

Homelessness Among Veterans in Connecticut

What are the causes of homelessness among veterans?

The causes of homelessness are much the same among veterans as among the general population; the majority of veterans experiencing homelessness simply fall on hard times and end up without a place to live.

Many of the proximate causes of homelessness, however, are exacerbated by conditions that can stem from the stress and trauma of military service, such as mental illness, substance abuse, and social disconnectedness.

Thus, while veterans on the whole are more economically stable than the general population, veterans living in extreme poverty have a relatively heightened risk of becoming homeless.

How many veterans experience homelessness in Connecticut?

On any given night, over 300 veterans experience homelessness in Connecticut, representing about 0.5% of the 62,000 veterans experiencing homelessness on any given night in the U.S. Homelessness is a transient condition for most people who experience it, however, and many more veterans spend at least one night homeless over the course of an entire year. In Connecticut, just over 1,000 veterans experience homelessness annually.

Where are these veterans?

The vast majority of Connecticut's veterans experiencing homelessness are in transitional housing programs; others are in emergency shelters and a relatively small group are living on the street.

Generally, veterans experiencing homelessness are more congregated around the major services areas of New Haven and Hartford, but homelessness appears throughout the state.

What is being done to fight homelessness among veterans?

Federal Initiatives

In 2009, President Obama and former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki announced the goal of ending homelessness among veterans by 2015. Within the framework of a five-year-plan, the federal government has created tens of thousands of permanent supportive housing vouchers (HUD-VASH) and appropriated several hundred million dollars for homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing (SSVF) — all exclusively for veterans. These services are provided through regional VA medical centers — which also provide medical care, vocational rehabilitation, and other services — and hundreds of local non-profit organizations that serve veterans alongside other individuals experiencing homelessness.

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State Initiatives

Connecticut has long provided significant assistance to veterans experiencing homelessness through the Connecticut state Department of Veterans Affairs, the state Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and over a dozen homeless service providers specifically focused on the veteran population.

Last April, to help Connecticut reach the federal goal of ending homelessness among veterans by 2015, Reaching Home and the Connecticut Heroes Project (CTHP) launched a joint working group devoted to improving coordination between agencies and filling gaps in veterans services. The group's comprehensive strategic plan was released in late 2013, and in February Governor Malloy announced his administration's support for the mission. CTHP and the Governor are working in tandem with non-profit and government partners across the state to get to zero.



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