

BVS POC REPORT

Housing/Homelessness

1. Date of Report: August 20, 2020
2. BVS POC: Tammy Lambert
3. Service Area/Program: Housing/Homelessness
4. VDVS Director/Program Manager: Matt Leslie
5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):

VVFS is a supporting role regarding housing and homelessness through direct services by navigating veterans to shelter/housing resources and providing state coordination through the Governor's Coordinating Council on Homelessness. VVFS also manages the Virginia Veteran Homeless Fund through the Veterans Services Foundation that supports designated veteran housing non-profits with providing gap expenses when housing veterans experiencing homelessness.

6. Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)?

Veterans at-risk or experiencing homelessness

7. How is the service/program delivered?

Service is delivered through a network of providers within Homeless Continuums of Care throughout the Commonwealth

8. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans?

Ensuring that veteran homelessness is prevented whenever possible and if not, that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

9. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?

Keeping veterans housed ensures they have greater access to work, education, and healthcare.

10. What is the statutory authority for the service area/program? NA

11. Where do the resources for the service area/program come from (general fund, non-general fund, donations, etc.?)

The veteran homeless systems receive funds from federal, state, and donated funds

August 14, 2020

12. How has COVID-19 impacted the delivery of services? What service adaptations have been made or are planned?

Veterans experiencing homelessness are on average a high risk for COVID-19 particularly those residing in shelters. Congregate living shelters have been greatly impacted due to the need to social distance. Systems have responded by using hotel/motels for short-term shelter and trying to get individuals housed as quickly as possible. CARES Act funding has increased the ability to do this but the eviction moratoriums have also reduced the amount of housing available for chronically homeless veterans in need of permanent supportive housing. Inspecting the units (HUD Requirement) has also been more challenging however systems have adapted by doing inspections virtually. Supportive services have gone mostly virtual which has resulted in some veterans feeling more socially isolated although it also has made it easier for some veterans who are open to it.

13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area/program at present?

The biggest challenge is the impending eviction crisis due to the increased unemployment and economic crisis. The eviction moratoriums have been successful in keeping people in housing but it also has delayed the inevitable of a historic eviction crisis. The homeless systems do not have the capacity to handle such an increase in need. The housing crisis has been growing for years and COVID has exposed the deficiencies in both affordable housing and the mental health systems.

14. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

A recognition that housing is essential part of healthcare and wellbeing and future opportunities to make housing more affordable. The new state Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) funded through CARES Act funding and new eviction laws are providing an opportunity to learn new best practices in keeping people (including veterans) housed.

15. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?

Point in Time Count

- Virginia held the 2020 Point-in-Time Count on the night of January 22, 2020. Preliminary data for veterans experiencing homelessness was 395. This was a 13% reduction from 2019 and 58% from 2011. The unsheltered number reduced 22% (2019-92, 2020 -72) and the number of female veterans reduced 32% (2019-57, 2020-39) (The final data from HUD is anticipated to be announced in Fall 2020.)
- The reduction has been a continual trend due to increased coordination across systems, targeting of resources, and identification of veterans experiencing homelessness. However, there is a huge risk that these gains could be lost with the current economic and eviction crisis.

- The Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) program, funded by the US. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, which supports non-profits across the Commonwealth to serve veterans experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness has seen two large increases in the last 5 months from the CARES Act. This funding, along with the eviction moratoriums, has assisted in sustaining efforts during the crisis and currently have not seen evidence of any significant increases in veterans experiencing homelessness and many communities have reported a decrease.