



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

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Policy Statement: Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program

WASHINGTON, Jun. 1, 2017— The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, is the only national, veteran-specific program to help at-risk veterans avoid becoming homeless, and rapidly re-house those veteran families who lose their housing. The program is also the most critical resource for homeless veterans who are able to quickly transition out of homelessness into permanent housing.

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

In 2016, VA awarded \$300 million in 275 individual SSVF grants to organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. The VA’s 407 SSVF grantees cover 400 of the 416 Continuum’s of Care across the country. Through FY 2015, more than 157,000 homeless and at-risk veterans and their families were served with these funds.

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. The HUD-published report “HPRP: Year 1 Summary” showed that only 2% of adults served by the program were veterans, even though veterans accounted for 16% of the adult homeless population in that year. SSVF was developed to address this unmet need.

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. In addition, it is a highly successful program; in 2015, 55,669 veterans served exited to permanent housing outcomes. Over the course of the program’s lifetime, 78% of all participants have exited to permanent housing.

At the 2012 NCHV Annual Conference, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki explained the “two-fold challenge” of ending veteran homelessness as “rescuing veterans who are already homeless while simultaneously preventing those at risk of homelessness from slipping into that downward spiral.”

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.

VA's prevention efforts are dependent upon the SSVF Program – the core of the department's future homeless veteran service delivery system. With a growing and unpredictable population of at-risk OEF/OIF veterans and the aging of Vietnam-era veterans, SSVF will be the workhorse of veteran homelessness prevention programs for years to come.

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 permanently authorize the SSVF Program, and maintain the funding levels necessary to keep existing SSVF coverage operational. The program is currently authorized at \$320 million through the end of FY 2017 by PL 114-228. SSVF will need to be both reauthorized and appropriated for FY 2018.

Because of an historical quirk in funding, there are 56 communities whose "surge funding" – awarded in FY 2015 – will expire at the end of FY 2017. To maintain the normal schedule of funding (\$300 million) and prevent the expiration of the surge grants (\$207 million over the next three years) **the funding for the SSVF program for FY 2018 must be no less than \$400 million.** A list of communities who received surge funding and who are at risk of losing that funding without an increased FY 2018 appropriation can be found at https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/ssvf/docs/SSVF_September2014_GrantRecipients.pdf.