



## **NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS**

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### **Policy Statement: Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program**

WASHINGTON, May 25th, 2022 — The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is the nation's only employment program wholly dedicated to serving homeless veterans, most of whom have serious and multiple barriers to re-entering the workforce. Administered by U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) for over two decades, HVRP served roughly 14,700 veterans in 2020, with a national placement rate into employment of 61.6%. These men and women find employment at an average cost to the program of approximately \$2,000 per placement with participants' earnings at exit nearly doubling the program's internal targets.

In order for HVRP grantees to receive renewed funding, they must guarantee job-driven job placement and retention services for homeless veterans. This is not simply an employment assistance program. Veteran clients benefit from wrap-around supports, as most grantees also provide residential stability, health services, and personal and family counseling. Additionally, successful programs leverage local service networks without incurring extra costs.

There are no giveaways in HVRP – the program simply provides an opportunity for those who have worn our nation's uniform and fallen into homelessness to build the skills necessary to once again become gainfully employed and return to independent living as productive members of society.

#### *Why is HVRP critical?*

The issues facing homeless veterans fall into three primary categories: health issues, financial hardship, and a shortage of affordable housing for low-income individuals and families in most communities. HVRP is the most effective program available to address homeless veterans' financial issues by helping them become gainfully employed. Through roughly 150 relatively small investments in community-based partners, HVRP capitalizes on the benefits provided by existing service delivery systems nationwide and is in need of expansion.

Among the program's hallmarks are long-term follow-up – grantees must check in with and offer support to veteran participants after they enter employment – and a commitment to serve women veterans and veterans with families. A recent study by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) found that women veterans, who now account for almost 11% of the veteran population, are three times more likely to become homeless than their non-veteran counterparts.

HVRP serves three different categories of veteran populations: Homeless female veterans and veterans with children, Incarcerated veterans, and then all other veterans experiencing homelessness that meet the criteria. HVRP establishes a set of national goals for the overall

program. Each HVRP grantee plays a part in these larger goals by placing veterans in these priority groups into competitive employment at the local level.

In Program Year 2020 more than 12,000 homeless veterans were served in American Job Centers. HVRP served over 14,500 participants in 2020, down due to the pandemic from 17,188 in program year 2019), with roughly 10,100 being co-enrolled in American Job Centers. DOL is currently studying the overall extent of beneficial effects of the program when paired with other federal homelessness programs. Initial data from the pandemic had shown increases in positive outcomes for participants and decreased cost for both HVRP and the partnered program.

Especially because of the economic factors involved in homelessness, maintaining HVRP to provide job-driven employment training and placement is the best defense against a resurgence of veteran homelessness in the future. In recent years there have been calls to consolidate federal employment assistance programs. Due to its core link to Department of Labor resources and data, and unique homeless veteran target populations, however, HVRP cannot be incorporated into other programs without sacrificing its effectiveness and efficiencies. Furthermore, NCHV believes the program's continued administrative location at the Department of Labor is critical to its sustained success.

#### *What should Congress do?*

NCHV recommends that Congress reauthorize and fund HVRP at \$100 million. The HVRP program was last authorized at \$50 million through FY 2020 by PL 115-251. While NCHV applauds the most recent appropriation in of \$57.5 million, NCHV believes the need still outpaces the funding.

This highly successful, specifically targeted program should be expanded across the country and given a long-term, or better yet permanent, authorization. To this end, the authorization for the program should be raised to \$100 million and funds should be appropriated to match the new authorization.

Congress should also pass legislation that will extend the HVRP program to every state as not all veterans have equitable access to these services. Currently there exists two pieces of legislation in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress that if passed would address this need specifically. S. 3094 was introduced by ranking Member Jerry Moran (KS), and H.R. 5783 which was introduced by Representative Tracey Mann (KS - 1). NCHV urges Congress to act swiftly to make this language law.