

VA Homeless Programs FY 2013 Appropriations Update, July 2012

The fiscal year (FY) 2013 Budget Proposal by the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) includes increases for VA homeless assistance programs that, while modest in amount, would have a **powerful impact in reducing the number of veterans living on the street**. VA's proposal is estimated to represent what is needed in the upcoming year to stay on target with VA's plan to end veteran homelessness by 2015.

The most significant increase within the Budget Proposal is for the **Supportive Service for Veteran Families (SSVF)** program. The request also includes case management for an additional 10,000 joint Department of Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing (**HUD-VASH**) vouchers, as well as continued funding of the **Grant and Per Diem (GPD)** program.

SSVF Overview

SSVF provides the missing piece in VA's range of interventions for homeless veterans: cost-effective homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing services. SSVF complements more intensive models for veterans with higher needs, including GPD transitional housing and permanent supportive housing through HUD-VASH. It is intended to be a short-term intervention that will help veterans and their families keep, or rapidly move to, permanent housing. Grants go to nonprofit community-based organizations, which provide low-income families with case management and direct supportive services, including rental assistance, links with employment services, and assistance with utilities, child care costs, and other housing-related expenses.

The program is targeted toward veterans (including single, unaccompanied veterans) and their families who are facing imminent eviction, or who are currently homeless. Eligible veterans are identified through outreach and referrals. Rapid re-housing and prevention have, for a very low cost, proven effective at ensuring stable housing for individuals and families who do not require the intensive assistance provided by the GPD and HUD-VASH programs. SSVF has already been implemented, although at a smaller scale, in communities across the country, with excellent results. Bringing the SSVF program to scale will put VA within reach of its goal to eradicate homelessness among those who served our country.

Current Status

Both the full House and the Senate Appropriations Committee have approved FY 2013 appropriations bills that include a total of \$1.35 billion for VA's targeted homeless veteran programs, including \$300 million for SSVF to provide assistance to an estimated 67,000 veteran families. To date, Congress has already provided SSVF funding for approximately 35,200 families as follows:

- FY 2011: \$60 million – approximately 13,200 veteran families
- FY 2012: \$100 million – approximately 22,000 veteran families

Recommendation

Congress should continue to make ending veteran homelessness a top priority by providing **\$1.35 billion for VA's homeless veteran programs, including \$300 million for the SSVF program** in FY 2013. To finally end homelessness among veterans, SSVF will need to start by serving an additional 67,000 veterans and their families with the requested funds in FY 2013. In combination with results from HUD-VASH, GPD, and mainstream resources, VA estimates that this will reduce the number of veterans experiencing homelessness to near 20,000 by the end of FY 2013, less than one-third the number who were homeless as of early 2011.