

# Ending Veteran Homelessness Indianapolis Action Plan

In 2010, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) introduced *Opening Doors*, the first federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. The plan set key goals that included ending homelessness among veterans by 2015. During the first five years of the plan's implementation, many partners came to the table to produce measurable reductions in veteran homelessness, including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and many local homeless service providers, the Continuums of Care (CoC), elected officials, faith communities, and others interested in ending veteran homelessness. In October 2015, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and its federal partners released the *Criteria for Achieving the Goal of Ending Veteran Homelessness* to create a comprehensive, consistent approach to evaluating whether a community has ended homelessness for Veterans. The Criteria, and the related Benchmarks, recognize that Veterans will continue to experience housing crises and focus on whether systems have made the necessary changes to make homelessness for Veterans rare, brief, and non-recurring.

In Indianapolis, the Veteran Homelessness Taskforce was formed, the Mayor signed onto the national initiative called the Mayor's Challenge to End Veterans Homelessness, and the Continuum of Care began planning to help create a path to ending homelessness for veterans. New funding came to Indianapolis from Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program. Providers worked more collaboratively to assure the most effective implementation of resources.

In December 2015, the Veteran Homelessness Taskforce began to outline the key action steps necessary to end veteran's homelessness in Indianapolis by July 4, 2016 and to be able to demonstrate the outcome by October 4, 2016. The primary emphasis of this action plan is to fill the gap in resources and coordination to effectively assure that the number of identified homeless each month is less than or equal to the number who wish to and receive housing and to change the system to align with the Federal Criteria and Benchmarks as well as local priorities. This plan was informed by research into best practices and across the nation as well as input from city and local stakeholders.

## **What are our goals?**

### Primary goal:

- Every identified veteran living on the streets or in emergency shelter is provided permanent housing within 30 days of identification, unless they choose to enter a long-term treatment program

### Additional goals:

- Serve all veterans regardless of time in service or type of discharge

- Assure a collaborative and coordinated response system to prevent and end homelessness among veterans
- Base our actions on evidence based strategies and our community results
- Evaluate and report our successes and challenges regularly to inform the community and to engage stakeholders to remove barriers or to leverage needed resources

### **How many homeless veterans are there in the Indianapolis area?**

The chart below highlights the homeless veterans documented through our Point in Time process:

Year	Number of veterans
2016	326
2015	389
2014	370
2013	320
2012	351

Although the number of homeless veterans has decreased slightly since 2015, the overall trend over ten years has been increasing. Veterans are more likely to have barriers such as mental health issues, substance abuse, and to be residing alone.

### **What do we mean by ending veteran homelessness?**

In this plan, ending homelessness is defined as having a system in place that prevents homelessness whenever possible and, when it cannot, implements strategies to assure that homelessness is brief, recoverable and non-recurring. The need for a coordinated homeless response system will continue to exist as veterans will face ongoing housing crises. Therefore, we seek to achieve the federal criteria & benchmarks for ending veteran homelessness as a community, a state which assures resources and services are available for all homeless veterans and a coordinated system to house all veterans experiencing homelessness as quickly as possible.

### **Who will manage this process?**

The Veterans Homelessness Taskforce will act as the steering committee, developing and managing an action plan to reach the federal benchmarks. This group has created and endorsed a definition for ending homelessness among veterans that will be used as a basis for measuring our success. For the purposes of this plan, we will define an end to veteran's homelessness as:

“Every identified veteran living on the streets or in emergency shelter is provided permanent housing within 30 days of identification, unless they choose to enter a long-term treatment program.”

This definition will allow us to serve all veterans currently homeless and provide us with guidance as we move forward.

### **How are we defining homeless veteran?**

For the purpose of this plan, a veteran includes any individual who has served in the military, including the National Guard and reserves, regardless of time in service and/or military discharge status. While many veterans experiencing homelessness are eligible for services through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA eligible”), others are not (“non VA eligible”).

### **Who is part of the Veteran Homelessness Taskforce?**

The Veteran Homelessness Taskforce is a team of nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and others whose goal is to end veteran homelessness, as defined by the community, by July 4, 2016 and to demonstrate it by October 4, 2016. The efforts of the taskforce are coordinated through monthly meetings, regular phone and email coordination, and the development and utilization of a Master List to identify and serve all homeless veterans in Marion County. The following entities are part of the Veteran Homelessness Taskforce:

*Intecare*

*Easterseals Crossroads*

*Indianapolis Housing Authority*

*Healthnet, Inc./Homeless Initiative Program (HIP)*

*Partners in Housing Development Corporation*

*HVAF of Indiana, Inc*

*Roudebush VA Medical Center*

*Horizon House*

*Volunteers of America- Indiana*

*Wheeler Mission*

*Coalition for Homeless Intervention and Prevention (CHIP)*

*United Way of Central Indiana*

*City of Indianapolis*

## What are the key action steps in the Action Plan to End Veteran's Homelessness in Indianapolis?

The chart below highlights some key action steps to end veteran's homelessness for Indianapolis:

<b>Ending Veteran's Homeless Action Plan</b>			
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Primary Responsible Organization</b>	<b>Status or Deadline</b>
<b>Establish a Steering Committee</b>	Establish the Veterans Homelessness Taskforce as the Steering Committee to oversee the end to veteran's homelessness	United Way of Central Indiana	Complete-4/1/15
	Identify chairs of the Veterans Homelessness Taskforce	Steering Committee	Complete-5/1/2016
	Define the end of homelessness in Indianapolis	Steering Committee	Complete-1/31/2016
<b>Create Master List of homeless veterans</b>	Establish HMIS protocols to allow for Master List creation	CHIP	Complete-3/31/2016
	Assure SSVF and GPD providers are entering ROIs into HMIS to generate comprehensive list	CHIP	Complete-5/1/2016
	Establish and implement VA protocols for participation	VA	Complete-02/01/16
	Increase shelter participation HMIS to create a more comprehensive list	Wheeler and CHIP	In Progress-12/31/2016 goal
	VA establishes training and launch timeframe for HMIS participation	VA	Complete-3/30/16
	Assess other gaps in HMIS data and develop a plan to ensure information for all homeless Veterans who sign a consent is entered on the Master List	Steering Committee	Complete-4/15/16
<b>Weekly case conferencing for homeless veterans</b>	Establish regular meeting times for case conferencing	Steering Committee	Complete-2/1/216
	Determine prioritization process for client evaluation and intervention	Steering Committee	Complete-2/1/16
	Evaluate success of conferencing process at monthly taskforce meetings	Steering Committee	Ongoing

<b>Establish coordinated entry for all homeless veterans</b>	Define how coordinated entry will work for veterans	Coordinated Entry Work Group	Complete-7/1/16
	Implement interim coordination process to ensure all veterans are identified and engaged	Steering Committee	Continued progress-7/4/16
	Facilitate the implementation of a coordinated entry process	CHIP	9/15/16
	Integrate coordinated entry efforts with CoC efforts	Steering Committee	12/15/16
<b>Use transitional housing as short-term bridge to permanent housing</b>	Educate and train all providers on Federal Criteria & Benchmarks approach to transitional housing and plan for integration into existing service provision	Steering Committee	Ongoing
	Ensure all providers offer clients permanent housing before transitional housing	Steering Committee	Complete-6/1/16
	Explore how "Bridge Housing" impacts move from transitional housing to permanent housing; Conduct agency trainings; Develop materials regarding Permanent Supportive Housing	Steering Committee	In Progress-8/13/16
	Continue to present permanent housing as an option for clients who initially choose transitional housing	Steering Committee	Ongoing
<b>Swiftly move veterans into permanent housing</b>	Analyze existing permanent housing resources against anticipated inflow to see if there are any resource gaps	CHIP, Steering Committee	1/31/2017
	Identify sufficient permanent housing	Steering Committee	
	Reduce housing inspection waits with IHA	CHIP, VA, Mayor's Office	In Progress-5/1/2016
	Establish an interagency Standard of Care for serving veterans (can be used with private landlords to secure housing)	Steering Committee	In Progress-Due 9/1/16
	Monitor number of Veterans housed every month with the goal of housing more Veterans than enter homelessness each month	Steering Committee	In Progress-7/5/16
	End chronic Veteran homelessness, ensure every	Steering Committee	In Progress-5/21/16

	chronically homeless Veteran who chooses not to go to PH is offered PH first		
<b>Identify and prevent at-risk veterans who are in danger of losing their homes from falling into homelessness</b>	Coordinate effort to respond to housing crises	Steering Committee	2/1/16
	Reduce number of veterans identified in the annual PIT count	CHIP	1/30/17
<b>Complete application to be certified as Ending Veteran's Homelessness</b>	Maintain 90-day status on ending veteran's homelessness as prerequisite to apply	Steering Committee	10/1/16
	Complete the application to USICH	Steering Committee, United Way, CHIP	10/25/16
<b>Strengthen Community Partnerships to Sustain Strategies</b>	Work with VA to strengthen partnership with community providers	Steering Committee	Ongoing
	Integrate the Veteran's Plan to End Homelessness into the other target population plans to end homelessness: Chronic, Youth, and Family	CHIP, Steering Committee	8/16/16
	Work with IHA to build/strengthen partnership	Steering Committee, CHIP, Mayor's Office	
<b>Strengthen the ability of community based providers to deliver services to veterans</b>	Create a streamlined veteran services resource guide for service providers that delineates client qualifications and referral process	Steering Committee, VA	
	Assess existing gaps in services that are related to veteran status	Steering Committee, VA	
	Implement training and technical assistance on best practices in serving veterans	Steering Committee, VA	In Progress- next event 9/14/16
	Work with community partners to house veterans that do not meet the HUD definition of homeless (e.g., couch surfers)	Steering Committee	