



## **NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS**

*“Housing First Implementation Brief - April 2014”*

Montgomery, A. E.; Hill, L.; Culhane, D.P.; Kane, V. / [Full Report](#)

### Quick Takeaways:

- Between 2010 and 2013 number of veterans experiencing homelessness on a single night decreased by 24%
- The VA has officially adopted the Housing First approach for its homeless programs
- The Housing First model has been proven to maintain housing for chronically homeless veterans as well as reduce the costs of healthcare and emergency care
- There was an overall 32% decrease in VA healthcare costs once veterans became stably housed

### Study and Findings:

Working with the HUD-VASH program, 14 VA Medical Centers were chosen to participate in the Housing First pilot for the study. Through this pilot, 700 HUD-VASH vouchers were distributed to 14 Veteran Administration Medical Centers (VAMC) to assist chronically homeless veterans (94% of those admitted were chronically homeless). To assist with monitoring data, demographics and veterans' medical records were collected upon admission.

- Over 90% of the veterans were single males
- A majority served in Vietnam or post-Vietnam
- Equal percentages were black and Caucasian
- More than two-thirds were between the ages of 45-64 years old.
- Many (78%) presented with or were previously diagnosed with a mental health or addiction condition.

After being admitted in the program, on average it took veterans 136 days to move into permanent housing. Main restrictors for the time period were financial costs such as, security deposits and negative credit histories.

Of the 700 veterans initially admitted to the program:

- 84% (585) are still living in permanent housing.

Among 115 who left the program:

- 37% moved on to more “independent living arrangements”
- 20% were discharged to an institutional setting
- 30% became disengaged or returned to homelessness
- 13% died



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Using the medical records supplied at admission:

- The number of emergency room visits decreased by 27%
- Acute inpatient hospitalizations decreased by 33%
- Total number of hospital bed days declined by 71%.
  - An overall 32% decrease in healthcare costs to the VA once the veterans became stabilized in permanent housing.

### Summary:

Findings from this initial Housing First study indicate that once veterans were stably housed, many stayed housed along with decreasing their need for intensive medical care at the VA. It is noted that further studies need to be conducted to show if when provided with housing, healthy behaviors in veterans increase and total costs of services beyond the VAMC decrease. More research can also explore the long-term implications of Housing First and the negative exits within the program.

Source: Montgomery, Anne E.; Hill, Lindsay; Culhane, Dennis P.; Kane, Vincent. "Housing First Implementation Brief – April 2014." *VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans*. n.p., n.d. Web. 16 June 2014.  
<<http://www.endveteranhomelessness.org/sites/default/files/Housing%20First%20Implementation%20brief.pdf>>.