permanent housing using a Housing First approach; and 3) available affordable housing.

Rental Subsidies When Needed

Achievements to date have been accomplished largely because of the rental subsidies provided through the [HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing \(HUD-VASH\) program](#), which "combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)" and the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\) program](#), which also provides rental assistance and supportive services.

Innovative Ways to Help Move Veterans into Permanent Housing Using a Housing First Approach

Achievements to date have also been accomplished because of innovative ways an increasing number of CoCs have used to lower barriers for veterans to obtain and maintain permanent housing. Innovative ways that have been designed and implemented include

- Applying for an exception from HUD to pay more than fair market rent for veterans;

- Providing flexible financial assistance to cover costs related to moving expenses, security deposits, first month's rent, etc. when needed;
- Creating inter-jurisdictional agreements and applications so that veterans do not have to fill out multiple sets of paperwork for various city and county departments and agencies;
- Offering landlords a holding fee to hold units for veterans while they go through lease up process;
- Extending landlord mitigation funds to offset potential problems such as unpaid rent or excessive damage to units.

The VA has compiled a "[How Landlords Can Help End Veteran Homelessness](#)" web page that includes benefits for landlords, 5 steps to get started, and housing inspection tips.

Not all CoCs have adopted or adapted innovative ways to move veterans into permanent housing using a Housing First approach. The more CoCs that do the more veterans are likely to be permanently housed using existing available housing.

Available Affordable Housing

Finding affordable housing in California has become increasingly difficult for a variety of reasons as noted in the following posts: "[Californians: Here's why your housing costs are so high](#)" and "[How California's Housing Crisis Turned into a Homeless Crisis.](#)"

Unprecedented legislation and funding from the State of California for homelessness includes several sources of funds for affordable housing including permanent supportive housing, which should be integrated into CoC homelessness action plans to prevent and end homelessness among veterans.

Unprecedented Legislation

Unprecedented Legislation includes a wide-range of bills recently signed into law.

[California's 2017 Legislative Housing Package](#) injected new regulatory and financial resources to accelerate the development of affordable housing. As noted, the package

- *Provides critical funding for new affordable homes;*
- *Accelerates development to increase housing supply;*
- *Holds cities/counties accountable for addressing housing needs in their communities; and*
- *Creates opportunities for new affordable homes and preserves existing affordable homes.*

For a list of more recent legislation concerning permanent supportive housing see [The Persistence of Chronic Homelessness in California](#).

Unprecedented Funding

Also see [The Persistence of Chronic Homelessness in California](#) for a list of state funding sources for affordable and permanent supportive housing.

The California Department of Housing and Community Development provides a "[Notice of Funding Availability Calendar](#)" that includes scheduled times for NOFAs, application submissions, and announcement of awards.

Not all CoCs have applied for or awarded funding for affordable housing and permanent supportive housing. The more that do the more veterans are likely to be permanently housed in new housing units including veterans that are not eligible for VA benefits including those benefits offered through the HUD-VASH and SSVF programs.

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