

California Is Getting Closer to Ending Homelessness among Veterans: What Will It Take to Finish the Job?

A brief prepared by Joe Colletti, PhD and Sofia Herrera, PhD
Urban Initiatives on Homelessness and Poverty
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This brief notes that California is getting closer to ending homelessness among veterans. Between 2011 and 2016, the total number of homeless veterans decreased by nearly half (42.2%) according to the 43 continuums of care (CoCs)¹ that make up California.² Furthermore, 16 or 37.2% of the 43 CoCs have recently stated that they ended homelessness among veterans or will end it by the end of 2016, and the strategies that they used, or are using, to finish the job are summarized in the last section of this brief.

NOTE: This brief is a follow up to an earlier one that focused on the 20 CoCs that have the largest numbers of homeless persons in the United States. The brief was entitled "We are Getting Closer to Ending Homelessness among Veterans in the United States: What Will It Take to Finish the Job?" and can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Significant Progress between 2011 and 2016

There was significant progress made by the California CoCs regarding the task of ending homelessness among veterans in the last five years. Table 1 below compares the total number of sheltered and unsheltered veterans reported in 2011 by the California CoCs to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as part of the homeless count Point-in-Time Chart, to the total number of sheltered and unsheltered veterans reported in their recently submitted 2016 CoC grant applications to HUD.

As noted in the last row of table 1, the total number of homeless veterans within these CoCs has decreased from a total of 16,773 in 2011 to 9,695 in 2016, which represents a decrease of 7,078 veterans or 42.2%.

¹ A "Continuum of Care" is a geographically based group of representatives that carries out the planning responsibilities of the Continuum of Care program, as described in 24 CFR Part 578 [Docket No. FR-5476-I-01] RIN 2506-AC29 Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing: Continuum of Care Program Interim Rule by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These representatives come from organizations that provide services to the homeless, or represent the interests of the homeless or formerly homeless and are eligible to receive annual CoC Program funding from HUD.

² The state is divided into 43 continuums of care (CoCs) by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The last row of table 1 also notes that the number of sheltered veterans in 2011 was 6,689 compared to 4,048 in 2016, which represents a decrease of 2,641 sheltered veterans or 39.5% and the number of unsheltered veterans in 2011 was 10,084 compared to 5,647 in 2016, which represents a decrease of 4,437 unsheltered veterans or 44.0%.

Table 1. Comparison of Homeless Veterans: 2011 and 2016

CoCs with Largest Numbers of Homeless Persons:	2011			2016		
	sheltered	unsheltered	total	sheltered	unsheltered	total
San Jose/Santa Clara City & County CoC	152	515	667	255	446	701
San Francisco CoC	489	430	919	228	352	580
Oakland, Berkeley/Alameda County CoC	143	345	488	170	231	401
Sacramento City & County CoC	116	181	297	166	141	307
Santa Rosa, Petaluma/Sonoma County CoC	77	327	404	54	220	274
Richmond/Contra Costa County CoC	69	8	77	51	85	136
Salinas/Monterey, San Benito Counties CoC	52	244	296	83	0	83
Marin County CoC	32	36	68	37	41	78
Watsonville/Santa Cruz City & County CoC	31	245	276	33	113	146
Mendocino County CoC	18	74	92	5	14	19
Turlock, Modesto/Stanislaus County CoC	43	30	73	39	35	74
Stockton/San Joaquin County CoC	92	20	112	97	61	158
Daly City/San Mateo County CoC	177	147	324	46	90	136
Visalia/Kings, Tulare Counties CoC	3	33	36	4	33	37
Fresno City & County/Madera County CoC	77	542	619	84	144	228
Roseville, Rocklin/Placer, Nevada Counties CoC	37	37	74	24	0	24
Redding/Shasta County CoC	38	8	46	49	345	394
Napa City & County CoC	9	9	18	8	14	22
Vallejo/Solano County CoC	27	14	41	54	65	119
Chico, Paradise/Butte County CoC	47	70	117	22	27	49
Merced City & County CoC	9	34	43	5	20	25
Davis, Woodland/Yolo County CoC	14	36	50	13	16	29
Humboldt County CoC	20	79	99	39	92	131
Colusa, Glen, Trinity Counties CoC*	17	11	28	0	0	0

Yuba City/Sutter County CoC	13	13	26	1	0	1
El Dorado County CoC	1	1	2	6	0	6
Tuolumne, Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa Counties CoC	7	18	25	14	21	35
Tehama County CoC	0	0	0	7	8	15
Lake County CoC*	0	0	0	0	0	0
Los Angeles City & County CoC	3,243	3,038	6,281	1,243	1,485	2,728
San Diego City and County CoC	756	893	1,649	584	572	1,156
Santa Ana, Anaheim/Orange County CoC	96	760	856	99	356	455
Santa Maria/Santa Barbara County CoC	70	88	158	43	79	122
Bakersfield/Kern County CoC	79	94	173	65	34	99
Long Beach CoC	349	309	658	195	94	289
Pasadena CoC	13	76	89	13	31	44
Riverside City & County CoC	76	814	890	111	100	211
San Bernardino City & County CoC	80	166	246	29	93	122
Oxnard, San Buenaventura/Ventura County CoC	31	109	140	21	57	78
Glendale CoC	20	19	39	2	8	10
Imperial County CoC	6	0	6	1	11	12
San Luis Obispo County CoC	60	211	271	48	113	161
Alpine, Inyo, Mono Counties CoC*	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total:	6,689	10,084	16,773	4,048	5,647	9,695

*CoC did not submit a CoC Program application to HUD for funding in 2016.

CoCs on Target to End Homelessness in 2016

When asked by HUD in the recently submitted 2016 Continuum of Care application to indicate if the CoC was "on target to end Veteran homelessness by the end of 2016," 16 or 37.2% of the CoCs stated "yes" as noted in the table below.

Table 2: CoCs on Target to End Veteran Homelessness by End of 2016

CoCs with Largest Numbers of Homeless Persons:	Is CoC on Target to End Veteran Homelessness by End of 2016?	
	Yes	No
San Jose/Santa Clara City & County CoC		✓
San Francisco CoC		✓
Oakland, Berkeley/Alameda County CoC	✓	
Sacramento City & County CoC		✓
Santa Rosa, Petaluma/Sonoma County CoC		✓

Richmond/Contra Costa County CoC		✓
Salinas/Monterey, San Benito Counties CoC		✓
Marin County CoC		✓
Watsonville/Santa Cruz City & County CoC	✓	
Mendocino County CoC		✓
Turlock, Modesto/Stanislaus County CoC	✓	
Stockton/San Joaquin County CoC		✓
Daly City/San Mateo County CoC		✓
Visalia/Kings, Tulare Counties CoC		✓
Fresno City & County/Madera County CoC		✓
Roseville, Rocklin/Placer, Nevada Counties		✓
Redding/Shasta County CoC		✓
Napa City & County CoC		✓
Vallejo/Solano County CoC		✓
Chico, Paradise/Butte County CoC	✓	
Merced City & County CoC	✓	
Davis, Woodland/Yolo County CoC		✓
Humboldt County CoC		✓
Colusa, Glen, Trinity Counties CoC*	-	-
Yuba City/Sutter County CoC		✓
El Dorado County CoC		✓
Tuolumne, Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa Counties CoC	✓	
Tehama County CoC		✓
Lake County CoC*	-	-
Los Angeles City & County CoC		✓
San Diego City and County CoC		✓
Santa Ana, Anaheim/Orange County CoC	✓	
Santa Maria/Santa Barbara County CoC		✓
Bakersfield/Kern County CoC	✓	
Long Beach CoC	✓	
Pasadena CoC	✓	
Riverside City & County CoC	✓	
San Bernardino City & County CoC	✓	
Oxnard, San Buenaventura/Ventura County CoC	✓	
Glendale CoC	✓	
Imperial County CoC	✓	
San Luis Obispo County CoC	✓	
Alpine, Inyo, Mono Counties CoC*	-	-
Total:	16	24

*CoC did not submit a CoC Program application to HUD for funding in 2016.

Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness

HUD also asked each CoC the following in the recently submitted 2016 Continuum of Care application with regard to being on target to end veteran homelessness by the end of 2016:

- If you answered "yes," "what are the strategies being used to maximize your current resources to meet this goal?"
- If you answered "no," what resources or technical assistance would help you reach the goal of ending Veteran homelessness by the end of 2016?

A review of strategies used by the 16 CoCs that answered "yes" when asked if they were on target to end veteran homelessness by the end of 2016 revealed the following approaches:

1. Street Outreach and Engagement

On-going street outreach not only focused on identifying veterans who were homeless but on engaging them as well.

2. Coordinated Entry System

Veterans were entered into a coordinated entry system that identified those veterans with the most severe needs and prioritized them for permanent housing placement.

3. Data Collection

A master list of veterans was created that included those veterans that were chronically homeless and updated on a bi-weekly or weekly basis which helped monitor progress and track housing outcomes.

4. Data Sharing

Data sharing involved several housing and supportive service providers that included verifying if veterans were eligible for U.S. Veterans Affairs services and ensuring that all veterans received appropriate housing and supportive services from mainstream service providers.

5. Housing First Approach

A housing first approach was implemented that helped veterans obtain permanent housing by focusing on removing barriers such as little or no income, past or present substance use, and criminal history.

6. Housing Search

Veterans were assigned housing navigators who helped them obtain and maintain permanent housing by securing legal services regarding outstanding warrants and expunging criminal records and securing targeted and mainstream benefits including income and employment support services.

7. Bridge Housing

Housing navigators helped secure low barrier bridge housing until permanent housing was secured that included permanent supportive housing.

8. Permanent Housing Resources

CoCs used the following permanent housing resources

- HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, which helps veteran households obtain permanent supportive housing by combining Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans who are eligible for U.S. Veterans Affairs services;
- Supportive Services for Veterans and Veteran Families (SSVF) Program, which helps veteran households obtain permanent affordable housing by providing temporary rental assistance and a wide-range of supportive services for veterans who are eligible for U.S. Veterans Affairs services;
- Other permanent supportive housing and permanent affordable housing options made possible by non-Veteran Affairs resources such as U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development resources that also provide on-going or temporary rental assistance and a wide-range of supportive services for veterans who are not eligible for U.S. Veterans Affairs services.

It is important to note that despite being on target to end veteran homelessness, several of the 16 CoCs that answered "yes" when asked if they were on target to end veteran homelessness by the end of 2016, cited challenges in identifying, securing, and obtaining available housing stock for veterans with HUD-VASH and SSVF assistance because of a lack of affordable housing for rent and a limited number of landlords willing to rent to veterans with HUD-VASH and SSVF assistance.