

## Situation Analysis:

# Homeless Veterans: One in four homeless persons is a veteran

### Overview

On any given night, more than 107,000 veterans experienced homelessness in 2009, as estimated by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA).

*Veterans are more likely to live outdoors—unsheltered—and experience long-term, chronic homelessness.*

*-Opening Doors, Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.*

**Point-in-time Count:** The VA and HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) found 75,609 homeless veterans on a single night in January of 2009, as reported by local point-in-time counts. Of these 75,609 homeless veterans, 57% were staying in a shelter or transitional housing program while the rest were living on the street.

This point-in-time count

reflected that 12% of all homeless people (including children) counted were veterans. In comparison, 8% of the total U.S. population has veteran status.

**One-Year Estimates** (Oct. 1, 2008– Sept. 30, 2009): More than 136,000 veterans spent at least one night in an emergency shelter or in transitional housing, according to the VA & HUD. The vast majority, about 96%, are individuals. Most homeless veterans are single white males between the ages of 31 and 50 who have a disability.

#### Definition of “Homeless Veteran”

A veteran is a person who served in the active military, naval or air service AND was not dishonorably discharged.

The VA follows the definition of “homeless individual” as established in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

### Risk of Homelessness

Since the Vietnam War era, veterans are at greater risk of homelessness than non-veterans. Just over 5% of adults living in poverty experience homelessness at some point during the year, compared to 10% of veterans living in poverty.\*

In a 2007 report to Congress, authors state NO direct correlation between PTSD and homelessness has been found. However, PTSD contributes to other psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, unemployment, low levels of social support upon returning home, and being unmarried (separation, divorce). These factors can lead to homelessness.

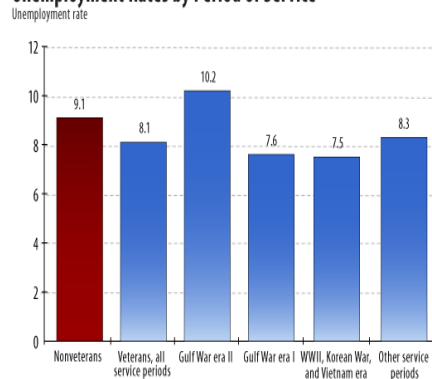
Researchers also found that 76% of homeless veterans deployed in Vietnam and 50% of homeless vets who were non-combat troops in the Vietnam era, said that at least 10 years passed before they became homeless. The 2007 report to Congress states that an informal survey by the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans found that 1,260 veterans from the Iraq war have sought help to prevent homelessness. USA Today reported that the VA recently reported that 10,000 veterans from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have experienced homelessness or are close to it.

### Concerns

There is concern that the VA may not be able to meet the need from the two conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, as stated in the 2007 report to Congress. Other concerns are that because National Guard and Reserve troops generally live further from base, they may have more problems accessing services than members of the Army or Marine Corps. In addition, members of the National Guard and the Reserve are about half as likely to file claims for assistance than members of other military branches.

Veterans from more recent conflicts are experiencing higher rates of unemployment, according to findings from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

#### Unemployment Rates by Period of Service



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

March 25, 2011

Prepared by the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission.

#### Notes from the author:

*Statistics over the past 10 years strongly differ regarding the percentage of homeless veterans.*

*HUD and the U.S. VA are working together to get more accurate estimates.*

*What all studies agree on, however, is that there is a significantly higher percentage of veterans among the homeless population compared to the percentage of veterans in the general population.*

Prepared by:  
Judith Tackett  
communications coordinator  
Metropolitan Homelessness Commission  
800 Second Ave. North  
Nashville, TN 37201

Phone: 615-517-7000

E-mail:  
judith.tackett@nashville.gov

Sources:

**HUD & VA** refers to “Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress” CRS Report to Congress, 2007 ([www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL34024.pdf](http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL34024.pdf))

\*<http://www.hudhre.info/documents/2009AHARVeteransReport.pdf>

## Estimated Number of Homeless Veterans in Nashville

Nashville has an estimated 600-700 homeless veterans, according to Operation Stand Down Nashville, Inc. According to the U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs, a third of the adult homeless population are veterans. Based on that statistic, OSD Nashville calculates that about 30% of homeless individuals counted in the city's annual point-in-time count are veterans.

Alternatively, the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans estimates that close to 20% of the homeless population are veterans. Applying that percentage to the point-in-time count, Nashville would have 450-500 homeless veterans.

Given that **Operation Stand Down served 408 homeless veterans at its annual service event in 2010**, we know that the number of homeless veterans in Nashville is likely higher assuming that not every homeless veteran in Nashville and surrounding counties attended the event. If we calculate that Nashville has a homeless population of 4,000 on any given night—including individuals, youth, families and children—then the estimate of homeless veterans in our area could be as high as 800.

## Data from the OSD Nashville's 2010 Annual Report

In 2010, OSD served 2,049 veterans (388 more than in 2009) in its Veteran Service Center. Of these, 185 were female veterans. OSD served an average of 75 veterans per day.

OSD's Transitional Housing Program offers 42 beds (35 for males, 7 for females) and served 112 men and women. The program's success rate was 64%, with success being defined as a person leaving the program with a place to live, having a job or monthly income, feeling in control of their finances and being comfortable about facing life again.

The program's employment report showed an employment rate of 80% (254 of 319 individuals were connected with a job) with an average hourly wage of \$10.96. Employment success is defined by maintaining employment for at least nine months. The program's nine-month job retention rate for 2009-2010 is 72%.

In 2010, OSD spent \$442,524 in Homeless Prevention and Rapid-Rehousing Program (HPRP) funding and helped 418 individuals (149 veterans and an additional 75 veterans with families) with rent and utilities to prevent them from becoming homeless. Recipients of the HPRP funding had to be up to three months behind in rent, have some income and just need help catching up on rent and utilities. The program ended in 2011.

*The Mission of Operation Stand Down is to provide, refer and/or coordinate social services to honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.*

## Effort to End Homelessness Among Veterans by 2015

The number of homeless veterans on any given night has dropped by over 55,000, the Department of Veterans Affairs reported on July 15, according to Reuters. Programs like the \$46.2 million to provide permanent housing for 6,790 homeless veterans, which was announced on July 14, are credited for the decrease.

Despite a still-stagnant economy and increased troop drawdowns leading to potentially higher numbers of homeless veterans, VA Deputy Press Secretary Drew Brookie said the number of veterans who are homeless each night has dropped from an estimated 131,000 in 2009 to 75,700 as of June this year. ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/15/homeless-veteran-numbers-drop\\_n\\_900409.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/15/homeless-veteran-numbers-drop_n_900409.html))

### From the USICH\*

23% of the homeless population are veterans

33% of the male homeless population are veterans

Of the homeless veterans:

47% served Vietnam-era

17% served post-Vietnam

15% served pre-Vietnam

67% served three or more years

33% were stationed in war zone

25% have used VA homeless services

85% completed high school/GED, compared to 56% of non-veterans

89% received an honorable discharge

79% reside in central cities

16% reside in suburban areas

5% reside in rural areas

76% experience alcohol, drug or mental health problems

46% are white males, compared to 34% of non-veterans

46% are age 45 or older, compared to 20% non-veterans

**National Call Center  
for Homeless Veterans:  
1-877-4AID-VET**

**1-877-424-3838**

**The Key Alliance is seeking to continue its partnership with the VA to provide intensive case management to recipients of the 50 additional VASH vouchers Nashville is slated to receive in 2011.**

\*The Forgotten Americans-Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve" – released Dec. 8, 1999, by the U.S. Interagency Council on the Homeless (USICH) – is the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients (NSHAPC), which was completed in 1996 and updated three years later. Download the NSHAPC reports at [www.huduser.org](http://www.huduser.org).