



# NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

## Perceptions of Homelessness in Older Homeless Veterans, VA Homeless Program Staff Liaisons, and Housing Intervention Providers

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### Quick Takeaways

- Over 15% of the homeless are 51 years of age and older, and the numbers of homeless over the age of 65 are expected to double by 2050.
- The report identified 10 major themes from an analysis of the transcripts, four from the veterans’ focus groups and six from the VA staff liaisons and housing intervention providers.
- Compared with younger veterans, older veterans have less social support, greater employment challenges, more significant health care needs, and motivation to change.

### Summary

The researchers conducted six focus groups of older veterans, two focus groups, and one semi- structured interview of VA staff liaisons, and two focus groups and one semi-structured interview of housing intervention providers. The objectives of this study were to characterize the experience of older homeless veterans, to explore perceptions of homelessness in older veterans from varied viewpoints, to examine the factors associated with success in completing a transitional supportive housing program, and to identify approaches needed to ensure greater access to homelessness programs for older veterans.

All homeless veteran focus group participants were men aged 49 or over who were receiving transitional supportive housing from community-based housing intervention providers under the GPD program. This study area is important because over 15% of the homeless are 51 years of age and older, and the numbers of homeless over the age of 65 are expected to double by 2050.

### Findings

The report identified 10 major themes from an analysis of the transcripts, four from the veterans’ focus groups and six from the VA staff liaisons and housing intervention providers. The report provides detailed information on each of the major themes.

Veterans	VA staff liaisons and housing intervention providers
Negative homelessness experience	Strong belief that the transitional housing program has made a difference in the lives of veterans
Benefits of the structured transitional housing program	Individualized criteria to address the unique needs of veterans
Importance of peer outreach	Sharp differences between older and younger homeless veterans in terms of less social support, greater employment challenges, more significant health care needs, and motivation to change
Need for age-tailored job placement programs	Outreach services
	Permanent housing issues
	Coordination of services

### Conclusion

Compared with younger veterans, older veterans have less social support and greater employment and health challenges. Given their frequently difficult health care status, the report suggests that access to homeless programs for older adults could be enhanced by using media outlets that promote the connection between homeless programs and VA clinics/hospitals that treat geriatric health care needs. The programs could also be enhanced by alerting medical social workers to the needs of homeless veterans for housing accommodations, and by enlisting older veterans to conduct peer outreach in homeless shelters touting the benefits of VA homelessness programs.