

**AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING**

Commission on Homelessness

Monday, March 7, 2016, 3:00 p.m.

Oxnard City Council Chambers, 305 West Third Street, Oxnard CA 93030

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT.** A person may address the Commission only on matters within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission. The presiding officer shall limit public comments to three (3) minutes per speaker. The Commission cannot enter a detailed discussion of or take action on any item presented during public comments that is not on the meeting agenda. Such items may only be referred to the Commission Secretary for administrative action or scheduled on a subsequent meeting agenda for discussion.

3. COMMISSION BUSINESS

SUBJECT: Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair for the 2016-2017 term.

4. INFORMATION/CONSENT ITEMS

SUBJECT: Minutes of Special Meeting of February 1, 2016 (001)

RECOMMENDATION: Approve minutes of meeting of February 1, 2016.

5. REPORTS FROM CITY STAFF

SUBJECT: Winter Warming Shelter

SUBJECT: FY 2016-17 Funding Process for Entitlement Grants

6. OLD BUSINESS

SUBJECT: Policy Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission discuss and formulate recommendations for policies and actions related to Veterans' homelessness and the Ten Year Plan to End homelessness; and authorize and direct the Chair to present the Commission's recommendations to the Homeless Committee and City Council.

7. COMMISSION BUSINESS

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF UPCOMING EVENTS

9. ADJOURNMENT

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and City of Oxnard policy, if you need special assistance to participate in a meeting, please call 385-8095 (TDD 487-2850). Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will assist the City in making reasonable arrangements to ensure meeting accessibility.

**City of Oxnard
Commission on Homelessness
DRAFT Minutes of the Special Meeting of
February 1, 2016**

On Monday, February 1, 2016, at 3:12 p.m. the Special Meeting of the Commission on Homelessness convened in the Council Chambers at 305 West Third Street, Oxnard, CA 93030. The following Commissioners were in attendance: Chair Peggy Rivera; and Commissioners Darlene Miller Gonzalez, Francine Castañon, and Francisco Jaena. Commissioner Lucy Martinez joined the meeting later. Vice-Chair Felipe Florés and Commissioner Susan Brinkmeyer were absent with excuse. City of Oxnard staff members present were Karl Lawson, Housing Department, who acted as Executive Secretary; and Officer Jacob Jundef of the Oxnard Police Department.

1. ROLL CALL

Roll was called and a quorum was deemed present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Gloria Delgado addressed the Commission. She stated that she was homeless, and asked the COH to act on her complaint that she had been discriminated against at the shelter. Chair Rivera and staff indicated that the COH was not an investigatory body, but rather had been created by City Council to provide Council with policy recommendations. Mr. Lawson indicated that staff had spoken to Ms. Delgado and to the police and to the parties whom she alleged had engaged in discriminatory acts; that the other parties' version of events differed substantially from Ms. Delgado's allegations; and that staff had referred Ms. Delgado to the Department of Fair Employment and Housing, the Housing Rights Center, and/or legal aid attorneys in the event she wished to pursue her claim.

Mr. Salvador Gonzalez addressed the Commission, recommending that they focus on the two primary purposes of preventing homelessness and reducing homelessness. Mr. Gonzalez urged the Commission to not pursue issues such as panhandling policies, and recommended that they direct their efforts towards the development of more affordable housing and other policies that will either prevent or reduce homelessness.

3. INFORMATION CONSENT

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF COMMISSION MEETING OF JANUARY 11, 2016

Commissioner Castañon moved approval of the minutes as presented in the agenda packet. The motion was seconded by Chair Rivera, and the motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Miller Gonzalez abstained.

4. REPORTS FROM CITY STAFF

A. SUBJECT: WINTER WARMING SHELTER

Mr. Lawson provided a verbal update on the operation of the Winter Warming Shelter at the Oxnard National Guard Armory. A total of 422 distinct persons utilized the shelter between December 1, 2015 to January 25, 2016. Of those, 52% identified Oxnard as their home and 19% from the City of Ventura. Fifteen percent came from other communities in Ventura County and the City of Santa Barbara combined. Another 12% hailed from other parts of California and other states. Staff responded to questions from Commissioners on the shelter operation. The Commission requested a breakdown of

the number of individuals who were veterans of the armed forces, and the number of those who utilize the shelter who had succeeded in obtaining housing. Mr. Lawson pledged to obtain and provide those numbers to the Commission.

Mr. Lawson reported that the cities of Oxnard and Ventura had together contacted the State of California Military Department to inquire whether the Armory could be made available during the daytime during heavy rains or inclement weather. On January 12, the Sacramento official in charge of the program for the statewide National Guard notified that absent a declaration of a state of emergency by the County, the Armory could not be opened during the day. Currently the WWS must be vacated every morning by 7:00 a.m., with re-entry not permitted until 6:00 p.m.

The Commission also received a report on the fundraising efforts for the shelter. Mr. Lawson noted that the article in the Ventura County Star of January 20, 2016 (Attachment No. 1 to these minutes) had generated an increase in donations, but that efforts continued to raise the \$50,000 goal that had been set to keep the WWS open through the month of March. Ms. Tara Carruth of the County Continuum of Care addressed the Commission and informed them that County Supervisor Steve Bennett had stated that he would support the allocation of additional County funding of up to \$10,000 if such proved necessary to keep the WWS open through March.

B. SUBJECT: FY 2016-17 FUNDING PROCESS FOR ENTITLEMENT GRANTS

Mr. Lawson reported that the first public hearing on the 2016-17 funding cycle for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership Act (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) allocations had been held on January 26, 2016; that applications for funding from service providers and other entities were due on February 19, 2016; that applicants will be interviewed by a proposal review panel between March 1st and March 3rd; and that the second public hearing before City Council had been calendared for April 28, 2016.

Chair Rivera urged the City Housing Department to set-aside some of the available grant funding for the purpose of a shelter for next winter. Commissioner Jaena noted that the Commission had previously enunciated its specific recommendations for funding in the resolutions adopted on December 7, 2015. Commissioner Castañon moved, and Commissioner Miller-Gonzalez seconded, that the Chair be directed to send copies of the COH's resolutions of December 7, 2015, with a cover letter. The motion carried unanimously. The letter, dated February 1, 2016 is Attachment No. 7 to these minutes.

C. SUBJECT: V.A.S.H. VOUCHERS

Mr. Lawson reported that staff had twice communicated with the Veterans Administration to invite a representative of the VASH program to attend the Commission meeting of February 1, but had not received any reply. Staff will extend an invitation to the VA to report at a future COH meeting.

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

Chair Rivera advised the Commission that she would be stepping down as Chair of and resigning from the Commission, effective at the conclusion of tonight's meeting. She expressed her gratitude for having had the privilege of serving the Commission and the homeless community for many years, and indicated that she would continue to be involved in advocacy efforts for the homeless. All Commissioners present thanked her for Chair Rivera for her outstanding service and expressed appreciation for her dedication. Chair Rivera also advised the Vice-Chair Flores had indicated that he would also be stepping down in order to focus his efforts on the low-income housing project that Habitat for Humanity is building.

Mr. Lawson indicated that the first order of business in the March meeting will be the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair.

6. STUDY SESSION

SUBJECT: VETERANS' HOMELESSNESS; TEN-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

Chair Rivera opened the discussion and Study Session on the topic of veterans homelessness and the ten-year plan to end homelessness. Commissioner Castañon spoke about the tendencies of landlords in the coastal counties and in inland counties to not want to accept vouchers for distinct reasons. She suggested examining the concept of providing landlords with a property tax discount in exchange for reserving a set number of housing units for VASH voucher-holders, along with concept of requiring developers to reserve units for voucher holders as a condition of being granted a permit.

Commissioner Miller-Gonzalez expressed her recommendation to provide support for developers, and to focus on developing more affordable housing for veterans. Commissioner Jaena opined that requiring mixes of income and affordability levels in the same development discourages development, and recommended allowing developers to be able to provide housing for one level of income in one parcel, and housing for lower-income, and supportive housing, in a separate parcel in another area.

Mr. Tim Hockett, of Community Action of Ventura County, noted that at one point up to 35% of homeless had been veterans. He noted that the strategies designed to end veterans' homelessness also applied to reducing homelessness in general, and questioned whether focussing on veterans created an imbalance between two classes of homeless (some viewed as deserving, some as undeserving). Mr. Hockett stated that any strategy needed all elements to be successful: supportive services, increasing affordable housing supply, maintaining an infrastructure for case-management, and developing sustainable long-term housing options.

Ms. Eileen Tracy spoke regarding inclusionary zoning and the state requirement 15% of affordable housing units. She recommended assessing impact fees rather than in-lieu fees, opining that the City's in-lieu fee structure has not produced sufficient low-income housing units. Ms. Tracy noted that housing that falls into the definition of low-income is actually too costly for most of Oxnard's poorer residents, and expressed support for encouraging more studio units to meet the need. She questioned whether current development policies discourage the production of studio units. Commissioner Castañon urged an analysis of the in-lieu fee structure to determine whether it is too high or too low, and requested that Community Development Director be invited to address the Commission at a future meeting.

Karol Schulkin, County of Ventura Human Services Agency, expressed support for obtaining voluntary buy-in for inclusionary housing from developers prior to construction, citing a recent case in Ventura where advocates had succeeded in achieving that. She invited the public to a grand opening of the Ventura Housing Authority's Castillo del Sol project, 3005 E. Main Street, Ventura, on February 18, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. That project includes five units for chronically homeless, and 10 supportive housing units.

Ms. Tara Carruth, Ventura County Continuum of Care, provided information on the C.o.C.'s recent hosting of a HUD Technical Assistance training focused on veterans housing. She noted that the objective of the Coordinated Entry system is to systematically identify the most vulnerable of the homeless to prioritize for provision of service. Ms. Carruth stated that the greatest challenge is the lack of inventory (housing units available to those holding vouchers). Chair Rivera urged programs to incentivize landlords to participate in the VASH and Section 8 programs.

Mr. Salvador Gonzalez addressed the Commission on a number of matters, noting the the number of unsheltered homeless veterans in Oxnard in the year 2014 was twelve, and urged the COH to maintain a broader focus. He stated that the state does not require a 15% set-aside, and that certain policies discourage inclusionary housing. Mr. Gonzalez noted that the City currently has approximately one million dollars in in-lieu fees, available for use as determined by the City Council. He recommended that the City examine which City policies might be an obstacle to reducing homelessness and to increasing the supply of needed affordable housing; that the City enact a density-bonus ordinance; and that the Housing Authority staff be more available and more responsive to landlords so as not to discourage landlord participation in the voucher programs.

7. NEW BUSINESS

SUBJECT: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON VETERANS HOMELESSNESS, AND TEN-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

At the commencement of this item, Oxnard Housing Director Arturo Casillas presented a Certificate of Appreciation of Chair Rivera for her years of service on the commission and to the homeless community. Following thanks and remarks by several Commissioners, Chair Rivera opened the discussion on the two topics which were the subject of the Study Session. Mr. Lawson distributed several handouts on veterans issues (included as Attachments No. 2 through No. 5 to these minutes), and a written submission from Commissioner Brinkmeyer on the Ten-Year Plan (Attachment No. 6).

The Commission engaged in a lengthy discussion on the matters presented. Staff and Commissioner Castañon named a number of states and communities that had achieved great success in reducing homelessness among veterans.

Commissioner Castañon recommended that the COH look to the system and policies that have been implemented by San Diego County, which have been cited as a model among all counties in California. She pledged to obtain and disseminate materials on the San Diego system prior to the next COH meeting. Commissioner Jaena recommended that the City focus on increasing the number of housing units as a way to increase affordable inventory.

Commissioner Castañon moved to continue the discussion of these two items to the March meetings, and Chair Rivera seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF UPCOMING EVENTS

The following events were announced:

Thursday, February 4: Oxnard Planning Commission Hearing on Oxnard Cultural Center site at 141 W. Fifth Street (location of the Transition-Aged Youth "TAY Tunnel" facility). At Oxnard City Council Chambers, 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 5: Women's Empowerment Workshop, Oxnard Heritage Cultural Center will host at the Center, Plaza Park, Oxnard.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Rivera declared the meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

(Draft Minutes prepared by Karl Lawson)

Oxnard warming shelter needs \$50,000 to remain open through March

By Claudia Boyd-Barrett

Posted: Yesterday 3:13 p.m.

A seasonal shelter for the homeless in Oxnard could have to close its doors earlier than expected because of a \$50,000 funding shortfall.

The West Ventura County Winter Warming Shelter, an overnight shelter at the National Guard Armory in Oxnard, needs additional money to stay open until March 31 as originally planned, city of Ventura Community Services Manager Peter Brown said Tuesday.

Brown said officials managing the shelter applied in November for a federal grant of up to \$75,000 administered by the state's Department of Housing and Community Development. So far there is no word from the state on whether the shelter will be awarded the grant. Even if the shelter does receive a grant, it could take a long time for the money to actually come through, he said.

In the meantime, shelter officials are asking the community for help in raising \$50,000, which Brown said would ensure the facility can continue to provide basic shelter and meal services until the end of March. If the grant request is successful, money raised from the community would still be put to good use at the shelter, paying for improved food services and supplies such as rain ponchos and toiletries, he said.

"We are doing the fundraiser to hedge against the possibility that we don't get that grant," Brown said. "If we do get it, how wonderful would that be that we both achieved our fundraising goal and got the grant so that we could provide an enhanced level of service."

Several entities pitched in with funding for the shelter this year. The county of

Ventura gave \$104,000, the city of Ventura provided \$44,000, and Oxnard approved \$50,000. Camarillo has also promised \$10,000. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul donated \$50,000.

Kevin Clerici, executive director of the nonprofit Downtown Ventura Organization, which is acting as fiscal receiver for the shelter funds, said almost \$5,600 has come in so far toward the \$50,000 fundraising goal.

If neither the grant nor enough fundraising dollars materialize, the shelter will be forced to close earlier in the season, Brown said. It costs about \$2,600 a night to run the shelter, he said. The shelter is run by social service agencies, city officials and volunteers.

Between 75 and 105 people are sleeping at the shelter each night, officials said. The number fluctuates depending on weather and time of the month, Brown said. Approximately 60 percent of the people seeking shelter are from Oxnard, around 16 percent are from Ventura, and the rest are from other parts of the county or from outside the county, he said.

Patrons receive a mattress, a hot evening meal, showers, breakfast and access to social service referrals.

Brown said the shelter also needs donations of specific items: individual oatmeal packets, cinnamon, raisins, sugar, coffee, socks, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoos and soaps, toiletry kits and rain ponchos.

Items "outside of that we really don't want because we don't have any storage over there, so we can't be overwhelmed with donations," he said.

Monetary donations can be made online at www.downtownventura.org/shelter, or by sending a check payable to Downtown Ventura Organization to P.O. Box 1414, Ventura, CA 93002. Items for donation can be taken any evening after 5:45 p.m. to the Oxnard National Guard Armory, 351 South K St., Oxnard.

(from the Ventura County Star, January 20, 2016)

VC Homes 4 Hero's Fact Sheet



"As long as there are veterans or veteran family members searching for shelter on the streets...we have failed in our duty to honor the commitment of the brave men and women who chose to serve." Senator Barack Obama, 2007

Definition of Homeless

Public Law 100-77, signed into law on July 22, 1987, known as the "McKinney Act," identifies a homeless person as one who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence; and who has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter, a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Why are Veterans Homeless?

In addition to the complex set of factors affecting all homeless individuals – extreme shortage of affordable housing, livable income, and limited access to health care – **a large number of displaced and at-risk veterans live with lingering effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse, compounded by a lack of family and social support networks.**

Recent VA data indicates that veterans are twice as likely as other Americans to be chronically homeless. In 2005, the VA Northeast Program Evaluation Center reported that male veterans are 1.3 times more likely to become homeless than non-veteran males; and female veterans are 3.6 times more likely to become homeless than non-veteran females.

Who are Homeless Veterans?

- 26% of homeless population are veterans.
- 33% of male homeless population are veterans.
- 15% served before the Vietnam Era.
- 47% served during the Vietnam Era.
- 17% served after the Vietnam Era.
- 67% served three or more years.
- 25% have used VA homeless services.
- 89% received an honorable discharge.
- 85% completed high school/GED compared to 56% of non-veterans.
- 46% are age 45 or older compared to 20% of non-veteran homeless citizens.

How Many Homeless Veterans Are There in Ventura County?

There are approximately 100 homeless Veterans living on the streets and in the riverbeds of Ventura County.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-5000

PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR PUBLIC AND INDIAN HOUSING

December 7, 2015

Dear Public Housing Authority leaders:

First Lady Michelle Obama recently released a video message to landlords across the country, calling them to action. Specifically, she urged them to join our effort to end veteran homelessness by making units available to veterans seeking housing with rental assistance vouchers. I invite you to view the message at <https://vimeo.com/144505787>.

I know you understand, particularly in tight rental markets, that it can be very challenging to find safe, affordable housing options for the folks who need our assistance the most. That includes the men and women who have served this country.

In 2010, President Obama released *Opening Doors*, the federal government's first strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness nationwide. Since the launch of *Opening Doors*, there has been a 35 percent decrease in homelessness among veterans, and the number of unsheltered homeless veterans has dropped by 50%. I know this impressive progress is due, in large part, to the partnerships formed at the local level and your commitment to the goal of ending veteran homelessness through the increased use of HUD-VASH vouchers.

PHAs have been awarded nearly 80,000 HUD-VASH vouchers since 2008, and as a result, housed over 101,000 veterans. Today, more than 64,000 veterans and their families are in safe, stable housing because of the HUD-VASH program.

But our work is not complete. We currently have an additional 6,000 veterans with HUD-VASH

vouchers that are searching for a home. I encourage you to *share the First Lady's message as you engage with landlords to assist these families, and as we continue to work together to end veteran homelessness.*

If you have questions about HUD-VASH or want to know more about best practices in landlord engagement, please contact your local HUD Field Office of Public Housing, or send an email to VASH@HUD.gov.

We thank you for all of your hard work and commitment on this mission to end homelessness for the brave men and women that have so honorably served this country.

Sincerely,



Lourdes Castro Ramírez
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Public and Indian Housing

★★★
**MAYORS
CHALLENGE**
TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS
★★★ IN 2015 ★★★

VETERAN



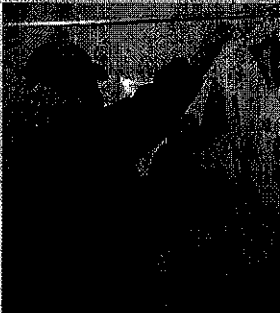
Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness set a bold and audacious goal to end Veteran homelessness in the United States before the end of 2015. Over the last three years, the Obama Administration and our partners in states and communities across the country have achieved a 24 percent decrease in homelessness among Veterans, during a time when our country was facing the worst recession since the Great Depression. Several communities, such as Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Houston, New Orleans and others are already on track to meet or beat this goal. On June 4, 2014, as part of the Joining Forces initiative, First Lady Michelle Obama announced that a growing coalition of mayors, governors, and county officials are committed to ending Veteran homelessness in their communities by the end of 2015, and called on additional mayors and local leaders to join this effort.



Through the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, mayors and other state and local leaders across the country will marshal federal, local, and nonprofit efforts to end Veteran homelessness in their communities. Ending Veteran homelessness means reaching the point where there are no Veterans sleeping on our streets and every Veteran has access to permanent housing. Should Veterans become homeless or be at risk of becoming homeless, communities will have the capacity to quickly connect them to the help they need to achieve housing stability. When those things are accomplished, our nation will achieve its goal.

To aid the mayors' pursuit of the goal of ending homelessness among Veterans, the Federal government has provided resources and information to help strengthen our country's homeless assistance programs. These resources and reforms, when implemented in local communities, can include:

- Using a Housing First approach, which removes barriers to help Veterans obtain permanent housing as quickly as possible, without unnecessary prerequisites.
- Prioritizing the most vulnerable Veterans, especially those experiencing chronic homelessness, for permanent supportive housing opportunities, including those created through the HUD-VASH program.
- Coordinating outreach efforts to identify and engage every Veteran experiencing homelessness and focusing outreach efforts on achieving housing outcomes.
- Targeting rapid re-housing interventions, including those made possible through the Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Services for Veteran Families program, toward Veterans and their families who need shorter-term rental subsidies and services in order to be reintegrated back into our communities.
- Leveraging housing and services that can help Veterans who are ineligible for some of the VA's programs get into stable housing.
- Increasing early detection and access to preventive services so at-risk Veterans and their families remain stably housed, and
- Closely monitoring progress toward the goal, including the success of programs in achieving permanent housing outcomes.



To publicly commit to ending Veteran homelessness in your community and learn more about joining the Mayors Challenge, send an email to mayorschallenge@hud.gov and visit <http://bit.ly/mayorschallenge>.



A joint initiative of Joining Forces, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

<http://bit.ly/mayorschallenge>



10 STRATEGIES TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

The goal to end Veteran homelessness is in reach and will require accelerated efforts from all partners to get the job done. To support communities as they progress towards the goal, USICH has identified 10 strategies that increase leadership, collaboration, and coordination among programs serving Veterans experiencing homelessness, and promote rapid access to permanent housing for all Veterans. Each strategy is accompanied by additional resources to help community leaders and stakeholders understand how to implement these strategies more effectively.

1) START AT THE TOP: RECRUIT YOUR MAYOR TO JOIN THE MAYORS CHALLENGE TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Mayors and local leaders are essential to securing and aligning the resources and partners necessary to end Veteran homelessness in every community. If your Mayor, County Commissioner, or Governor has not yet joined the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, they should do so. Joining the Mayors Challenge is a great way to solidify partnerships and to promote coordination and ensure accountability across all partners. The Mayors Challenge also includes criteria for success in ending Veteran homelessness that can help define the vision and the goal for your community.

Resources:

- [Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness Fact Sheet](#)
- [Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness Information \(HUD\)](#)

2) IDENTIFY ALL VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY NAME

By identifying Veterans by name, a community is able to ensure that they are effectively and efficiently serving all Veterans needing housing and homelessness assistance. A best practice has been to create a shared list of Veterans experiencing homelessness, created through data-sharing, assessment processes, and communication between the local VA Medical Center, the Continuum of Care, and other stakeholders. A VA Medical Center is able to share client-level information with CoC partners by asking the Veteran to sign a release of information (ROI) form that meets VA requirements. The community can then prioritize the list to match Veterans with the appropriate housing and services as quickly as possible.

Resource:

- [Best Practices: Sharing Information to End Veteran Homelessness](#) (HUD; includes link to VA ROI form)

3) IMPLEMENT A HOUSING FIRST SYSTEM ORIENTATION AND RESPONSE

By using a Housing First approach, a community can ensure that Veterans experiencing homelessness can move into permanent housing, with the right level of services, as quickly as possible. Individual programs and projects can help accelerate entry to permanent housing by removing as many barriers as possible for accepting applicants regardless of their sobriety or use of substances, poor credit or financial history, or past involvement with criminal justice system.

In addition, to truly embrace Housing First, a community should create strong and direct referral linkages and relationships between the crisis response system and rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing, implement a coordinated entry system for matching people experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate housing and services, and use a data-driven approach to prioritizing people with the most significant needs for housing assistance.

Resources:

- [The Housing First Checklist: A Practical Tool for Assessing Housing First in Practice](#)
- [Four Clarifications about Housing First](#) blog by Richard Cho

4) SET AND MEET AMBITIOUS SHORT-TERM HOUSING PLACEMENT GOALS

By setting concrete and ambitious short-term housing placement goals, your community can achieve bold outcomes around targeting Veterans experiencing homelessness and expediting entry to permanent housing. Many communities have established ambitious monthly, quarterly, or 100-day housing placement goals to break down the larger goal of ending Veteran homelessness into focused blocks of time and effort, while pushing their systems to perform with maximum efficiency and better outcomes.

These goals can be met by creating and sharing a community-wide list of Veterans, using a tested and validated assessment tool and process to prioritize and target interventions, using navigators and/or guides to address individual Veterans' needs and monitoring progress rooted in access to housing on a weekly or monthly basis.

Resource:

- [Best Practices: Sharing Information to End Veteran Homelessness](#) (HUD)

5) CONDUCT COORDINATED OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

Communities experience the greatest successes in providing permanent housing to Veterans not by merely waiting for Veterans to show up for help, but by proactively seeking out Veterans in need of assistance, sharing information across outreach teams and sites, using a Housing First approach to focus on permanent housing connections, and collaborating with other systems, including law enforcement, prisons and jails, hospitals, libraries, and job centers. Partnerships and collaborations between VA Medical Centers and Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) grantees and Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) grantees may have a powerful impact on improving care coordination and optimizing resources.

In addition, communities should develop a strategy for conducting ongoing counts of people experiencing homelessness – perhaps on a monthly basis – to identify new Veterans who are either in shelters or in places not meant for human habitation.

Resources:

- [Guide to Identifying and Referring Veterans Experiencing Homelessness](#) (USICH)
- [HCH-VA Collaboration Quick Guide: Joining Forces to Coordinate Care for Unstably Housed Veterans](#) (National Health Care for the Homeless Council)
- [Veterans Justice Outreach](#) Program (VA)
- [Assessing the Evidence: What We Know About Outreach and Engagement](#) (SAMHSA)

6) IMPLEMENT COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEMS

In order to use the resources that are ending and preventing Veteran homelessness effectively, individual programs and resources need to work together as part of a coordinated entry system that matches individuals and households experiencing homelessness to appropriate housing and services, based on a common and shared assessment process performed consistently across partners. Your community should consider using housing [navigators](#) that are assigned to specific Veterans and can negotiate and expedite the entry process into housing by providing assistance with paperwork, identifications, appointments, and other critical steps to create a streamlined process for getting into housing.

Resource:

- [Coordinated Assessment Toolkit](#) (National Alliance to End Homelessness)

7) DEPLOY HUD-VASH/SSVF EFFECTIVELY

Achieving the goal requires the efficient deployment and full utilization of targeted programs like HUD-VASH and SSVF. Continuums of Care can partner with VA Medical Centers, HUD-VASH and SSVF providers to ensure participation in the community's coordinated entry system, disseminate best practices, and remove barriers throughout the system so that when challenges related to the deployment of resources and performance of these programs do arise, strategies can be adjusted to increase the number of Veterans accessing permanent housing.

Resources:

- [HUD-VASH Best Practices](#) (HUD)
- [HUD-VASH Resource Guide for Permanent Housing and Clinical Care](#) (VA)
- [SSVF University](#) (VA)

8) IMPROVE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PERFORMANCE AND CONSIDER CONVERTING OR REALLOCATING RESOURCES INTO PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Communities can reach the goal of ending and preventing Veteran homelessness faster by seeking to help Veterans currently residing in transitional housing move into permanent housing as quickly as possible. Transitional housing programs can help speed up exits to permanent housing by using permanent housing and housing stability outcomes as the key measures of success, eliminating or reducing entrance eligibility criteria, and reducing lengths of stay.

H

Every community should also use the VA gaps analysis tool to determine the inventory of resources needed locally to end Veteran homelessness, including the amount and types of transitional housing. If your community finds that it has a larger stock of transitional housing units than are needed to house Veterans, it may wish to convert those programs into other programs such as permanent supportive housing or modify the program model to serve another function such as bridge housing. Options vary by funding source and regulations.

Resource:

- [Guide to Reallocating Funds in the CoC Program \(HUD\)](#)

9) INCREASING CONNECTIONS TO EMPLOYMENT

As President Obama said in the 2015 State of the Union address, "If you want somebody who's going to get the job done, hire a Veteran." Communities should work with employers to commit to hiring Veterans, including Veterans who have experienced homelessness.

Communities should also collaborate with Workforce Investment Boards and provide seamless points of referrals and contacts between the Continuum of Care, VA Medical Center, and workforce systems. CoC and VA case managers are integral resources in building referral relationships with supportive service providers, public system and can help navigate employment services and ensure that a Veterans' employment needs are met holistically. Some communities have utilized the Employment Navigator model, where a case management team helps families experiencing homelessness through homeless assistance and housing, workforce systems, and income supports.

Resources:

- [Partnerships for Opening Doors Summit Page](#)
- [Practice Guides for Employment and Training](#)
- [Top Ideas on Integrating Employment and Housing Strategies to Prevent and End Homelessness](#)
- [Guides for Service Providers](#) (National Coalition for Homeless Veterans)

10) COORDINATE WITH LEGAL SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS TO SOLVE LEGAL NEEDS

One of the major reasons Veterans experience homelessness is due to unmet legal needs. Civil legal services attorneys are essential partners in removing barriers to housing and employment by solving civil legal problems such as preventing avoidable evictions, navigating outstanding warrants, expunging criminal records, and securing targeted and mainstream benefits. Legal Services attorneys should also engage in systemic advocacy (to the degree allowable by law) to promote Housing First practices among public housing authorities and housing assistance programs. Your community should ensure that homeless assistance programs coordinate with legal services organization to address individual and systemic legal needs.

Resources:

- [Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable Toolkit \(DOJ\)](#)
- [Five Best Practices for SSVF legal services \(VA\)](#)
- [Homeless Experience Legal Protection](#) (Project H. E. L. P.)

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND STRATEGIES TO END VETERANS HOMELESSNESS, VISIT USICH.GOV/POPULATION/VETERANS.

Language proposed by Sue Brinkmeyer for consideration at February 1, 2016 meeting of the City of Oxnard Commission on Homelessness

The Commission on Homelessness recommends that the Oxnard City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness send forward to the City Council the following language for consideration as the Council adopts an overarching vision on homelessness:

1. The goal of the City of Oxnard is to have in place a systematic response that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.
2. The City recognizes that, to end homelessness, systems and resources must be in place to
 - a. Quickly identify and engage people experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their homes;
 - b. Intervene to prevent the loss of housing and divert people from entering the homeless services system;
 - c. Provide, without barriers to entry, immediate access to shelter and to crisis services while permanent, stable housing and appropriate supports are secured; and
 - d. Quickly connect people experiencing homelessness to housing assistance and to services tailored to their unique needs and strengths in order to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.
3. An end to homelessness cannot occur without the support of all sectors of the community, including government, service providers, faith-based organizations, businesses, community residents and homeless persons themselves.
4. Multiple models of service will be required to end homelessness, among which “housing first” and “rapid rehousing” strategies are primary, evidence-based practices; both of these approaches require access to housing that people living in poverty can afford.
5. Homelessness is a high-risk condition that has severe impacts on each homeless person and on the larger community.
6. Homelessness is a condition, not a character trait, and homeless persons should be treated with respect and be offered every opportunity to improve their lives.
7. Though it is not the intent of the City of Oxnard to criminalize homelessness, the City encourages positive community living behaviors and will discourage high-risk, illegal, and anti-social behaviors.
8. The City Council endorses the January 2013 revision of the “County of Ventura 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness,” and directs staff to report to council actions that could be taken by the City to further its 23 recommendations.

To the Honorable Members of the Oxnard City Council:

On behalf of the Commission on Homelessness, I wish to express our appreciation for the public hearing that was conducted by Council on January 26, 2016, regarding the Needs Assessment.

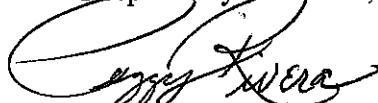
Please note that at the Special Meeting of the Commission on Homelessness of today, February 1, 2016, the Commission adopted a motion authorizing and directing me to submit the attached Resolutions to Council.

These Resolutions set forth recommendations adopted by our Commission following careful consideration and study sessions over the course of multiple meetings. Several of the recommendations set forth in those Resolutions refer specifically to entitlement grant funding, which is a primary emphasis of the Needs Assessment public hearing process. These recommendations are the product of considerable community input, expertise, and refinement by Commissioners and service providers.

Our Commission requests that you take these recommendations to heart and into consideration, when evaluating applications of funding for Fiscal Year 2016-17. We will appear at the second public hearing in April to offer input on the funding applications that will come before you at that hearing.

It has been a pleasure and an honor serving as Chair of the Commission. I thank you and wish you well.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peggy Rivera", written over a circular stamp or seal.

Peggy Rivera, Chair

Commission on Homelessness

February 1, 2016

Attachments