## Ending Veteran Homelessness in the Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care:
Progress and a Path Forward

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## Webinar Issues

- Participants are muted
  - Use the GoToWebinar Control Panel – chat/ questions feature – to submit questions
- Webinar presentation will be posted to COHHIO's website
- Webinar will be recorded and posted

## Webinar Overview

- Ohio BoSCoC context and background
- Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for ending Veteran homelessness
- Overview of work to end Veteran homelessness to date
- Ohio BoSCoC Policies and Procedures for a System Response to Veteran Homelessness

## Webinar Overview

- Progress on ending Veteran homelessness
- Path forward to achieve and sustain an end to Veteran homelessness

## Ohio BoSCoC: Context

- 80 non-urban counties in Ohio
  - Over 400 homeless programs and 7,000 beds
    - 12 SSVF programs serving all 80 counties
    - About 105 GPD beds
    - About 50 HCHV beds
    - Over 500 VASH vouchers
  - 3032 total homeless in 2016 PIT count
    - Including 207 total homeless veterans (18% decline from 2015)
- About $15 million in CoC funding

## Ohio BoSCoC: Context

- COHHIO provides primary staff support to the CoC
- COHHIO administers CoC's HMIS

## Definition of Veteran

- A Veteran is someone who, regardless of discharge status, has served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.

## Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving an End to Veteran Homelessness

- In 2015, US Interagency Council on Homelessness, HUD, and VA adopted criteria and benchmarks for what it means to end Veteran homelessness
  - https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/criteria-for-ending-veteran-homelessness/

## Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving an End to Veteran Homelessness

- An end to Veteran homelessness does not mean that no Vet will ever experience a housing crisis again.

## Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving an End to Veteran Homelessness

- And end to Veteran homelessness means that communities will have a systemic response that ensures that homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring event

## Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving an End to Veteran Homelessness

- The federal criteria and benchmarks help communities determine if they have achieved a functional end to Veteran homelessness
  - Criteria: ask whether communities have a system to make homelessness rare, brief, non-recurring
  - Benchmarks: measure if system is working effectively and efficiently

## Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving an End to Veteran Homelessness

Criteria
1. Community has identified all Veterans experiencing homelessness
2. Community provides shelter immediately to any unsheltered Veteran who wants it
3. Community only provides Transitional Housing in limited instances

## Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving an End to Veteran Homelessness

Criteria

4. Community has capacity to assist Veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing
5. Community has resources, plans, and capacity to identify and assist Veterans returning to homelessness or at risk of homelessness

## Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving an End to Veteran Homelessness

Benchmarks

A. Chronic homelessness among Veterans has ended
   – All chronically homeless Vets have been housed, or offered housing but declined
B. Veterans have quick access to permanent housing
   – Average time to house is less than 90 days

## Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving an End to Veteran Homelessness

Benchmarks

C. Community has sufficient permanent housing capacity
   – Number of Vets moving into PH is greater than number of Vets newly entering homelessness
D. Community has committed to Housing First and provides TH to homeless Veterans only in limited instances
   – Number of Vets entering TH is less than Number of Vets newly entering homelessness

## Overview of Work to End Veteran Homelessness to Date

Overview

• Intentional focus began in 2015
• Formed Homeless Veterans Workgroup
• Created Master List of currently homeless Veterans
• Drafted policies and procedures to guide overall CoC response to Veteran homelessness

## Homeless Veterans Workgroup

• All Ohio BoSCoC providers invited to join Homeless Vets Workgroup
   – VA funded providers and those serving more vets personally invited to join
   – All SSVF providers participate
   – VA staff participate (VAMC staff and VISN 10 Homeless Coordinator)
   – COHHIO staffs workgroup

## Homeless Veterans Workgroup

• Created initial Homeless Veterans Report (ie, Master List)
• Charged with ensuring compliance with the new CoC policies and procedures for Veterans
• Monitors overall CoC progress on ending Veteran homelessness

## Homeless Veterans Report

- Drafted preliminary Homeless Veterans Report and process in July 2015
  - Also called a *Master List* or *By-Name List*
- HMIS generated report (ie, all vets in HMIS participating programs)
  - Homeless vets not in an HMIS program are added by hand and given unique identifier

## Homeless Veterans Report

- A 'responsible provider' assigned to every homeless Veteran
  - Responsible provider serves as a housing navigator
  - Most commonly an SSVF provider

## Policies and Procedures for System Response to Veteran Homelessness

- P&P organized around achieving federal criteria
- Much responsibility for identifying and housing homeless Veterans rests with SSVF grantees
  - Although ALL homeless providers have some level of responsibility

## P&P: Identifying Homeless Veterans

- Street outreach teams coordinate with SSVF grantees
- SSVF grantees regularly outreach to non-HMIS shelters and TH
- CoC staff run HMIS Homeless Vets Report bi-weekly to identify newly homeless Vets
- SSVF outreach to providers with newly homeless Vets on the Report

## P&P: Identifying Homeless Veterans

- VA staff work with SSVF grantees and/or CoC staff to ensure their homeless Vets are on the Report
- All homeless Vets are assigned a 'Responsible Provider'
  - This provider serves as their navigator
  - Most often, this is SSVF

## P&P: Providing Shelter to Homeless Veterans

- Unsheltered Vets have access to shelter
  - All BoSCoC shelters must implement Housing First practices, especially related to eliminating barriers to entry
  - Where local shelters are full or are unable to serve the Vets household type, SSVF grantees may be able to shelter via hotel voucher
    - Shelters will need to contact SSVF directly

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## P&P: Providing Shelter to Homeless Veterans

- Unsheltered Vets have access to shelter
  - If a homeless Vet declines an offer of shelter, providers must continue to offer shelter at least every two weeks

## P&P: Housing Focused Systems and Providers

- The CoC provides PH immediately to all homeless Veterans who want it
  - Shelter & TH providers should *immediately* refer to SSVF, with Vet consent
  - SSVF has capacity to rapidly re-house every eligible, literally homeless Vet, but can also help facilitate connection to VA Supportive Housing (VASH) as needed

## P&P: Housing Focused Systems and Providers

- The CoC prioritizes use of TH as short-term bridge housing for homeless Vets
  - Homeless Vets are always offered PH (through SSVF-RRH at minimum). Homeless Vets should only enroll in TH where they explicitly request it and decline PH offer
  - Homeless Vets in TH programs are offered PH every two weeks

## P&P: Housing Focused Systems and Providers

- Non-VA funded RRH and PSH projects prioritize homeless Vets who are not VA eligible

## Progress to Date

- As of 8/29/16, 161 homeless Veterans in CoC (down from about 185 six months ago, and down from 207 during PIT count)
- 18% decrease in total homeless Veterans between 2015 and 2016 PIT Count

## Progress to Date: Federal Benchmarks

- 3 chronically homeless Veterans
- Average length of time to house is 52 days over past 90 days
- 112 Veterans exited to PH in last 90 days, while 111 newly entered.
- Of the 111 who became homeless, 11 entered TH for other than bridge housing purposes

## Progress to Date:
## Federal Benchmarks

- The Ohio BoSCoC has achieved 3 of the 4 federal benchmarks to demonstrate a functional end to Veteran homelessness
  - This achievement has been sustained for 2 months

## Next Steps

- Implement the Policies and Procedures for a System Response to Veteran Homelessness
- Continue to monitor progress on criteria and benchmarks (bi-weekly)
- Continue to convene Homeless Veterans Workgroup

## Next Steps

- Identify any gaps in identification of homeless Veterans in the Ohio BoSCoC
  - Providers and communities should notify CoC staff immediately if they believe homeless Veterans are not on the Master List and/or getting assistance

## Next Steps

- What we need from Ohio BoSCoC providers/members
  - Inform CoC staff of any gaps in identification of homeless Veterans
  - Inform CoC staff of any local barriers to getting homeless Veterans sheltered and housed

## Next Steps

- What we need from Ohio BoSCoC providers/members
  - Comply with the Policies and Procedures for System Response to Veteran Homelessness
    - Implement Housing First practices
    - Prioritize non-VA eligible Vets for your PH resources
    - Refer homeless Vets to SSVF immediately
    - If SSVF contacts you attempting to assist a Vet, HELP THEM to do so

## Declaring an End to
## Veteran Homelessness

- The Ohio BoSCoC will begin to consider claiming a functional end to Veteran homelessness when:
  - All four benchmarks have been achieved and maintained
  - Any gaps in identification of homeless Veterans have been identified and addressed

### Declaring an End to Veteran Homelessness

- Process to make a public declaration about achieving an end to Veteran homelessness:
  – Inform HUD field office, USICH regional coordinator, VA representatives of progress and possible future claim
  – Submit documentation of the claim to USICH for review and federal partner approval

### Declaring an End to Veteran Homelessness

- Upon approval of a claim that the Ohio BoSCoC has achieved the federal criteria and benchmarks for ending Veteran homelessness, we will make a public announcement

### Additional Information and Resources

- Information about VA resources for homeless Veterans in Ohio BoSCoC counties
  – http://cohhio.org/files/Summary%20of%20VA%20Homeless%20Resources%2C%20by%20county%2C%202016.xlsx
- Policies and Procedures for a System Response to Veteran Homelessness
  – http://cohhio.org/files/Ohio%20BoSCoC%20Homeless%20Vets%20P%26P%2C%20FINAL%207.2016.pdf

### Contact Info

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