

ZERO: 2016 Plan

Montgomery County

Background

- Zero: 2016 is a national effort of 75 communities across the country who have committed to **ending Veteran homelessness by December, 2015** and **chronic homelessness by December, 2016**.
- Montgomery County's Zero: 2016 Initiative, is a rigorous follow-on to its successful 100,000 Homes Campaign and builds upon these past efforts.
- Montgomery County will continue to use a Housing First model as the basis for its plan.
- The following plan is the result of collaborative discussions between Department Health and Human Services (DHHS) and key stakeholders including family and single adult shelter providers, Veterans groups, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) providers and others.

Who is a veteran?

- Montgomery County CoC Definition of a Veteran is any individual experiencing homelessness who has served on active duty in the United States Military, regardless of discharge status. The active duty requirement is not time restricted, which means that it applies to any length of service beyond training/boot camp. This definition includes persons who are not eligible for some homelessness programs and services provided through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Take Down Number

- Our goal is to house 56 Veterans who are Montgomery County residents experiencing homelessness into permanent housing by December 31, 2015.
- This does not mean that there will never be a veteran experiencing homelessness but, rather, that the community has reached sustainable functional zero.
- Functional Zero = Homeless Veteran \leq Veteran Monthly Housing Placement Average



Take Down Number

The goal or “take down number” is based on the following:

1. the current number of homeless Veterans who have been identified in the County’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS),
2. the 2015 annual Point-in-Time Survey, (24 veterans identified)
3. by the Department of Veterans Affairs staff working at the Veterans One-Stop Center located in the Montgomery County Crisis Center, and
4. by the staff of the regional Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) contractors as being connected to Montgomery County.

In addition to the number of homeless Veterans in the County who have previously been identified through these sources, a projection of the number of Veterans who will become homeless during the course of 2015 has been developed using both national trends as well as past experience specific to Montgomery County.



National Guidelines for Projecting Housing Placement for Homeless Veterans

Chronically Homeless – 33%		Episodic and Short Term Homeless – 67%		
Need Permanent Supportive Housing		Do Not Need Permanent Supportive Housing		
VA eligible - 85%	not VA eligible - 15%	Rapid Rehousing, VA Eligible – 37.5%	Rapid Rehousing and Other Housing, Not VA Eligible– 37.5 %	Self-Resolving – 25%
Montgomery County Projected Targets Based on Available Data				
7 – VASH (VA)	12 - County	14 – SSVF (VA)	14 – County	9 - No intervention necessary

Master List

- Using this definition, a master list of all persons identified as Veterans and are currently homeless in Montgomery County has been developed.
- The list is updated regularly – in most cases, daily in order to ensure it has the most up-to-date information on veterans in our community.
- The Master List is not a waiting list; veterans on this list may already be accessing programs, waiting for a housing unit, or may self-resolve their homelessness.
- This list is meant to get the key partners involved in ending veteran homelessness in our community.

Prioritization Of Existing Housing Resources for Homeless Veterans

- The Montgomery County CoC has developed a coordinated entry system and written standards for access to housing resources to assure transparent and uniform decision-making when assessing need and referring persons to housing.
- The Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization and Decision Assessment Tool (VI-SPDAT) is used to assess individuals who are in need of housing intervention(s) and
- The locally-developed Housing Options Targeting Tool is used to assess families.
- The CoC will prioritize Veterans over non-veterans when referring individuals and families to permanent housing options.

Federal Housing Resources

HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (VASH)

- The HUD-VASH, which is a Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) which provides long-term rental assistance vouchers and social services specifically targeted to homeless veterans.

Supportive Service for Veteran Families Program (SSVF)

- The SSVF which provides time-limited financial and supportive services to individuals and families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness to enable them to quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness.



New Resources

- As part of Montgomery County's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget, an appropriation in the amount of \$500,000 was approved to provide housing and supportive services to homeless Veterans in the County. This will be funding two new programs, a permanent supportive housing program to be operated by the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless (MCCH), and a rapid rehousing program to be operated by Bethesda Cares.
- The Housing Opportunities Commission has committed 10 Housing Subsidy Vouchers to be used by the MCCH program.

New Housing Resources

MCCH's Operation Homecoming (Permanent Supportive Housing Program)

- Operation Homecoming is targeted to 20 Veterans, who may or may not have documented disabilities, but have significant behavioral health, medical, or other significant barriers that will require ongoing rental assistance and social services support.

Bethesda Cares' Veterans Rapid Re-Housing Program

- Bethesda Cares' program is targeted to 15 Veterans who need assistance in obtaining housing, short or medium term assistance with rental payments, and some time-limited social services support.



Gaps

- Lack of affordable and diversified housing stock in general, and particularly for seniors, especially those who may need some level of assisted living
- Barriers for persons with limited or no income to access the affordable and supportive housing which is currently available.
- Lack of ability to quickly access affordable housing for populations such as domestic violence victims
- Resources for programs providing models to assist in ending intergenerational poverty.
- Programming focused on long-term economic security.

Sustainability

The following strategies will be used to sustain the efforts of ending Veteran homelessness:

- Continuing to serve Veterans with the Housing First approach and provide individualized pathways to permanent housing.
- Reducing the unsheltered status and minimize the time spent being homeless.
- Improving access to mainstream benefit programs, such as Social Security disability benefits and Veteran benefits.
- Providing prevention assistance includes but is not limited to rental and utility assistance; down payment assistance; legal assistance; employment assistance; vocation assistance; mental health and substance abuse assistance; and housing counseling.

Short Term Action Steps

Action Steps that are currently in process:

- Change Assessment Process - Uniform adoption of the VI-SPDAT as the referral tool, and use County's assessment as a case management tool
- Adding the Department of Veterans Affairs to Montgomery County's HMIS.
- Call for Action for Landlords and PSH providers to work to provide housing for individuals identified through the updated Housing Prioritization List.
- Publicizing to the community the progress towards the housing placement goals – will be regularly communicated out through the Housing Prioritization Committee, and will also be publicly tracked through a website dashboard

Current Status

23 Veterans Housed this year as of
August 31, 2015!