

## Legislative Report—Veteran Lottery Fund

On March 31, 2017, Governor Kate Brown called on the Oregon Legislature to support additional investments in veteran services and to provide a home for every veteran in Oregon. In the 2017-2019 Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) Legislatively Adopted Budget, a budget note directed \$1.5 million in lottery funds to Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) through Measure 96, which funds an array of veteran programs. Additionally, the budget note directed OHCS to work with ODVA to develop a collaborative plan for expenditure of these funds and to report to the Legislature in the February 2018 session. During the past 9 months, OHCS and ODVA have been collectively researching best practices, speaking with local, state, and federal leaders, and developing an interactive map of current veteran resources. In addition, OHCS and ODVA jointly hosted an Oregon Homeless Veteran Providers and Partners Convening in December 2017. The convening brought together more than 80 leaders from across Oregon. Informed by input from our partners, the Governor's leadership, research, and agency collaboration; OHCS and ODVA are jointly presenting to you an expenditure plan for use of the \$1.5 million in lottery funds.

This memo outlines the proposed expenditure plan that includes investments in technical assistance and outreach critical to supporting local efforts and building lasting infrastructure, while also contributing to essential homeless services and permanent housing opportunities. This expenditure plan is focused on initiating the development of a robust veteran homeless delivery system and permanent housing opportunities for veterans experiencing or at-risk of homelessness across Oregon. Additional focus will be placed on building local capacity and leadership, a system-wide analysis of community programs that serve veterans, the state's role in convening, the integration of multiple sector systems, better leveraging of state and federal resources, and community level technical assistance and consultation. OHCS and ODVA's action plan is based on U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) criteria, which is seen as the best practice when looking to end veteran homelessness. The USICH criteria have been the platform utilized by those states that have functionally ended veteran homelessness. These states are Connecticut, Virginia, and Delaware. The USICH criteria are:

- Identification statewide of all veterans experiencing homelessness;
- Statewide capacity to provide immediate shelter to any veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it;
- Utilization of service-intensive transitional housing only in limited instances;
- Statewide capacity to assist veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing and;
- Statewide sustainable capacity to serve and place any future veterans who become homeless or are at-risk of homelessness into permanent housing.

Our intention is to functionally end veteran homelessness based upon the USICH criteria. Functionally ending homelessness is defined as when the number of veterans experiencing homelessness within a community is less than the average number of veterans being connected with permanent housing each month.

Oregon is at a critical juncture, especially on the heels of the release of the 2017 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count that identified Oregon as having 1,251 veterans experiencing homelessness. This makes Oregon the fifth highest state in terms of number of veterans experiencing homelessness and one of only three states in which more than half of all veterans experiencing homelessness were unsheltered. We believe that Oregon can do better and that no veteran should be left without a place to call home. This expenditure plan will help us get there.

### Data Context

According to the Oregon Dept. of Veteran Affairs (ODVA) 2017 Annual Report:

- Approximately 310,333 veterans live in Oregon
  - 8.2% are women
  - 52% are aged 65+ (This population is anticipated to significantly increase over the next 10 years.)
  - 40% aged 35-64
  - 8% aged 20-34
  
- The Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) 2017 PIT count shows
  - 1,251 homeless veterans in Oregon (compared to 1,372 in 2015)
  - Veterans represent 9% of the total counted homeless population (13,953)
  - 90% of homeless veterans were men, 120 were women, 6 were transgender, and 3 did not identify as female, male, or transgender
  
- Of the total veteran homeless population
  - 53% were living in unsheltered locations, making Oregon the third highest state in rate of unsheltered veterans
  - 36% of homeless veterans are experiencing chronic homelessness (compared to 25% of the overall homeless population)
  - Oregon's Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC), representing 28 counties, had the third highest number of homeless veterans and fourth highest number of unsheltered veterans compared nationally to other balance of state and statewide CoCs

OHCS has an interactive database on homelessness, including veteran homelessness, which can be found on the OHCS website at:

[https://public.tableau.com/profile/oregon.housing.and.community.services#!/vizhome/InformationDashboardPITCount\\_1/Point-in-TimeCount](https://public.tableau.com/profile/oregon.housing.and.community.services#!/vizhome/InformationDashboardPITCount_1/Point-in-TimeCount)

## State Veteran Resources

OHCS and ODVA currently receive funding to provide a variety of services and housing for veterans. Both organizations share a commitment to ending veteran homelessness and have been charged by Governor Brown to reduce and functionally end veteran homelessness in Oregon. A map of current veteran resources can be found on the following OHCS website: <http://geo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ffc8c99e7daa4200825f52b3fa34852f>

OHCS has historically provided a broad array of homeless services to multiple subpopulations including veterans. In 2009, the state legislature (HB 2436) created a Document Recording Fee (DRF), which added a \$15 fee to recording of real property documents to fund affordable housing. In 2013, the legislature (HB 2417) added an additional \$5 to the DRF to specifically serve veterans. By statute, the fee is divided into three programs/purposes, each of which includes a set-aside for veterans:

- Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) – 10%;
- Home Ownership Assistance Program (HOAP) – 14%; and
- General Housing Account Program (GHAP) – 76%.

The EHA Veterans DRF program is administered by the OHCS Housing Stabilization Division's Homeless Services Section and delivered by the Community Action Agency (CAA) network. The HOAP Veterans DRF and GHAP Veterans DRF programs are administered by the OHCS Housing Finance Division. The EHA Veterans DRF program assists low- or very low-income veterans who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, to acquire and sustain stable permanent housing. These funds are awarded by formula to our CAA partners on a quarterly basis. Funds are used to provide services within multiple program components that include transitional housing, rapid re-housing, homelessness prevention, street outreach, supportive in-home services, emergency shelter, community capacity building, facility acquisition and rehab/conversion, and data collection. During the 2015-17 biennium, 813 veteran households (1,455 individuals) received Veterans DRF funded services.

ODVA's network of Veteran Service Officers (VSO) provide direct advocacy to Oregon veterans and their families. State and County VSOs and our National Service Organizations are the center of veteran assistance within their counties. They provide disability and pension claims expertise and are on the front lines of assisting in veterans homelessness efforts and housing stabilization. VSOs work within their counties to provide crucial efforts in the work to guide veterans to housing resources and also to provide the wrap-around services needed for long term stable housing.

In 2016, additional veteran resources were made available through the passage of Measure 96, which allocates 1.5 percent of net lottery revenues to support veterans. The Measure is expected to generate a total of \$18.7 million in the 2017-19 biennium, \$1.5 million of which is dedicated to support veteran housing and efforts to end veteran homelessness. The OHCS and

ODVA proposed investment plan for these funds is included below and was approved by the OHCS Housing Stability Council at their January 5, 2018 meeting.

### **Other Veteran Resources and the Importance of local Veteran Leadership Teams**

State resources are being leveraged with some local resources and significant federal resources, which include Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) resources. HUD-VASH is jointly funded by HUD and the Federal VA. HUD provides rental assistance to Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and the Federal VA provides services in the form of case managers through local VA Medical Centers, who provide housing placement and wrap around services. This program targets chronically homeless veterans and gives a permanent, long-term tenant-based rental subsidy to veterans, similar to the Housing Choice Voucher/Section 8 program. Implementation of this program takes strong coordination among the VA, PHAs, and veteran services providers and involves case conferencing and landlord recruitment.

SSVF is funded by the Federal VA and provides significant resources to local grantees all across Oregon. These grantees are primarily homeless service providers and CAAs, of which, over half are SSVF recipients. This program provides both homeless prevention and rapid rehousing services, and allows the flexibility to provide an array of support services. These services include, but are not limited to, outreach, case management, connection to VA resources, connection to mainstream services, and enhanced services such as temporary financial assistance, legal services, employment, and landlord supports.

Efforts to end veteran homelessness are most effective when the deployment of state, federal, local, and other resources are aligned in an effective and efficient manner. The implementation of these programs require the commitment of state and local leaders, a Veteran Leadership Team driving the initiative on the ground, development of a By-Name List of homeless veterans; and the engagement of philanthropy, business, volunteers, and veteran service organizations.

### **2017-19 Veteran Lottery Fund Investment Plan**

#### **Veteran Homelessness Integrator Position**

Total Investment: \$240,000

Hire a Limited Duration Veteran Homelessness Integrator to provide leadership for Oregon's initiative to end veteran's homelessness. Integrator staff will assist local communities through key stakeholder engagement (veterans, veteran service providers, landlords, housing providers Community Action Agencies, Housing Authorities, Continuums of Care, etc.) and partnership development designed to leverage and align resources, creating a streamlined homeless veteran service delivery system with shared performance metrics.

**Justification:** Governor Brown has directed OHCS and ODVA to end veteran homelessness. The 2017 PIT Count showed that 1,251 Oregon veterans identified as homeless. The challenge of meeting the Governor's directive is compounded by Oregon's affordable housing crisis and the multiple systems that impact homeless veterans. Research from United States Interagency

Council on Homelessness (USICH), shows that states who have ended veteran homelessness (Virginia, Connecticut, and Delaware) have designated staff whose sole responsibility is to lead the initiative by working with the multiple systems that serve veterans (health, education, corrections, workforce, housing, poverty, etc.) to ensure coordinated and streamlined service delivery and access, thus avoiding duplication and increasing effectiveness.

**Anticipated Number of Veterans Served:** The number of veterans served by the Veteran Homelessness Integrator is heavily dependent on the communities that are selected to receive the Community Technical Assistance and Consultation, as stated below. Work will be targeted toward ending homelessness for PIT count identified veterans in each of the selected communities. Once we have those communities selected we will know the number of PIT identified veterans we are targeting. Additionally, the veterans By-Name List will provide more comprehensive and on-going detail on the number of veterans experiencing homelessness in a given community. Once the By-Name lists are established in the selected communities, we will have very specific detail on the number of veterans that could benefit from the Veteran Homelessness Integrator. This level of detail will also allow us to closely track and report outcomes.

Initially, the Veteran Homelessness Integrator will focus a majority of their time in the communities selected to receive Technical Assistance and Consultation. The Integrator will also serve as a resource to all communities striving to build the infrastructure necessary to participate in future initiatives. The Integrator will provide resources, best practices and opportunities for peer learning in order to better position them for success reaching the goal of functionally ending veteran homelessness in their communities.

#### **Increased CAA Veterans Services Funding**

Total Investment: \$350,000\*

These funds have been allocated to the Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to provide a wide array of services to veterans who are homeless and/or at-risk of homelessness. Funds will be utilized in conjunction with OHCS's Document Recording Fee (DRF) Veterans funds and have the same service components and requirements as the Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) program. Allowable services include street outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing and prevention.

Leveraging the Lottery and DRF Veteran services funding with all funds, resources and services that are available to homeless veterans increases the likelihood of ending veteran homelessness in Oregon. The legislative investment of \$40 million into EHA and the State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP) will allow for service to a broader spectrum of homeless veterans, create the capacity for additional outreach and intervention, and strengthen linkages to on-going support such as veteran medical care, VASH rent subsidies, SSVF assistance, education benefits and disability compensation. These linkages are critical to long term stabilization of homeless veterans by creating a continuum of supports that go beyond initial services.

While federal and state resources dedicated to veterans are critical to ending veteran homelessness, there are gaps in services that may need to be covered by other resources. Not all veterans are able to meet the program requirements of the veteran-specific funding. Military discharge status is an example that can be a barrier for many veterans. Additionally, there are restrictions on the way that veteran-specific funds can be spent. For example, a HUD-VASH voucher can provide housing, but it does not cover the move-in deposit. There can also be a wait for HUD-VASH vouchers. While veterans wait for the HUD-VASH voucher or placement, other funds can be used to stabilize their housing situation. Flexible funding sources like EHA and SHAP are critical to closing service gaps and removing barriers so that all veterans can be permanently housed.

EHA and SHAP are also used to enhance the continuum of services required to meet the needs of homeless veterans. CAAs utilize these funds to support their coordinated entry systems. Coordinated entry is a process which ensures that all people experiencing a housing crisis in a defined geographic area have fair and equal access, and are quickly identified, assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and homeless assistance based on their needs and strengths, no matter where or when they go for services. In addition to providing more efficient and effective interventions for people experiencing a housing crisis, coordinated entry is a key part of the development and maintenance of a veterans By-Name list.

***Veteran Success Story:***

Terrance, a 70-year old homeless veteran had been sleeping in a tent when he was placed into shelter by a Yamhill Community Action Partnership (YCAP) client services team member. His case manager at the shelter managed to connect him with the local Housing Authority who provided him with a HUD-VASH housing voucher. He secured a beautiful apartment, telling his YCAP case manager when he moved in, "I felt that someone finally cared about me, other than my family." Terrance is a bike lover and now donates 15-20 hours a week at the YCAP Spoke House, working to fix donated bikes so that they can be given back out in to the community. Terrance said that it's his way of thanking YCAP and giving back.

**Justification:** Distribution of funds to OHCS's current grantees allowed for a quick investment in local efforts to reduce veterans homelessness and aligns with current DRF veterans funding.

**Anticipated Number of Veterans Served:** Based on 2017-19 CAA work plan submissions and historical data from the DRF Veteran services program, we anticipate serving 215 veteran households.

*\*These funds have already been distributed to the CAA grantees.*

## **Community Technical Assistance and Consultation**

Total Investment: \$150,000

Through a targeted technical assistance effort, OHCS will engage experts to assist local communities through their Continuums of Care and Community Action Agencies to end veteran homelessness. OHCS is researching potential contractors with extensive experience in assisting states and local communities to develop real time data on homelessness, optimize local housing resources, track progress against monthly goals, and accelerate the utilization of proven strategies. This investment will not only support local community efforts, but also create a lasting infrastructure for data management to make an impact into the future.

Initiative technical assistance and consultation will be available to local communities in coordination with Oregon's Continuums of Care. We anticipate that funds will allow for 10 communities to receive intensive assistance that includes national peer-to-peer convening and strategy development. Selection criteria will be established to ensure a balance between emerging and established local efforts to end veteran homelessness, address resource and geographic need, and encourage local leadership readiness. OHCS and ODVA are committed to working with the selected communities to guarantee a statewide dissemination of the tools and knowledge that come from the technical assistance, ensuring that all interested communities benefit from the technical assistance and consultation investment.

**Justification:** Regional and local communities are in different stages of readiness to end veterans homelessness as defined by USICH. To meet USICH national benchmarks, local communities will require increased knowledge and capacity to deliver the necessary assistance to veterans, engage key stakeholders including local elected leaders, and collect, enter and analyze the data necessary to direct investments and monitor progress. Both Virginia and Connecticut have utilized nationally regarded contractors to work on data improvements, such as creation of a Veterans By-Name list, and have functionally ended veteran homelessness based on the USICH benchmarks and criteria. Selected consultation will be a peer learning model that provides educational opportunities with communities from across the country to share ideas, goals, action plans, and solutions to overcoming barriers to successful implementation. The initial cost is \$10,000- \$12,000 per community. Our projection is that a minimum of ten communities would receive consultation and approximately \$25,000 - \$50,000 of the contract would be utilized to stand up a Veterans Homelessness Workgroup to support and pull together information from participating communities, track progress, and identify and address challenges to the goal of ending veteran homelessness. The membership will include national, state, and local experts as well as representation from the veteran's community.

**Anticipated Number of Veterans Served:** As stated with the Veteran Homeless Integrator, the projected number of veterans served under this category will be dependent on the communities selected. Once communities are selected, PIT count numbers for those communities will provide us with the detail on the total number of homeless veterans potentially targeted in each region. Additionally, establishment of a By-Name List of homeless

veterans will provide more comprehensive and on-going detail of real time veteran homelessness. This will also allow for better outcome tracking and reporting.

### **Permanent Housing for Homeless Veterans**

Total Investment: \$760,000

OHCS will create additional permanent housing for veterans who are homeless and/or at risk of homelessness. With the severe shortage of housing opportunities in many communities throughout Oregon, the creation of new affordable housing is a critical component of the work to place veterans in permanent housing situations. The legislature communicated a strong interest that a portion of the funds be allocated to permanent housing, which is a strategy successfully utilized by other states and jurisdictions to end veteran homelessness. Specifically, the funds will be added to an OHCS Multifamily Housing NOFA (Notice of Funding Availability). One opportunity could be to provide funding to an additional housing development project through the Veteran/Mental Health NOFA, which recently closed. If that opportunity is not available, we would add the funds to other NOFAs to be released early in 2018.

**Justification:** Oregon's current housing crisis has created an affordability gap for moderate and low-income households creating an even bigger barrier for homeless veterans with no and extremely low incomes. Research continues to show that long-term housing assistance reduces homelessness and is more cost effective than shelter and institutional care. Oregon has embraced the evidence-based practice that access to permanent housing is a first option and the provision of supportive services once homeless households are placed in permanent housing, is key to ending veteran homelessness.

**Anticipated Number of Veterans Served:** This investment will allow OHCS to fund an additional project application from the recent Veterans/Mental Health Housing. This will create approximately four new permanently affordable housing units for veterans in a rural area of Oregon.

\*OHCS anticipates funding a total of 75 new housing units for veterans through the recent Veterans/Mental Health Housing NOFA.

### **Key Performance Measure**

An existing key performance measure for OHCS is "Percentage of homeless households who exited into permanent housing and retained that housing for six months or longer". ODVA intends to adopt this measure specific to the veteran population for the purpose of quantifying progress toward functionally ending veteran homelessness.