Lessons from the Federal Criteria & Benchmarks Review Process

NCHV Annual Conference

June 2, 2016

Panelists

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- **Anthony Love,** Director of Community Engagement, Homeless Programs, VA

- **Joe Savage**, Regional Coordinator, USICH

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- **Moderator: Tom Albanese**, Senior Associate, Abt Associates

Agenda

- Overview
- Panel Discussion
- Audience Questions & Answers

Overview

Operational Definition of an End to Homelessness - USICH

An end to homelessness **does not mean that no one will ever experience a housing crisis again**. Changing economic realities, the unpredictability of life and unsafe or unwelcoming family environments may create situations where individuals, families, or youth could experience or be at-risk of homelessness.

An end to homelessness means that every community will have a **systematic response in place** that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.

Operational Definition of an End to Homelessness - USICH

Specifically, every community will have the capacity to:

- **Quickly identify** and **engage** people at-risk of and experiencing homelessness.

- Intervene to **prevent** the loss of housing and **divert** people from entering the homelessness services system.

- Provide immediate **access to shelter and crisis services**, without barriers to entry, while permanent stable housing and appropriate supports are being secured.

- When homelessness does occur, **quickly connect people to housing** assistance and services—tailored to their unique needs and strengths—to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.

Put another way…"Ending Homelessness" means…

Planning and implementing an *optimized* homeless crisis response system that assures homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring for people in your community

Optimization: an act, process, or methodology of making something (as a design, system, or decision) as fully perfect, functional, or effective as possible.
-Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness

- Determined by federal partners (USICH, VA, HUD)
- For communities participating in *Mayor's Challenge* or that otherwise want *federal recognition*
- May be periodically updated
- Key underlying concepts and practices behind criteria and benchmarks as expressed in USICH Operational Definition

Federal [Criteria](#) for Ending Veteran Homelessness

1. The community has **identified all veterans** experiencing homelessness.

2. The community **provides shelter immediately** to any veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it.

3. The community only provides service-intensive **transitional housing in limited instances.**

4. The community has **capacity to assist** veterans to **swiftly move into permanent housing**.

5. The community has **resources, plans, and system capacity** in place should any veteran become homeless or be at risk of homelessness in the future.

Federal [Benchmarks](#) for Ending Veteran Homelessness

A. Chronic homelessness among veterans has been ended.

B. Veterans have quick access to permanent housing.

C. The community has sufficient permanent housing capacity.

D. The community is committed to housing first and provides service-intensive transitional housing to veterans experiencing homelessness only in limited instances.

Clarifications & Reminders

- Criteria & benchmarks should be examined together to see how entire system is functioning
- Criteria & benchmarks = *minimum* system qualities and performance that indicate homelessness among veterans is **rare, brief, and non-recurring**
  - Represent key homeless response ***system practices*** (e.g., comprehensive outreach, coordinated entry, limited use of TH) and ***performance*** (e.g., avg time to PH)
  - Exemptions are not exclusions (e.g., CH Veteran who accepts PH offer only exempted for 90 days)
  - Community can set other goals and/or more aggressive targets
  - Achievement = key milestone requiring ongoing monitoring, use of data, & adjustment
- Voluntary, but *must meet for Federal recognition*

Federal Confirmation Process Basics

To begin the confirmation process:

- Contact any one of the following Federal reps and request sample template:
    - USICH Regional Coordinator
    - HUD Field Office
    - HUD Regional Administrator
    - Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) Homeless Coordinator
    - VA Medical Center
- Gather requested data and complete template (review and obtain endorsement from key partners)
- Submit request to your primary Federal representative to initiate Interagency review

Federal Confirmation Process, cont'd.

Interagency Review Team:

- USICH, HUD, VA representatives
- Reviews confirmation requests
- This may include clarifying questions, requests for additional data to clarify
- Outcome of review is provided to community
  - If confirmed: Federal government issues formal confirmation letter and offers to coordinate w/ community on announcement & messaging
  - If not confirmed: Federal partners are available to offer guidance and technical assistance to help address the issues raised in the review

Panel Discussion

Audience
Questions & Answers

Resources

- Achieving an End to Veteran Homelessness: [Criteria and Benchmarks](#)

- Federal partner 12-17-2015 blog post on [Clarifying the Federal Criteria and Benchmarks](#)

- SNAPS In Focus: [What it Means to End Veteran Homelessness](#)

- Data Sharing: [VA Guidance on HMIS Access](#)

- Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness: [Vets@Home Toolkits](#)

- [10 Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness](#) (USICH Resource)