CASE STUDY: HOUSING FIRST CUT VETERAN HOMELESSNESS BY 50%

Housing First is supported by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in its two largest homelessness programs – Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH). These programs, which are considered to be the gold standard for homelessness programs both domestically and abroad, have been instrumental in reducing veteran homelessness by 50% over the past decade.

In 2021, 3 states and 82 communities announced they achieved net zero veteran homelessness using the Housing First model:

VIRGINIA	CONNETICUT	DELAWARE
Mobile, AL	Massachusetts CoC, MA	Schenectady, NY
Little Rock, AR	Kent County, MI	Syracuse, NY
Riverside, CA	Lansing, MI	Troy, NY
Flagler County, FL	Wexford, MI	Cumberland, NC
Miami-Dade County, FL	Dakota, MN	Winston-Salem, NC
Myers, FL	Moorhead, MN	Dayton, OH
Daytona Beach, FL	Northeast CoC, MN	Akron, OH
Atlanta, GA	Northwest CoC, MN	Norman, OK
DeKalb County, GA	Southeast CoC, MN	Gresham, OR
Central Illinois, IL	Southwest CoC, MN	Multnomah County, OR
Christian County, IL	Gulfport, MS	Portland, OR
Coles County, IL	Hattiesburg, MS	Delaware County, PA
Douglas County, IL	Mississippi CoC, MS	Lancaster, PA
Edgar County, IL	Kansas City, MO	Lehigh Valley, PA
Moultrie County, IL	Poplar Bluff, MO	Philadelphia, PA
Quad Cities Region, IL	St. Joseph, MO	Pittsburgh, PA
Rockford, IL	Lincoln, NE	Reading, PA
Shelby County, IL	Nebraska CoC, NE	Scranton, PA
Waukegan, IL	Las Vegas, NV	Western CoC, PA
Will County, IL	Nashua, NH	Chattanooga, TN
Indiana CoC, IN	Bergen County, NJ	Jackson, TN
Des Moines, IA	Middlesex County, NJ	Abilene, TX
Quad Cities Region, IN	Las Cruces, NM	Houston, TX
Kansas City, KS	Santa Fe, NM	San Antonio, TX
Lexington, KY	Albany, NY	Austin, TX
New Orleans, LA	Buffalo, NY	Chittenden County, VT
Shreveport, LA	Long Island, NY	Kittitas County, WA
Terrebonne Paris, LA	Poughkeepsie, NY	La Crosse, WI
Montgomery County, MD	Rochester, NY	Beckley, WV
Lowell, MA	Saratoga Springs, NY	

Several factors played a role in this progress: robust federal funding in Housing First programs for veterans, access to world-class healthcare through the VA, and strong leadership. To end homelessness for all people, we must build on the successes and the lessons learned from efforts to decrease veteran homelessness.

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

Research shows that Housing First is effective for veterans experiencing homelessness. Studies show Housing First:

- Ends homelessness. A 10-year study published in 2017 found that the HUD-VASH program, which uses the Housing First model, reduced veteran homelessness and helped to prevent a substantial rise in veteran homelessness over that time period.

- Keeps veterans housed. Veterans housed in Housing First programs were 8 times more likely than those under non-housing first programs to maintain housing stability for 12 months.

- Reduces healthcare costs. A study of the HUD-VASH pilot demonstrated that Housing First is both a clinically effective and fiscally efficient model. Overall, it found that 84% of veterans remained stably housed after 3 years, emergency room visits decreased by 27%, hospitalizations decreased by 33%, and healthcare costs declined by 32%.

- Improves mental health and other outcomes. A longitudinal study found that once veterans were stably housed, mental health symptoms, quality of life, and social support improved, underscoring the importance of permanent supportive housing, outreach efforts, and tailoring housing options to each individual's preference.

Learn more about the evidence supporting Housing First here.

For more information, contact NLIHC senior vice president of public policy and field organizing Sarah Saadian at ssaadian@nlihc.org.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

NATIONAL COALITION for HOMELESS VETERANS

1000 Vermont Avenue, NW | Suite 500 | Washington, DC 20005 | 202-662-1530 | www.nlihc.org