

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD OF  
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

**ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS**

**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**July 29, 2015**

**Introduction**

Chairman Isakson, Ranking Member Blumenthal, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement for today's hearing on veterans' homelessness. I commend you all for your tireless efforts to ensure that America fulfills its obligations to our current service members, veterans, and their families. The Department of Labor (DOL, or The Department) also works hard every day to ensure all veterans are prepared to meet their employment objectives.

Secretary Perez and I believe that one of the most important ways to prevent and end veteran homelessness is through a good job. However, employment is not the only factor in overcoming homelessness among veterans. Long-term stability requires a coordinated level of care between many federal partners, including the Departments of Veteran Affairs (VA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), state and local organizations, non-profits, and the private sector to ensure veterans are successful in overcoming the myriad of challenges to homelessness. To that end, the Department is committed to helping the Administration meet its goal of ending homelessness among veterans in 2015, as guided by *Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. In leading this effort, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has generated powerful national partnerships at every level to work toward ending homelessness across the nation. Currently, Secretary Perez serves as the Council Chair.

Through these interagency efforts and many others, the Administration has achieved historic progress. According to the HUD's 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, homelessness among veterans has declined by 33 percent from January 2010 to January 2014. Yet, on a single night in January 2014, there were still 49,933 homeless veterans. That is why the Department looks forward to working with the Committee in providing these brave men and women who serve our nation with the employment support, assistance and opportunities they need and deserve to succeed in the civilian workforce.

We also note that our partnerships throughout DOL extend VETS' ability to achieve its mission, and bring all of DOL's resources to bear for America's veterans, separating service members, and their families. VETS' mission is focused on four key areas: (1) preparing veterans for meaningful careers; (2) providing them with employment resources and expertise; (3) protecting their employment rights; and, (4) promoting their employment and related training opportunities to employers across the country.

VETS administers the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) to help homeless veterans reenter the labor force. The agency provides grants to state and local Workforce Investment Boards, tribal governments and organizations, public agencies, for-profit/commercial entities, and non-profit organizations to administer services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans. The HVRP program succeeds, not only because of the hard work and local connections of our grantees, but also because of the collaborative efforts of our government partners at the Federal and State levels. These efforts help ensure that homeless veterans receive a robust, comprehensive network of support.

HVRP's client-centric, hands-on approach has helped place thousands of previously-homeless veterans, some of whom were chronically homeless, on a path to self-sufficiency. Historically, the Department also has utilized HVRP funding for other grants designed to address difficult-to-serve subpopulations of homeless veterans: the Homeless Female Veterans and Veterans with Families Program (HFVWF) and the Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program (IVTP). In addition, the Department supports "Stand Down" events (described below) and technical assistance grants.

### **HVRP**

HVRP is one of the few nationwide federal programs focusing exclusively on helping homeless veterans to reintegrate into the workforce. HVRP is employment-focused; each participant receives customized services to address his or her specific barriers to employment. Services may include, but are not limited to, occupational, classroom, and on-the-job training, as well as job search, placement assistance, and post-placement follow-up services. Grantees under this program are competitively selected for a one-year award, with up to two additional option years, contingent on the availability of appropriations and grantees' compliance with the terms of their grant.

Grants like HVRP have helped homeless veterans like Edwin Sostre, a Marine veteran, in Pittsburgh, PA. Edwin moved to Pittsburgh after obtaining employment in 2010 but was laid off shortly after. He tried to make it on his own for about a year but had no local support kinship networks and ultimately found himself homeless. In 2011, Edwin and his two sons enrolled with one of VETS' HVRP grantees, Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania (VLP), which he found out about at a Stand Down event.

Through VLP, counselors worked with Edwin to help him obtain housing, and then helped him acquire employment as a security guard at the Monroeville Mall while he also attended the Community College of Allegheny County. Edwin completed the HVRP program, but still kept in touch with his Case Manager. Edwin graduated from the Community College in May 2015 and will start at VLP as a HVRP Career Advisor/ Case Manager on August 3, 2015. Edwin now wants to give back to those who were so helpful to him and to his fellow veterans who can see in his accomplishments a path to their own success.

### **The Homeless Female Veterans and Veterans with Families Program**

HFVWF are competitive grants that specifically target the subpopulation of homeless female veterans and veterans with families who are “at risk” of becoming homeless. As noted in HUD’s 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, homeless women veterans accounted for 10 percent of the overall homeless veteran population. The program provides direct services through a case management approach that leverages federal, state, and local resources. Eligible veterans and their families are connected with appropriate employment and life skills support to ensure a successful integration into the workforce.

### **The Incarcerated Veterans’ Transition Program Grants**

The IVTP was last awarded in FY 2010; those grants continued up through September 30, 2013, after which funds were not appropriated for the program. IVTP grants were designed to support incarcerated veterans who are at risk of homelessness by providing referral and career counseling services, job training, placement assistance and other services. For PY 2012, IVTP grantees enrolled 1,408 participants and had a placement rate of 63.4 percent with an average hourly wage of \$10.69 at placement. Funds have been made available for IVTP grants for FY 2015, and the 2015 Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act expanded the definition of the veterans eligible to participate in the IVTP program. Veterans eligible to participate in IVTP include veterans who are at risk of homelessness and are either residents of penal institutions, residents of institutions providing long-term care for mental illness, or were recently released from incarceration.

### **Stand Down and Technical Assistance Grants**

Through HVRP, the Department also supports “Stand Down” events. These events, typically held over one to three days in local communities, provide an array of social services to homeless veterans. Stand Down organizers partner with federal and state agencies, local businesses and social services providers to offer critical services, including temporary shelter, meals, clothing, hygiene care, medical examinations, immunizations, state identification cards, veteran benefit counseling, training program information, employment services, and referral to other supportive services.

A portion of the HVRP funding is used for the National Veterans Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC). The NVTAC provides a broad range of technical assistance on veterans’ homelessness programs and grant applications to: existing and potential HVRP, HFVWF, and

Stand Down grantees; interested employers; Veterans Service Organizations; and, federal, state, and local agency partners.

### **Program Performance**

In Program Year (PY) 2013, DOL received in appropriations \$36,187,711 for HVRP. With these resources, DOL funded 35 new HVRP grants, 90 option-year HVRP grant extensions, 22 HFVVWF grants, 14 IVTP grants, and 90 Stand Down grants.

In FY 2014, the HVRP programs received an appropriation of \$38,109,000 with which the Department awarded 37 new HVRP grants, 101 option year HVRP grants, 18 HFVVWF grants, and 66 Stand Down grants. These grantees are expected to provide services to 17,000 homeless veterans, with an estimated placement rate of over 60 percent, at an estimated cost per participant of \$2,200. In addition, to support grantees and disseminate best practices, the Department awarded two technical assistance Cooperative Agreements.

In June 2015, Secretary Perez announced the awarding of more than \$35 million in grants to provide an estimated 16,000 veterans with services through over 150 new and option year HVRP grantees, 12 HFVVWF grantees, and estimates 70 or more Stand Down grants.

HVRP grant recipients, including HFVVWF and IVTP, are measured against four performance outcomes outlined in our policy guidance. The performance outcomes are: (1) Number of Enrollments; (2) Number of participants placed in unsubsidized employment; (3) Placement Rate; and (4) Cost per Placement. DOL staff members work closely with grantees to help them succeed and to achieve their goals for all four performance outcomes. HVRP grant recipients also report on the average earnings for individuals who retain employment.

**Table 1. HVRP Participant Statistics, PYs 2012-2013\***

<b>Performance Outcomes</b>	<b>PY 2012</b>	<b>PY 2013</b>
<b>Participants Enrolled</b>	17,480	16,133
<b>Placed Into Employment</b>	11,317	10,226
<b>Average Cost Per Participant</b>	\$1,985.95	\$1,903.28
<b>Average Hourly Wage at Placement</b>	\$11.22	\$11.50

\* As reported in the Veterans' Employment and Training Service Operations and Program Activity Report (VOPAR) System, HVRP Program Status Report, including HFVVWF but not IVTP data.

### **Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)**

In addition to HVRP, DOL awards Jobs for Veterans State grants (JVSG) as a formula grant to each state and territory to support two types of staff positions in the AJC network: Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER). DVOP and LVER staff support HVRP grantees by helping grantees achieve employment goals through case management, direct employer contact, job development, and follow-up services.

DVOP specialists provide intensive services targeted at meeting the employment needs of disabled veterans and other veterans with significant barriers to employment, including homeless veterans. In addition, DVOP specialists often refer veterans who experience homelessness to other AJC services, such as the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Workers services and training. AJCs provided JVSG-funded services to 17,734 homeless veterans in PY 2013. LVER staff conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with local businesses to increase employment opportunities for veterans, and encourage the hiring of veterans, including homeless veterans.

The transition from WIA to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides an extraordinary opportunity to improve job and career options for our nation's jobseekers and workers, including veterans, through an integrated, job driven public workforce system that links diverse talent to businesses. While retaining the network of DVOP specialists at AJCs, WIOA strengthens accountability and transparency of outcomes for core programs, including establishing common performance indicators across these programs. The Department is considering the adoption of these new common performance indicators for JVSG and other VETS-administered programs, so that we will know with even greater detail the outcomes of our investments in veterans' employment and related programs.

#### **S. 425 – Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs Reauthorization Act of 2015**

The House passed H.R. 474, the "Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs Reauthorization Act of 2015," which would reauthorize HVRP through 2020. The Department is also aware of a similar Senate Bill, S. 425, which mirrors H.R. 474 expanding the eligibility for services under HVRP, to include not only homeless veterans, but also veterans participating in VA- supported housing programs for which certain rental assistance is provided and veterans who are transitioning from being incarcerated, as well as the addition of Native Americans who are veterans and receiving assistance under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act of 1996.

The Department supports the extension of the HVRP authorization to 2020. The Department looks forward to working with the Committee to provide technical information pertaining to S. 425 as necessary

As mentioned, H.R. 474 would expand eligible participants under HVRP to veterans currently receiving housing assistance under the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program and Native American veterans participating in the Native American Housing Assistance program who are otherwise not eligible for HVRP services. Under current legislative authority, approximately 78,000 veterans who participate in the HUD-VASH program annually are ineligible for HVRP's services because they are not, technically, homeless. The Department believes housing programs, such as HUD-VASH, are critical to the rehabilitation and success of homeless veterans because the availability of housing and health services improves their job readiness and employability.

Similar to H.R. 474, under S. 425, veterans who are transitioning from incarceration would also be eligible for HVRP's services. For veterans, having an arrest record is a major barrier to

employment and can lead to homelessness. VETS believes it is critical to begin delivering employment support prior to their release in order to better prepare them to secure civilian employment.

While the Department supports the goals of this legislation, these changes would mean a substantial increase in the eligible population. To accommodate these changes within existing funding, VETS would need to write the HVRP grant solicitations to establish service priorities for the program to reach those with the greatest needs and avoid duplication.

### **Conclusion**

We at the Department of Labor remain committed to the Administration's goal of ending veteran homelessness, and we look forward to working with the Committee to ensure the continued success of our efforts. Chairman Isakson, Ranking Member Blumenthal, and distinguished Members of the Committee, this concludes my written statement. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit a statement for the record.