

homeless veterans | facts

Veterans make up about 20% of Indianapolis' homeless population, roughly on par with the national average. This population represents people who have served in every conflict since the Second World War.

Veterans who experience homelessness have high incidences of mental health and substance abuse issues, often as a result of conflict-related stress, and high levels of physical disability, due to injury or illness. And, they may lack social support networks. According to the VA (www.va.gov):

- 45% of homeless veterans suffer from some form of mental illness
- 70% of homeless veterans suffer from substance abuse issues
- Two-thirds of homeless veterans served at least three years in the active military
- Almost 90% of homeless veterans received an honorable discharge

All of these concerns make it difficult for some veterans to easily return to civilian life after having served. Veterans facing the risk of homelessness also often spend over 50% of their income on housing related costs.



Female Veterans

As the percentage of women serving in our active military increases, so too, unfortunately, does the percentage of female veterans who are homeless. Recent studies seem to suggest that female veterans have a higher probability of becoming homeless than male veterans. Reasons for this higher risk include:

- Female veterans tend to be younger
- The incidence of sexual assault
- High levels of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- The presence of children without spousal support
- Female veterans tend to have a higher housing-cost burden

Interventions that work

As with many individuals and families experiencing homelessness, rapid-rehousing strategies, where people are moved as quickly as possible back into housing with some sort of housing assistance and/or subsidy, are very effective in keeping homeless veterans from experiencing long-term or episodic homelessness. Homelessness prevention strategies and housing subsidies are also important for this population. However, a sizable number of homeless veterans are experiencing critical barriers to success, such as serious mental illness and/or substance abuse, that the best answer for their situations is permanent supportive housing.

Housing subsidies

Permanent rental assistance is the most effective means for preventing homelessness. Funds to provide such subsidies are limited and waiting lists are long. Medium- and short-term rental subsidies can be effective, and studies show that veterans exiting shelter with such subsidies can often escape becoming homeless a second time. However, even the available short-term subsidies cannot meet the

need in Indianapolis. Waiting lists are long for all subsidy programs.

Permanent supportive housing

As opposed to transitional housing models, where there is a set time limit for an individual to live in the housing unit before they must find other housing, permanent housing is just that—permanent. It is their home, and not the property of a program or agency. This is important because it establishes safety and security without the upheaval of relocation or a housing search in the near future. An important feature of permanent supportive housing is a set of housing supports attached to the housing, typically including intensive case management services relating to the specific barriers each person may face, such as employment, mental illness, substance abuse, physical disability, education, life skills, and family supports.

What you can do

- Contact local leaders in Indianapolis, both at the City and State level, and urge them to provide more funding locally for programs that provide support to homeless veterans, particularly programs providing direct Prevention and Subsidies and Permanent Supportive Housing. Programs like the Indianapolis and State of Indiana **Low Income Housing Trust Funds** use local Indiana dollars to help provide housing supports to local people living on the verge of homelessness. Ask City leaders to make assistance to veterans—particularly prevention and housing subsidies and permanent supportive housing—a priority for federal funding allocations.
- Nationally, urge Indiana’s Senators and Congress-people to support expanded funding for national programs that help veterans, such as **HPRP** (Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-house Program) through the department of Housing And Urban Development (HUD) and the VASH (Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing) program through the VA.



How many veterans are homeless?

According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (www.nchv.org), there are 107,000 homeless veterans. This population is composed of veterans who have served from World War II to the current conflicts. Though research indicates that those serving in the late Vietnam and post-Vietnam era are at greatest risk of homelessness.

Veterans returning from the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq often have severe disabilities that are red-flags for the potential for homelessness. And still new challenges present themselves as times change: for instance, homeless women veterans are more common than in the past.

Contact CHIP at (317) 630-0853 or HVAF (Hoosier Veterans Assistance Fund) to find out how you can help end veteran’s homelessness in Indianapolis.