

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
September 17, 2024
Denver, Colorado
9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Mountain Standard Time
Minutes

The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) convened a public meeting, which primarily focused on programmatic updates from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Federal agencies and community partners on September 17, 2024, in Denver, CO.

Committee Members -- Present

Brandon Wilson, ACHV Chair
Ann Oliva, ACHV Vice Chair
Dr. Toni Jackman
Wendy McClinton
Kathryn C. Monet
Dawanta Parks
Quandrea Patterson
Josh Protas
Darryl Vincent
Evonne Williams

Ex Officio Members - Present

Dr. Susan Black, DSW, LCSW-C, BCD, National Suicide Prevention Officer, Outreach, Transition, and Economic Development, Veterans Benefits Administration
Stacey Owens, MSW, LCSW-C, Military and Veterans Affairs Liaison, Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services
Yashika D. Neaves, Ph.D., Chief, Strategic Plans and Initiatives, Military Civilian Transition Office, Defense Support Services Center, Defense Human Resources Activity, Department of Defense

Committee Support Staff - Present

Anthony Love, Designated Federal Officer, ACHV, VHA Homeless Program Office (HPO)
Leisa Davis, Alternate Designated Federal Officer, VHA HPO
Felicia Vant, Special Assignment Community Engagement, VHA HPO

Other Attendees - Present

Kathy Freeman	Jana Lynch
Michael Harmon-Fields	John McLaughlin
Walter Craig	Tamara Wright
Gary Medina	Lucia Spinelli

Sheryl Anthes
Tracy Emmanuel
Shawn Liu
Marion Fera
Kathy Feehan
Monica Diaz
Chelsea Watson
Anna Bliasco
Anna Brunner
Rose Dunaway
Lauren Lapinski
Richard DeBlasio
Jamie Rife
James Bell
Tony Anderson

Deidre Knight
Jelessa M. Burney
Roosevelt Travis
Joaquin Clinton Vega
Steven Tillman
Julie Klein
Jessica Blue-Howells
Angela Kovack
Amir Farooqi
Sherice Robinson
Mary Mish
Sofia Vigil

Opening Session:

Brandon Wilson, Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Chair called the meeting to order and took roll call for the Committee.

Ann Oliva, ACHV Vice Chair thanked the presenters/attendees and provided a brief overview of the agenda topics that would be covered during the meeting.

Anthony Love, Designated Federal Officer, ACHV, provided an overview of Senior Leaders that will be presenting during the meeting.

Morning Presentations:

Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Program Office provided an update of what is currently happening in the program (goals, housing placements, grants, FY 2025 budget, encampments, and HUD-VASH vouchers).

Currently 43,000 Veterans permanently housed, the goal was 41,000 and was met one month early. Goal for Veterans not return to homelessness was 95%, currently at 96.3% Veterans not returning to homelessness.

New grants authority given \$26 million in legal services grants, with 10% of those grants going to legal services specifically for women Veterans. FY 2025 budget there is no change in special purpose funding from FY 2024.

Amir Farooqi, Interim Director/Chief Executive Officer, VHA Homeless Programs and Denver VA Medical Center provided an overview of their operational updates and commitment to understanding the unique needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness and at risk of homelessness to identify and understand challenges to develop plans, monitor progress and take action. In metro Denver, Veteran homelessness has been reduced by more than 30% directly due to collaboration and relationships with community partners.

In a moderated panel session, the Veterans with Lived Experience Panel (comprised of

one female Air Force Veteran and three male Veterans who served in the Marine Corps, Navy, and Army) shared personal stories and provided some opportunities for improvement.

Some common themes in the Veterans' personal stories:

- Veterans did not know they may be eligible for VA health care, were not given information about VA health care upon discharge, and they did not have anyone to assist them with applying for VA services.
- They did not connect to VA until 4-30 years after discharge when they were referred by family, friend, another Veteran.
- If they had information about VA programs (after discharge), they would have possibly contacted VA earlier.
- Mental health, substance abuse, and/or incarceration contributed to them becoming homeless.

The Veterans provided the following opportunities for improvements:

- Close the gap at discharge, providing information about next steps and available programs.
- Transition Assistance Program (TAPS) program, add a medical component to the information.
- Provide sober and health focused activities (consider adding a gym in VA facilities).
- Provide family members with knowledge and information on supporting Veterans discharging.
- Provide more collaborative VA and community outreach and prevention efforts.
- Provide targeted services to female Veterans.
- Provide assistance with navigating and enrolling into VA programs.
- Provide easier hiring process for peers and remove barriers.

Notably, they mentioned the following programs helped them the most:

- Intensive Outpatient Program
- Harbor Lights, Salvation Army
- Marion Indiana Rehab
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH)
- Grant and Per Diem (GPO)
- Group therapy through VA
- Coalition for the Homeless
- Hot Springs, South Dakota
- Church
- Veterans Treatment Court
- Peer Support Program
- Phoenix Sober Gym
- Veterans Exploration Therapy

Opened for Public Comments

- The following questions were asked related to the aging Veteran population:
 - Will the VA be looking at doing more to assist older Veterans? There is an increase in older Veterans looking for work because their income of either social security, retirement, or both no longer sustain their living situation causing homelessness.
 - Will the VA be looking into opportunities to be proactive to help these Veterans stay in their homes and increase their quality of life?
- Suggestion of bringing peers to speak with discharging service members to provide information.

The Committee recessed from 12:05 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. (Mountain Standard Time) for lunch.

Afternoon Presentations:

Jessica Blue-Howells, Deputy National Director, subject matter expert from the Veterans Justice Program provided an overview on the Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups (CHALENG) Survey for Veterans (including history, explanation of survey, categories, data collection, analysis, and data uses).

In a moderated panel session, the Denver Community Partners (Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH), Department of Housing Stability, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Denver Economic Development and Opportunity, Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC), and Continuum of Care Metro Denver Homeless Initiative) provided an overview of their operational updates and commitment to understanding the unique needs of Veterans experiencing and/or at risk of homelessness by working with VA and community-based partnerships to identify and understand challenges to develop improvements, monitor progress and take action.

The community partners work collaboratively to cover every dimension of Veterans' lives (housing, healthcare, benefits, employment, transportation, etc) in an effort to empower and support them so they can be successful in their communities. The community partners commended VA for improving collaboration and removing roadblocks and barriers previously present.

The following items were cited areas where assistance is needed: further empowering and strengthening of community and VA Medical Center partnerships, collaboration with different agencies, more flexibility with the definition of family, universal application and standardization for housing authority, funding to support various homeless programs, more project-based vouchers, workforce development with Veterans as a specific population for funding, more collaboration with Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), more resources and housing to support the needs of aging Veterans, increased mental health support, utilization of data.

Adjournment

Brandon Wilson, Chair, ACHV adjourned the meeting on September 17, 2024 at 3:30 p.m. Mountain Standard Time.

/s/Brandon Wilson
Committee Chair

/s/Anthony Love
Designated Federal Officer

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
September 18, 2024
Denver, Colorado
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Mountain Standard Time
Minutes

The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) convened a public meeting, which primarily focused on the ACHV Members presenting and voting on proposed recommendations for the ACHV Annual Report on September 18, 2024 in Denver, Colorado.

Committee Members -- Present

Brandon Wilson, ACHV Chair
Ann Oliva, ACHV Vice Chair
Dr. Toni Jackman
Wendy McClinton
Kathryn C. Monet
Dawanta Parks
Quandrea Patterson
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Other Attendees - Present

Michael Harmon-Fields	Sean Clark
Walter Craig	Jelessa M. Burney
Lucia Spinelli	Josie IPock
Matt DuFresne	John McLaughlin

Shawn Liu
Marion Fera
Tamara Wright
Hannal Lambert
Tracy Emmanuel
Elizabeth Louer
Richard DeBlasio

Madolyn Gingell
Dr. Gina Graham
De Carol Smith
Jessie Blue-Howells
Joaquin Cintron Vega
Allison Zmetra
Mary Mish

Opening Session

Brandon Wilson, Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Chair called the meeting to order and took roll call for the Committee.

Ann Oliva, ACHV Vice Chair thanked the presenters/attendees and provided a brief overview of the agenda topics that would be covered during the meeting.

Presentations:

The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) presented their proposed recommendations related to the following topics for incorporation in the March 2025 ACHV Annual Report:

- Enhance Veterans Justice Outreach Program
- Expand Veterans Justice Outreach to Support More US Native Americans on Tribal Land
- Awareness and Training for Predatory Practices Affecting Veterans Benefits and Services
- Deploy Peer Support into Transition Assistance Programs
- Adjusting Administrative Expense Cap Under Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) Regulations
- Participation with a Community Collaboration Initiative
- Prevention (Initiate Predictive Analysis Initiative)
- Prevention (VA Status Update on the USICH Prevention Commitment Policy Sprint)
- Geriatrics (Extend Utilization of Enhanced Use Leases for Geriatrics)
- Geriatrics (Enhance and expand aging services within the Permanent Supportive Housing Framework)

With the exception of the proposed recommendation related to Peer Support being tabled until the next Annual Report, the other proposed recommendations were approved (with minor comments). General feedback was provided on the proposed recommendations that included but not limited to:

- Modifying the proposed due dates to separate deliverables to provide sufficient time for VA to prepare written responses and consult with other key stakeholders
- Incorporating additional points for clarification to make the recommendation more clear/concise

- Identifying other key stakeholders that may need to be consulted

The ACHV will forward the Annual Report to VA in October 2024, so VA can prepare written responses to support their position to Concur, Non-Concur or Concur-In-Principle with the recommendations. The final ACHV Annual Report will be released in March 2025.

Summary of Committee Requests for Information and Responses:

The Homeless Program Office will work with the appropriate points of contact to acquire information and share them with the Committee. The next meeting will be held in Los Angeles, CA in April 2025. The meeting logistics will be published in the Federal Register in 2025.

Adjournment

Brandon Wilson, Chair, ACHV adjourned the meeting on September 18, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. Mountain Standard Time. I hereby certify, that to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes

/s/Brandon Wilson
Committee Chair

/s/Anthony Love
Designated Federal Officer