# Los Angeles County Veteran Homelessness Dashboard Methodology Document

**Published: April 22, 2016**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

Efforts to end Veteran homelessness in Los Angeles County take place across many geographies, and are woven through hundreds of government and non-profit partners, community members and coalitions.  To better understand the effectiveness of our existing systems, this dashboard will unifies the data we collect and frames it in a straightforward manner. This data dashboard helps focus our efforts, informs the public and helps make policy choices around program design and resource alignment.  Beyond simply counting how many Veterans were housed, this dashboard illustrates who they are, how they are accessing the system, how long it takes to achieve results, and ultimately, how close our community is to attaining a functional end to Veteran homelessness.

***Our Mission: Create a centralized data dashboard, updated monthly, to effectively measure progress towards ending Veteran homelessness in Los Angeles County.***

This document explains each of the dashboard's data visualizations, including the data source, its meaning, as well as any notable caveats or limitations.  Our multi-organizational team created a dashboard methodology is generates the most comprehensive and accurate picture Veterans served by the homelessness and housing system in Los Angeles County. To do so, our methodology integrates datasets from multiple sources strategically, while reducing opportunities for duplication within across sources.

**U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Data:** VA data comes from the Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System (HOMES). HOMES is an administrative database that tracks use of VA specialized homeless programs and  housing outcomes of Veterans served by VA. The data from HOMES is for the Greater Los Angeles Health Care System (GLA-VA) service area includes most of Los Angeles County as well as parts of Ventura and Kern Counties, while the Long Beach Healthcare System service area includes parts of Orange County.  However, for the purposes of this dashboard, *only data from programs operating in Los Angeles County and clients residing in Los Angeles County are included*.

It is also worth noting that Federal privacy law dictates some information not be shared, including client-level GLA-VA medical data.

**Continuum of Care Homeless Management Information System (CoC HMIS) Data:** HMIS is a software application designed to record and store client-level information on the characteristics

and service needs of homeless people. Each CoC maintains its own HMIS, which can be tailored to meet local needs, but must also conform to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) HMIS Data and Technical Standards.

HMIS Data provide an unduplicated count of people across homeless projects who are homeless in shelter and information about their characteristics and service-use patterns over a one-year period of time. These data are entered into each CoC's HMIS at the client level.

**De-duplication:** For the purposes of this data dashboard, clients in VA-funded programs and client exits to VA permanent supportive housing programs from HMIS data were excluded from the CoC HMIS data queries. Those clients were included in the data dashboard from VA Data.

**Glossary:** A glossary of common terms and acronyms used by the VA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and homeless services providers can be found at the end of this document.

# DASHBOARD COMPONENTS

## Housing Trends: Bar Graph by Month

This graph tracks Los Angeles County's monthly progress in permanently housing homeless Veterans, including permanent housing destinations with and without ongoing subsidies/services. When a client is permanently housed or moves from one program to another, they are considered to be "exited" from a program.

Permanent housing placements include exits from emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, safe havens, and into permanent supportive housing programs (such as VASH, or the HUD Section 8 voucher program).

**Hover Action and De-duplication Method:** Each bar breaks out VA and Community placements. VA permanent housing placements stem from the VASH, GPD, DCHV, HCHV, and SSVF Rapid Re-housing VA-funded programs. Additionally, SSVF Re-housing move-ins to permanent housing are counted during the month of placement.

Community permanent housing placements come from non-VA funded programs to destinations such as rentals without subsidy, family and friends placements, rentals with on-going, non-VASH subsidy, and non-SSVF Rapid Re-Housing placements. Additionally, non-SSVF Re-housing move-ins to permanent housing are counted during the month of placement.

- **Veteran Exiters:** Veterans who exited the respective program during the month. Veterans who exited multiple programs in the same month are only counted once in each column.

Data Sources: VA Data and CoC HMIS Data

## Veterans Permanent Housing Need: Simple Text

This section of the data dashboard tracks monthly housing need and progress in Los Angeles County. Los Angeles' community Active List (By-Name List), in concert with data from LA CoC's HMIS and VA HOMES, is used to track the number of new Veterans connecting to services from the prior month to the current. Additionally, the list is used to identify the total number of Veterans on track to obtaining permanent housing each month.

VA and local public housing authorities document the number of Veterans that have been issued a housing voucher and are still actively seeking housing each month.

The number housed from January 2014 is a running total the "Housing Trends" chart since January 2014.

Data Source: LAHSA Data


## Homeless Program Entries: Stacked Bar Graph by Month

This graph tracks the monthly total of Veterans accessing the programs through Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing, and Rapid Re-housing programs. These system component totals help illustrate comparative Veteran inflows within the Los Angeles County homeless crisis response system. Analyzing these flows allows Los Angeles to promote collaboration and in-reach between programs.

The cumulative totals of the stacked bars show general trends for Veterans entering the homeless system in Los Angeles County. Those cumulative totals include program entries for more than one system component for a Veteran within a given month. Despite that limitation, the cumulative totals do provide meaningful monthly comparisons for analyzing crisis response system inflows.


**Hover Action:** Each bar breaks out entries between VA Programs and Non-VA Programs. VA Program entries include DCHV/HCHV (ES) programs, GPD programs (TH), and SSFV (RRH) programs. Non-VA Programs include community-based Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing, and Rapid Re-Housing funded through a variety of non-VA sources.

- **Veteran Entries:** Veterans who entered a program during the month. Veterans who entered multiple programs in the same month within the same system component are only counted once in each bar.


Data Sources: VA Data and CoC HMIS Data


## System Dimensions

This series of charts blends VA and CoC HMIS data that track Los Angeles' crisis response and housing system performance for Veterans. Each chart contains data for four distinct system components, Emergency Shelter (red), Transitional Housing (TH), Rapid Re-Housing (green) and Permanent Supportive Housing (orange).

- **Length of Stay (days) – Veterans:** The average number of days from program entry to program exit for veterans who exited during the current month. For veterans who did not exit during the current month the average number of days from program entry to the last day of the current month.

- **PH Housing Placements:** Veterans who are documented as being placed into permanent housing in the HOMES program exit forms or the Housing Progress Form (HPF) or the SSVF Program Participation database. Veterans who are placed in permanent housing by multiple programs in the same month are only counted once. **Note**: This measure also includes move-ins to units under VASH, and so may not always match the Demographics Chart "Where are Veterans Going" which does not.
    - **Hover Action:** Points on the Rapid Re-Housing and Transitional Housing lines will show information on how many placements that month in actual numbers, as well as what percentage exited to VASH.

- **Unit Occupancy Rate for Veteran Dedicated Beds (average for the month):** The average occupancy rate for Veterans who are served by the respective programs at least one day in the current month. **Note:** This measure uses only VA funded, Veteran-dedicated beds and units. A methodology to also track utilization for non-VA funded beds and units is being developed.

Data Sources: VA Data and CoC HMIS Data

## Time to Housing (Days) Bar Graph by VA Program

This graph tracks the speed of a Veteran's move from initial VASH or SSVF Rapid Re-housing program acceptance to permanent housing placement. This metric is a deeper analysis of the time required for a Veteran to accept, identify and ultimately move into permanent housing through the SSVF and VASH programs. It

For SSVF Rapid Re-housing, "Entry to Move In" bar is an absolute calculation of the time it takes from when a Veteran is admitted to a program to signing a lease and physically moving into a unit.

For VASH, this bar is broken into three important milestones. Only data for Veterans housed in a given month are included in the three bars for that month.

**VASH Program Milestones:**
- **Days to Program Admission to Public Housing Authority (PHA)** [blue]: The average number of days from admission to HUD-VASH Case Management as documented in the HOMES HUD-VASH Entry Form to a referral to PHA as documented in the HOMES HUD-VASH Housing Progress Form (HPF).
- **Housing Authority to Voucher** [orange]: The average number of days from PHA referral to PHA issue as documented in the HPF.
- **Voucher to Move-In** [green]: The average number of days from PHA issuance of a HUD-VASH voucher to the Veteran moving into their unit as documented in the HPF.

Data Sources: VA Data and CoC HMIS Data

## VI-SPDAT Intervention Score

This chart illustrates scores of acuity for all Veterans who were assessed in the month using the VI-SPDAT.  Intervention scores range from 1 to 4, with the highest scores prioritizing the most resource intensive intervention. Interventions range from short-term assistance securing affordable housing (1) to medium-term assistance like security deposits and first month's rent, including rapid re-housing (2), and long-term assistance such as permanent housing with rental subsidy and wrap-around supportive services (3 and 4).

Data Sources: CoC HMIS Data

## Demographics: Pie Graphs

Each chart provides demographic data for participants within each System Component type*.* Use the drop down menus to select which month of data and System Component type you wish to view. Data is calculated by an average of statistics from both the VA data and HMIS, each of which are weighted according to their prevalence in the data.

**Notes:**

- **Note 1:** Chronic Homeless (CH) status data comes exclusively from the CoC HMIS databases using an automated query checking for length of homelessness, disabling condition, and prior living situation.

- **Note 2**: The "Permanent" measure in the chart "Where are Veterans Going?" does not include move-ins to units under VASH, and so may not always match the System Dimensions chart "% Exits to Permanent Housing."

Data Sources: VA Data and CoC HMIS Data

**Acuity Score**- A score assigned to a homeless person or family by use of the VI-SPDAT tool, which conveys their relative need for each type of housing assistance

**Chronically Homeless Individual**- An individual who:

A. Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and

B. Has been homeless and living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least 1 year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years; and

C. Can be diagnosed with one or more of the following conditions: substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability (as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002)), posttraumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability.

Notes: (1) Persons under the age of 18 are not counted as chronically homeless. (2) For purposes of the PIT, persons living in transitional housing at the time of the PIT count should not be included in this subpopulation category. (3) Persons with the disabling conditions identified above must also meet the qualifications identified in the term for "disability" (e.g., "is expected to be long, continuing or indefinite duration").

**Continuum of Care (CoC)**- A collaborative funding and planning approach that helps communities plan for and provide, as necessary, a full range of emergency, transitional, and permanent housing and other service resources to address the various needs of homeless persons. HUD also refers to the group of community stakeholders involved in the decision making processes as the "Continuum of Care."

**Continuum of Care (CoC) Lead Agency**- An organization designated by the CoC primary decision making body to be the entity that submits the CoC application. The CoC lead agency is responsible for the coordination and oversight of the CoC planning efforts, and has the authority to certify and submit the CoC homeless assistance funding application. For most of Los Angeles County, LAHSA is the CoC Lead.  The Cities of Long Beach, Glendale, and Pasadena lead their own Continua.

**Disability-** An individual is disabled if they are diagnosed with one or more of the following conditions:

A. A physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that:

       (1) Is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration;

       (2) Substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently; and

       (3) Could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions.

B. A developmental disability, as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002); or

C. The disease of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or any condition arising from the etiologic agency for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV).

**Emergency Shelter-** Facilities that provide temporary or transitional shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless. Most serve specific sub-populations including single adults, families with children, et al.

**Homelessness-** As established by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), there are four categories of homelessness.  They are:
1. People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they temporarily resided if they were in shelter or a place not meant for human habitation before entering the institution.
2. People who are losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or a doubled up situation, within 14 days and lack resources or support networks to remain in housing.
3. Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state. This is a new category of homelessness, and it applies to families with children or unaccompanied youth (up to age 24) who have not had a lease or ownership interest in a housing unit in the last 60 or more days, have had two or more moves in the last 60 days, and who are likely to continue to be unstably housed because of disability or multiple barriers to employment.
4. People who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life--threatening situations related to violence; have no other residence; and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.


**Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)-** An electronic database used to hold information on the characteristics and service needs of homeless people in the U.S. Users of

HMIS include homeless service providers, Continuums of Care, Public Housing Authorities, Broad utilization of HMIS can help provide a consistent and accurate snapshot of a region's homeless population, including a population count, information on service use, and a measurement of the effectiveness of homeless programs, as HMIS also helps track the number of chronically homeless clients and placements into permanent housing

**Permanent Supportive Housing**- Affordable housing with supportive services, designed for persons with disabilities.

**Rapid Rehousing**- Programs that provide financial assistance and services, such as security deposits, move-in assistance, short- or medium-term rental subsidies, to help those who are experiencing homelessness be quickly re-housed and stabilized.

**Transitional Housing**- Transitional housing facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing. Homeless persons may live in transitional housing for up to 24 months and receive supportive services such as childcare and job training.

**Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)**- Service providers must know homeless individuals personally to identify the best ways to help them escape homelessness.  The VI-SPDAT is a "supertool" that combines two widely used Outreach assessments to gauge a homeless person or family's physical and emotional condition, safety, security and socialization, among other factors. The VI-SPDAT assigns an Acuity score and helps identify who should be recommended for each housing and support intervention to effectively prioritize who is eligible and in greatest need of services and housing.

- The Vulnerability Index, developed by Community Solutions, is a street outreach tool currently in use in more than 100 communities. Rooted in leading medical research, the VI helps determine the chronicity and medical vulnerability of homeless individuals.
- The Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, developed by OrgCode Consulting, is an intake and case management tool. Based on a wide body of social science research, the tool helps service providers allocate resources in a logical, targeted way.

The tool helps identify the best type of support and housing intervention for an individual by relying on three categories of recommendation:

- Permanent Supportive Housing: Individuals or families who need permanent housing with ongoing access to services and case management to remain stably housed.
- Rapid Re-Housing: Individuals or families with moderate health, mental health and/or emotional health issues, but who are likely to be able to achieve housing stability over a short time period through a medium or short-term rent subsidy and access to support services.
- Affordable Housing: Individuals or families who do not require intensive supports but may still benefit from access to affordable housing. In these cases, the tool recommends affordable or subsidized housing but no specific intervention drawn uniquely from the homeless services world.

# APPENDIX B: VA DATA DICTIONARY

**VA Data Sources** (Updated Monthly)

- Homeless Operations & Management Evaluation System (HOMES) Residential Treatment Exit Form
- HOMES VJO Exit Form
- HOMES HCRV Exit Form
- HOMES HCHVCM Exit Form
- HOMES HUD-VASH Housing Progress Form (HPF)
- HOMES Assessment Form
- Legacy Form X
- Legacy Form D
- Legacy Form Z
- HUD-VASH Legacy Forms
- Homeless Services Registry
- Cooperate Data Warehouse (CDW) Outpatient Visit File
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program (SSVF

**VA/HMIS Data Bridge**

Within many database systems, certain elements of data about clients are "coded" for simplification.  However, the code for a specific element in the VA HOMES system might not match the same code in an equivalent system such as HMIS.  In order to accurately combine data for the dashboard, it must be "bridged" between the two sources.  The following tables illustrate how each code was bridged. Each data point is matched horizontally with its equivalent code in HMIS.

| HOMES Residence Prior | HMIS Residence Prior |
|---|---|
| a = Housing owned by Veteran, no ongoing housing subsidy | 23 = Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy |
| b = Housing owned by Veteran, with ongoing housing subsidy | 21 = Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy: |
| d = Housing rented by Veteran with HUD-VASH voucher | 19 = Rental by client, with VASH housing subsidy |
| e = Housing rented by Veteran with non-HUD-VASH housing subsidy | 20 = Rental by client, with other (non-VASH) ongoing housing subsidy |
| f = Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons (such as SHP, S+C, or SRO MOD Rehab) | 3 = Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons (such as SHP, S+C, or SRO Mod Rehab) |
| g = Staying or living in family member's room, apartment or house | 12 = Staying or living in a family member's room, apartment or house |
| h = Staying or living in friend's room, apartment or house | 13 = Staying or living in a friend's room, apartment or house |
| i = GPD transitional housing | 2 = Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth) |
| j = Non-VA transitional housing for homeless persons | 2 = Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth) |
| k = Safe Haven (special transitional supportive housing or drop-in supportive service center for homeless SMI individuals) | 18 = Safe Haven |
| l = VA MH RRTP (all types: DCHV, CWT/TR, SA RRTP, PTSD RRTP, General RRTP) | 1 = Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher |
| m = VA contracted residential treatment programs (ATU-HWH or HCHV contract) | 5 = Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center |
| o = Non-psychiatric hospital (acute care) | 6 = Hospital (non-psychiatric) |
| p = Psychiatric hospital (acute care) | 4 = Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility |
| q = Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher | 14 = Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher |
| r = Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher | 1 = Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher |
| s = Prison, jail | 7 = Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility |
| t = Place not meant for habitation (outdoors, automobile, truck, boat) | 16 = Place not meant for habitation |
| 96 = Invalid Entry | NULL |

| HOMES Destination | HMIS Destination |
|---|---|
| 1 = Housing owned by Veteran, no ongoing housing subsidy | 10 = Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy |
| 2 = Housing owned by Veteran, with ongoing housing subsidy | 21 = Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy |
| 3 = Housing rented by Veteran, no ongoing housing subsidy | 11 = Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy |
| 4 = Housing rented by Veteran with HUD-VASH voucher | 19 = Rental by client, with VASH housing subsidy |
| 5 = Housing rented by Veteran with non HUD-VASH housing subsidy | 20 = Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy |
| 6 = Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons (such as SHP, S+C, or SRO MOD Rehab) | 3 = Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons (such as: CoC project; or HUD legacy programs; or HOPWA PH) |
| 7 = Staying or living in family member's room, apartment or house | 12 = Staying or living with family, temporary tenure (e.g., room, apartment or house) |
| 8 = Staying or living in friend's room, apartment or house | 13 = Staying or living with friends, temporary tenure (.e.g., room apartment or house) |
| 9 = GPD transitional housing | 2 = Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth) |
| 10 = Non-VA transitional housing for homeless persons | 2 = Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth) |
| 11 = Safe Haven (special transitional supportive housing or drop-in supportive service center for homeless SMI individuals) | 18 = Safe Haven |
| 12 = VA Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Program (MH RRTP; all types: DCHV, CWT/TR, SA RRTP, PTSD RRTP, General RRTP) | 1 = Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher |
| 13 = VA contracted residential treatment programs (ATU-HWH or HCHV contract) | 5 = Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center |
| 14 = Non-VA residential treatment program | 5 = Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center |
| 15 = Non-psychiatric hospital (acute care) | 6 = Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility |
| 16 = Psychiatric hospital (acute care) | 4 = Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility |
| 17 = Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher | 14 = Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher |
| 18 = Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher | 1 = Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher |
| 19 = Prison, jail | 7 = Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility |
| 20 = Place not meant for habitation (outdoors, automobile, truck, boat) | 16 = Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus/train/subway station/airport or anywhere outside) |
| 21 = Don't know | 8 = Client doesn't know |
| 99 = NULL Entry | NULL |