

JANUARY 2023

*The Homeless Programs Office (HPO) newsletter contains news and information about VA's ongoing effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.*



## Executive Director's Message | Around HPO

## Health Update | Staff Spotlight | Fact of the Month

*Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.*

## Message From Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office



Fred Rogers—best known from *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*—once said, "It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."

When it comes to Veteran homelessness, too many say, "It's not my problem." But not at VA.

VA homeless programs staff and our partners see the need and respond. And for this, I consider them my heroes.

Around this time last year, VA Secretary Denis McDonough shared his vision to create a national challenge that would re-invigorate VA's efforts toward ending Veteran homelessness with me. We agreed that focusing on permanent housing placements would yield impactful results immediately and prevent returns to homelessness for years to come.

Setting a goal to increase the number of national permanent housing placements by 5% felt ambitious—especially considering the continued unpredictability of the pandemic and the historic shortage of affordable housing across the country.

Still, Secretary McDonough and I agreed that with careful strategic planning, close collaboration—and most importantly—the dedication of VA employees, our partners, and the Veterans we serve—placing 38,000 Veterans into permanent housing by the end of 2022 was not impossible. It was what our Veterans deserved.

When Secretary McDonough announced the challenge last February, VA staff and partners got to work. Day after day, month after month, they put in the time, took on more responsibilities, contacted more landlords and community organizations, and conferenced with colleagues across the country to brainstorm new ideas.

Because they believed in our Veterans, our Veterans began to believe in themselves. And as a result, [40,401 Veterans were permanently housed](#) during the challenge.

[Read Monica's full message.](#)

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## Around HPO

### [Ending Veteran Homelessness Podcast: What the New Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Means for Veterans](#)

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) recently released *All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. On this month's *Ending Veteran Homelessness* podcast, hear Jeff Olivet, executive director for USICH, discuss how the plan will impact Veterans, what the plan aims to accomplish, and where the government is going next. [Listen to the full episode.](#)



### [HUD, VA Award \\$25.4 Million to Provide Housing Assistance for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness](#)

Along with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), VA has awarded \$25.4 million to provide housing assistance for Veterans experiencing homelessness, building on the investments that resulted in an 11% decline in Veterans homelessness from 2020 to 2022. [Read the full press release.](#)

## [HUD Releases 2022 Annual Homeless Assessment Report](#)

The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is an annual effort led by HUD to estimate the number of Americans, including Veterans, without safe, stable housing. It's one of the tools used to assess progress each year toward VA's priority goal of ending homelessness among Veterans. Read the full 2022 report [here](#).



## [Biden-Harris Administration Announces Plan to Reduce Homelessness 25% by 2025](#)

We achieved our goal of housing 38,000 homeless Veterans in 2022 – but we aren't stopping there. The Biden-Harris Administration has announced a plan to reduce all homelessness by 25% by 2025, and we're proud to do our part to support the cause through the work we do for Veterans. Learn more about the plan [here](#).

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## [Veterans' Voices: DoorDash, Zoomo Partner Up to Offer Employment Program for Veterans](#)

In an effort to assist Veterans seeking employment after life in the military, DoorDash and Zoomo partnered up to provide a unique pilot program to offer them training and a job. [Watch the video](#) to learn about the partnership and how it's creating opportunities for Veterans in Los Angeles.



## [All In 101 Webinar Recording and Slides](#)

[Watch this webinar](#) from USICH, which gives an overview of *All In*, the new federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. The presenters cover the current state of homelessness, how the *All In* plan was developed, how it will be implemented, and what metrics will be used to show success.

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## **Health Update**

Improving ventilation and filtration can help prevent virus particles from accumulating in indoor air and can help protect you from getting infected with and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

[The CDC recommends](#) spending time outside when possible instead of inside, as viral particles spread



between people more readily indoors than outdoors. Other actions that can improve ventilation and filtration include:

- Bringing in as much outdoor air as possible—for example, opening windows.
- Increasing air filtration in your heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system, such as by changing filters frequently and using filters that are properly fitted and provide higher filtration.
- Using portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) cleaners.
- Turning on exhaust fans and using other fans to improve air flow.
- Turning your thermostat to the “ON” position instead of “AUTO” to ensure your HVAC system provides continuous airflow and filtration.

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## HPO Staff Spotlight: Masaki Hirayama, LCSW



Masaki Hirayama serves as a legislative liaison for the VHA Homeless Programs Office, working alongside national leaders to impact legislation and shape policies that help organizations end Veteran homelessness. The work is meaningful to many, but especially to Hirayama, whose father once struggled to navigate the homeless system and get help.

[Read the full spotlight](#) to learn about how she worked her way up from making an impact on an individual basis to contributing to change at the systemic level.

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## HPO Fact of the Month

Did you know VA offers assistance that helps Veterans avoid eviction? If you or a Veteran you know is struggling to pay rent, utilities, or other housing costs, [learn about rental assistance and legal aid resources](#).



If in need of safe, stable housing, call the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-877-4AID VET (877-424-3838).

If other resources are needed, visit our [Housing Resources](#) page to access information on the full variety of available VA resources including [housing assistance](#), [health care](#), [employment programs](#), [mental health services](#), and [food security](#).