

Quarterly Veterans Committee Meeting Minutes - 12/14/23

In Attendance: Megan Benway, VA outreach, Shaundell Diaz, 3 County CoC, Linda Candage, VA employment coordinator, Gumersindo Gomez, Bilingual Veterans Services, Patrick Gore, Veterans with Vision, Michelle Lague, Health Care for the Homeless, Luz Marcano, VA, Bill St. Denis, Veterans Inc., Uri Strauss, Community Legal Aid, Kate Sweetster-Owens, VA

Three County CoC Update:

- currently 16 veterans on by-names list; 10 are experiencing chronic homelessness; on average 3 veterans added to by-names list each month
- since July, 40 vets exited to permanent housing; 30 exits to temporary housing; 12 exits to homelessness (out of a total of 108 exits)
- July-mid-Nov - 91 veterans entered programs (ES, TH, street outreach)
- on average: veterans are spending 139 days in emergency shelter; 191 days if including emergency shelter and transitional housing
- continuing to hold case conferencing meetings every month

Hampden County CoC Update:

- 19 veterans on by-name list
- Springfield has a new outreach project - Mercy Medical Center, 2 full-time street outreach staff. They have been encountering unsheltered veterans and will be joining next week's case conferencing meeting.
- Case conferencing starting up again next Wed., 12/20 at 2:30 pm and they will be meeting monthly after that.

Outreach update:

Health Care for the Homeless Veterans provided an excellent overview of their work, who they're serving and how to access their services. Please read it all here in [this powerpoint](#) and [this brochure on their services](#). Thank you to Michelle Lague for the presentation and to all the outreach workers for their incredible work!

Veteran Program Announcements:

- Bilingual Veterans Center has openings! 6 permanent housing units and 6 transitional units - please contact Gumersindo Gomez at sgtgomez@aol.com
- Gumersindo has been appointed to the Governor's Advisory Committee on Veterans - likely meeting for the first time in January - please be in touch with Gumersindo (see email above) with any input you would like him to deliver
- Community Legal Aid has resources to address veteran homelessness in Hampden and Hampshire County - please contact Ian Kennen at ikennen@cla-ma.org with referrals
- Patrick Gore of Veterans with Vision provided an update on organizational conversations happening on a state and federal level regarding racial discrimination in the treatment of veterans - he will share more information soon

- Bill St. Denis of Veterans Inc has enrolled 10 veterans in SSVF and 1 is about to get housed; Pamela will connect him to Hampden County case conferencing

WMNEH updates on state budget and policy:

- Unprecedented numbers in family and individual homelessness. The state has issued an RFP to expand individual winter shelter capacity; and has partnered with United Way Mass Bay to expand family shelter capacity. Please learn more and find the applications on the [Network blog post here](#).
- The Healey Administration's Housing Bond Bill was filed last month and will be heard at legislative hearings, beginning in January. This proposed \$4.1 billion investment in affordable housing holds tremendous promise to address our affordable housing crisis (it is more than double the amount of the housing bond bill of 5 years ago). It also includes significant policy advances (e.g., transfer fee for affordable housing; eviction record sealing - although transfer fee requires significant change to make it effective for western MA and eviction record sealing requires amendments to make it effective - but still an advance that they are in there!) Please read more on the [Network blog post here](#) and please stay connected on opportunities to show your support!

Annual Homelessness Point in Time Count happening on January 31 in western MA. Stay tuned for more information on that.

Next meeting date: Thursday, March 14, 10 am - 11 am