

The Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee

Addressing Veteran Homelessness in Maine

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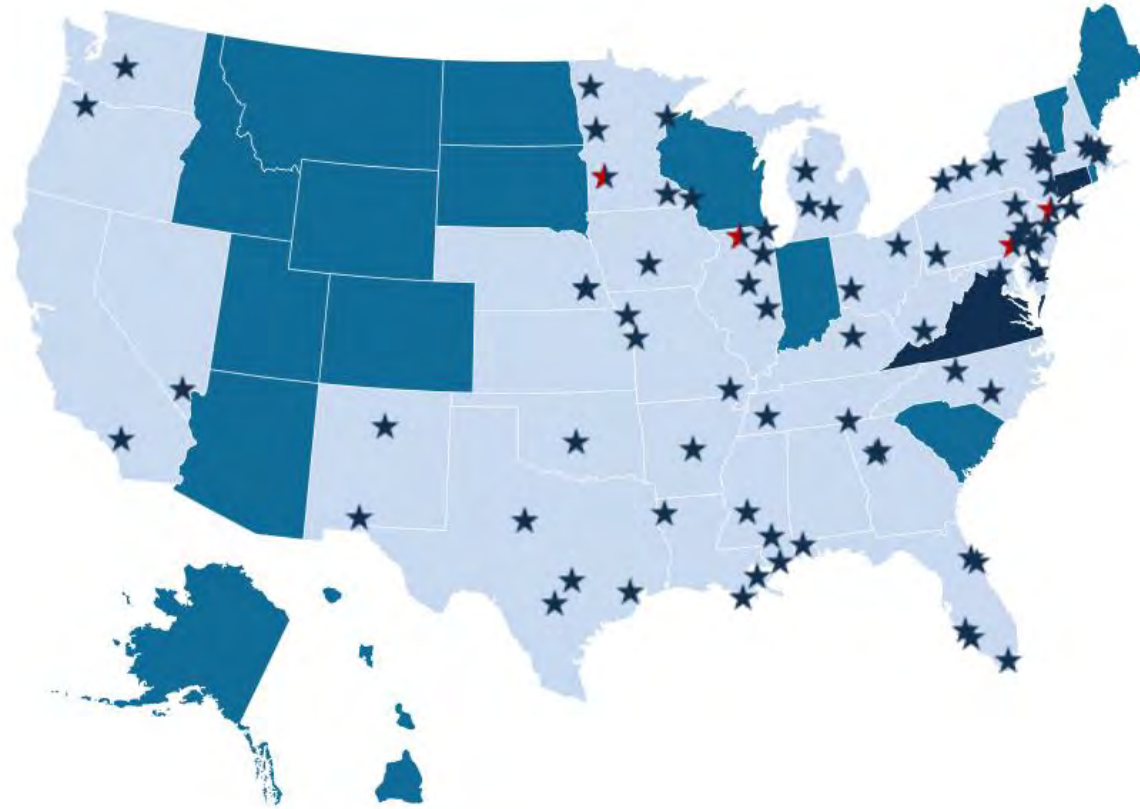
Chair, Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee

Tyra Parker

Vice President of Program Operations, Volunteers of America Northern New England



National Effort

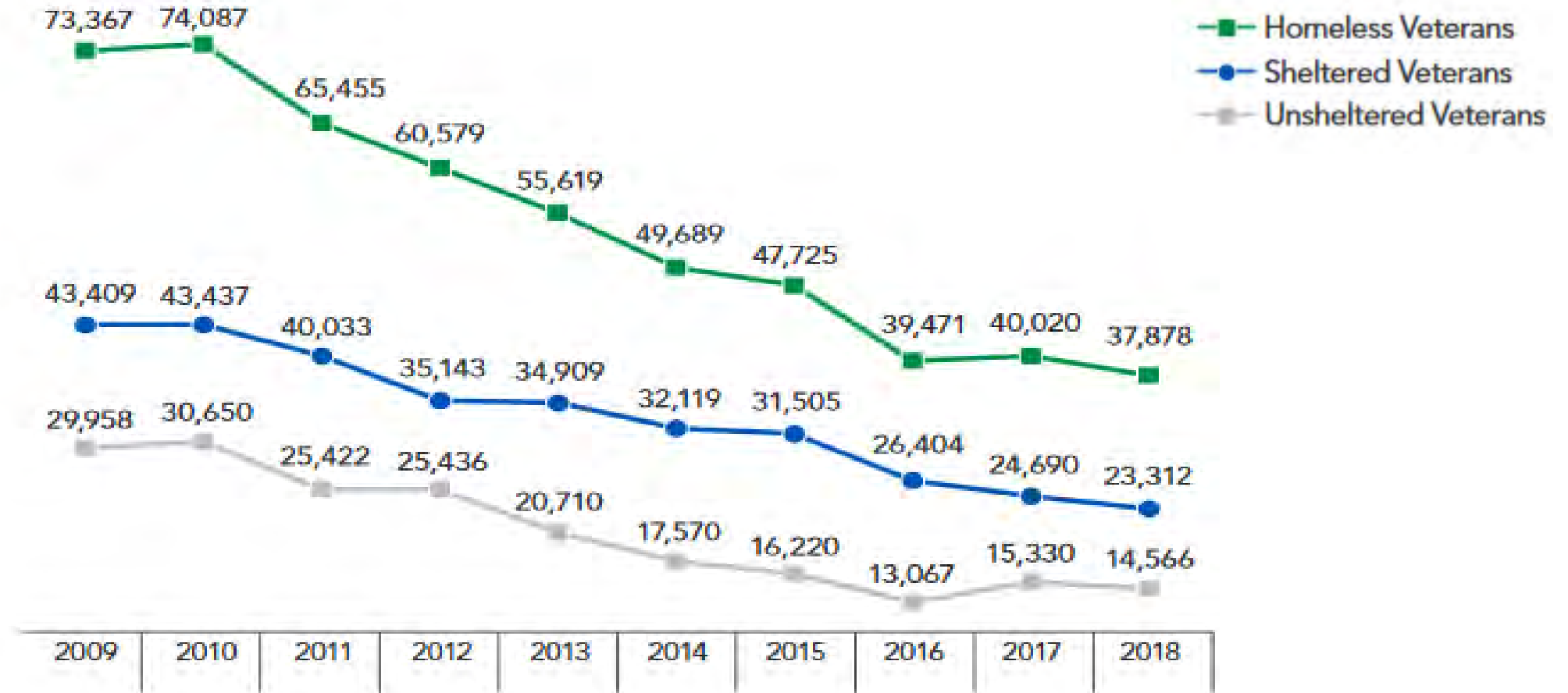


★ **77** communities and **3** states have ended Veteran homelessness

★ **4** communities have ended Chronic & Veteran homelessness

■ States that have at least one community that has ended homelessness

National Trends



Who We Are

The Maine Homeless Veterans Action Committee is a statewide alliance, united to ensure homelessness among veterans in Maine is **rare, brief, and non-recurring.**

Adopted in the fall of 2016.

Who We Are

Members include:

- Preble Street
- VA Maine Health Care System
- Easter Seals of Maine
- Veteran's Inc.
- MaineHousing
- Bread of Life Ministries
- Maine VFW
- Maine Bureau of Veteran Services
- Volunteers of America
Northern New England
- Betsy Ann Ross House of Hope
- Maine Elks
- Veterans with lived experience

What We Do

The Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee **operates, oversees, and works to improve** Maine's system to address homelessness among veterans.

Pre-ME HVAC Shortfalls

- Veterans completing intakes and screenings multiple times and regular movement between programs
- Veterans receiving duplicative services from more than one program at a time
- All programs serving veterans of varying vulnerability
- Under/over utilized programs
- Limited communication between programs

How We Do It Now

Our member providers closely coordinate with one another.

Close coordination of members = close coordination of services and resources for the veterans we serve.

Close Coordination

- All of our member providers meet weekly on a conference call we call **Case Consultation**
- In case consultation, our member providers are...
 - Celebrating move ins!
 - Sharing updated information about veterans experiencing homelessness.
 - Coordinating referrals and ongoing services in real time.
 - Sharing/Receiving information about available housing.
 - Ensuring newly identified veterans experiencing homelessness are promptly connected with services.
 - Troubleshooting challenges.

Close Coordination

What do we coordinate?

- Outreach: identifying veteran households experiencing homelessness
 - Staying in touch
 - “No Wrong Door”
- Data collection
- Services and resources

Forging New Partnerships

Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness

- A **call to action** for all mayors and other civic leaders to publicly commit to making sure that every Veteran who served the U.S. has a home in it.
- Civic leaders who have signed on to the challenge:

Congressman Jared Golden

Mayor of Auburn, Jason Levesque

Mayor of Westbrook, Mike Sanphy

Mayor of Portland, Ethan Strimling

Mayor of Brewer, Bev Uhlenhake

Mayor of Augusta, David Rollins

Bangor City Council Chair, Sarah Nichols



Increasing ME HVAC Membership

Some newer members include:

- RAM Property Management
- Maine Elks
- Maine American Legion
- Seeds of Hope Neighborhood Center
- **YOUR NAME HERE!**

Please contact committee chair Robert Marcroft at rmarcroft@preblestreet.org or 207-239-2795 if you are interested in becoming a member, learning about how you can help, or for more information.

Raising Awareness

Some of those we have presented to:

- Maine Military and Community Network
- IDEXX Laboratories
- Maine Sheriff's Association
- **YOUR NAME HERE!**

Please contact committee chair Robert Marcroft at rmarcroft@preblestreet.org or 207-239-2795 if you would like us to present to your organization.

The Numbers

- As of August 31, 2019: **103** veterans were experiencing homelessness in Maine.
 - **43** veterans experiencing homelessness in Region 1 (Portland, South)
 - **40** veterans experiencing homelessness in Region 2 (West of Lewiston on up to South of Bangor)
 - **15** veterans experiencing homelessness in Region 3 (East of Bangor on up to Northern Maine)

Ending Veteran Homelessness is a **solvable** problem.

The Numbers

Reducing Long-term Homelessness among Veterans:

Chronic Homelessness = 1 year or longer **OR** 4 times in the last 3 years, equivalent to 1 year of homelessness.

Month	Number of Veterans Experiencing Chronic or Long Term Homelessness
August 2018	17
September 2018	14
October 2018	14
November 2018	14
December 2018	14
January 2019	11
February 2019	11
March 2019	10
April 2019	8
May 2019	8
June 2019	5
July 2019	6
August 2019	4

The Numbers

Reducing Average Time Veterans Spend Homeless

The increase in the average amount of days from identification to permanent housing was due to a focus on the chronic and long-term homeless population this year.

Month	Average Numbers of Days until Permanent Housing
August 2018	93
September 2018	164
October 2018	141
November 2018	128
December 2018	129
January 2019	135
February 2019	130
March 2019	116
April 2019	110
May 2019	113
June 2019	100
July 2019	86
August 2019	85

The Numbers

- We currently house an average of **63** veteran households every 90 days.
- This past year, we identified an average of **78.6** veteran households every 90 days.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF VA MEHCS HUD-VASH PROGRAM AND VOANNE

VA MEHCS HUD-VASH:

- Screening of homeless Veterans to determine eligibility for the VA Medical HUD-VASH Program
- Identify the social service and medical needs of VA HUD-VASH participants and providing regular ongoing case management, outpatient health services, hospitalization, and other supportive services as needed throughout this initiative
- Submit application to VOANNE to complete referral for assistance under the PBV Program to Maine Housing once a Veteran is admitted to the program

VOANNE:

- VOANNE follows the Housing First model in alignment with the HUD-VASH Housing Assistance Program (HAP)
 - Veterans from the streets or homeless shelter
 - Not on the Sex Offender Registry
 - No convictions Meth Lab
- Accepting housing applications in person and via mail
- Informing VA MEHCS of upcoming HUD-VASH vacancies
- Marketing for all non-HUD-VASH units



CLIENT SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Successes:

- Currently have all 21 cabins full (everyone stayed the first year; average age 59; average rent \$359/month; 90% male)
- First year, only two situations where individuals had major lease violations and required high support services (and this was support not wanted or received from the VA Togus HUD VASH team)
- Four that left the cabins, there were no evictions:
 - Two individuals decided to get married and left their individual cabins to move into a large home in the community.
 - One who came from the living in the woods many years decided it was too isolating moving closer to the ocean (but not back to the woods)
 - One moved do to leasing violations but also to move off government grounds

Challenges:

- Ongoing clear communication with the VA Togus HUD VASH team, police and fire department
- Supporting Veterans with Mental Health diagnosis (VASH and NON-VASH) who do not want support services
- Building a community that works for a diverse population
- Transportation to meet the needs of residents

Veteran Homelessness is a **Solvable Problem**

We need our housing organization partners to be **flexible** on admission screenings.



Rigid Admission Screenings and Procedures

Veterans experiencing homelessness are coming up against:

- Mandatory application fees
- Rigid rental history requirements
- Rigid criminal history requirements
- Rigid credit requirements

All **major** obstacles to veterans securing housing



Application screenings are **not** foolproof.
Many veterans experiencing homelessness
will not have spotless backgrounds,
but **they are great tenants.**

Obtain the Support & Resources You Deserve!

Too often, property managers are on their own for screening applicants **and** if a financial or behavioral concern arises with a tenant.

Added Resources

Housing organizations gain access to resources they wouldn't otherwise have:

- An organized, coordinated group of providers
- Additional information: will help make more informed admission decisions
- Trained staff support: someone to call for help
- Professional help mediating and resolving issues with tenancy
- Professional support for tenants
- Financial safety net
- Support on Municipal, State, and Federal advocacy for policy change and funding

You can help!

If you know of a veteran experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity,
please call 211.

You can help!

If you...

- Are interested in renting to a veteran experiencing homelessness
- Would like to refer a landlord to us
- Are Interested in partnering with our committee
- Are Interested in joining our committee
- Would like us to present to your organization
- Have ideas you would like to discuss
- Would like more information

CONTACT US!

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Questions?

Thank You!