



NATIONAL COALITION for HOMELESS VETERANS

333 ½ Pennsylvania Avenue, SE

Washington, DC 20003-1148

202-546-1969 / 800-VET-HELP

Website: www.nchv.org Email: info@nchv.org

Policy Statement: Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28, 2013— The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, is the only national, veteran-specific program available to help at-risk men and women veterans from ever becoming homeless. The program is also the most suitable resource for homeless veterans who are able to quickly transition out of homelessness into permanent housing.

SSVF grantees are nonprofit, community-based organizations that provide very low-income veterans and their families with services in the following areas: health, legal, child care, transportation, fiduciary and payee, daily living, obtaining benefits, and housing counseling. The program also allows for time-limited payments to third parties – e.g. landlords, utility companies, moving companies, and licensed child-care providers – to ensure housing stability for veteran families. SSVF funds are leveraged with local Continuums of Care and other community partners at no extra cost to the federal government.

In July 2012, VA awarded \$100 million in SSVF grants to 151 organizations in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. About 42,000 homeless and at-risk veterans and their families are expected to be served with these funds. A \$300 million Notice of Funding Availability – which will include grant renewals – was published on Oct. 26, 2012, and will close on Feb. 1, 2013.

Why is SSVF critical?

Modeled after HUD’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), the SSVF Program serves low-income veterans and their families residing in or transitioning to permanent housing. HPRP, however, was a one-time infusion of funds whose distribution demonstrated what many in the veteran service provider community long suspected – veterans are not well served by “mainstream” homeless programs. The HUD-published report “HPRP: Year 1 Summary” shows that only 2% of adults served by the program were veterans, even though veterans accounted for 16% of the adult homeless population in 2009.

The vast majority of VA’s homeless programs are necessarily geared toward rehabilitation—more than half of the homeless veteran population suffers from physical disabilities, mental illness, substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders. The SSVF Program is critical because it serves an at-risk veteran population that is ten times larger than the homeless veteran cohort, yet has no other dedicated funding source for the homelessness prevention services it needs.

At the 2012 NCHV Annual Conference, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki explained the “two-fold challenge” of ending veteran homelessness: “rescuing veterans who are already homeless while simultaneously preventing those at risk of homelessness from slipping into that downward spiral.” VA’s prevention efforts are dependent upon the SSVF Program— the core of the department’s future homeless veteran service delivery system.

Mission: The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans will end homelessness among veterans by shaping public policy, promoting collaboration, and building the capacity of service providers.

How many veterans are at risk of homelessness?

More than 1.4 million American veterans live in poverty and are more vulnerable to becoming homeless than their civilian counterparts. VA research shows that one in 10 veterans living in poverty is likely to experience homelessness. In October 2011, VA and HUD released “Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress,” which found the following:

- Young veterans (between ages 18 and 30) in poverty are almost four times more likely to become homeless than their non-veteran counterparts in poverty.
- Women veterans in poverty are more than three times more likely to become homeless than women non-veterans in poverty.
- More than 26% of poor African American, American Indian, and Alaska Native veterans were homeless at some point during 2010.

What should Congress do?

NCHV recommends that Congress reauthorize and fund the SSVF Program at \$300 million through the maturity of the Five-Year Plan (FY 2015). The program is currently authorized at \$300 million through FY 2013, but has yet to receive a matching appropriation.

An increased investment in the SSVF Program would address the severe lack of veteran access to assistance under HUD’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program, while keeping our nation on track to fulfill the Five-Year Plan to End Veterans Homelessness.

Mission: The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans will end homelessness among veterans by shaping public policy, promoting collaboration, and building the capacity of service providers.