

Veterans in Allegheny County's Homeless Services System, 2014–2018



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DEFINITIONS

Emergency Shelter: A facility with overnight sleeping accommodations, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter. People utilizing emergency shelters are considered to be homeless.

Homelessness: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines¹ define four categories of homelessness:

- 1) Individuals or families who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence (for example, individuals living in a place not meant for human habitation, staying in an emergency shelter or transitional housing, or exiting an institution like a jail or mental health treatment facility).
- 2) Individuals or families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days and do not have the means to identify a subsequent residence.
- 3) Unaccompanied youth under age 25, or families with children/youth, who have faced persistent housing instability or who qualify as homeless under various federal statutes.
- 4) Individuals or families fleeing domestic violence, lacking another residence, and who do not have the means to identify other permanent housing.

Homelessness prevention: Assistance provided to people who are currently housed, but who require help with overdue rent, utility bills or other obstacles that could lead to homelessness if left unaddressed.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): Programs that combine housing with more intensive services for people who have one or more chronic disabling conditions. These programs do not have a limit on length of stay as long as the tenant pays their portion of the rent and follows the rules of their lease. People residing in PSH are not considered to be homeless.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH): Programs that assist individuals or families who are experiencing homelessness to move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and to achieve stability in that housing through a combination of rental assistance, housing search and supportive services. People utilizing RRH programs are not considered to be homeless.

Street Outreach: Services that connect people residing in unsheltered locations with emergency shelter, permanent housing or other critical non-facility-based services.

¹ https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf

Transitional Housing (TH): Programs designed to provide housing and appropriate supportive services to people experiencing homelessness to facilitate movement to independent living within a reasonable amount of time, usually 24 months. People utilizing transitional housing are considered to be homeless.

Veteran: In this report, Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) defines a Veteran as an individual who has served, in any capacity and for any length of time, in any branch of the United States armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard) either in active duty or in the reserve. The data used in this analysis represents self-identified and self-reported Veteran status, with no reference to documentation of service or specific eligibility requirements beyond prior service.

INTRODUCTION

Recent national and local focus on Veterans who are experiencing homelessness has led to reduction in homelessness in this population. In order to provide more information about these individuals, this report describes Veterans in Allegheny County who received homeless assistance services at least once from 2014 through 2018, including details on demographics, housing program types and involvement with other County services. In order to sustain progress and to further prevent and reduce Veteran homelessness as much as possible, Allegheny County agencies and community partners will benefit from leveraging data to identify patterns in Veteran homelessness, track outcomes and inform practices for addressing Veterans' housing needs.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Trends in Veteran homelessness.** The number of Veterans entering homeless assistance programs in Allegheny County consistently declined from 2014 through 2018, seeing a 45% decrease over the five-year period. By contrast, non-Veterans saw slight decreases in program entries from 2014 through 2016, punctuated by a significant uptick in 2017.
- **Racial disproportionality in Veteran homelessness and the homeless system as a whole.** While Veteran homelessness declined overall, underlying racial disparities in housing security persisted among Veterans and non-Veterans alike. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimated in 2018 that 12% of Veterans were Black.² In comparison, 2018 data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) shows that approximately 32% of homeless Veterans were Black,³ indicating that a racial gap in housing security exists among Veterans nationally. In Allegheny County, more than half (52%) of the Veterans who accessed homeless assistance programs from 2014 through 2018 were Black. The percentage of Veterans using Allegheny County homeless services who were Black is consistent with the racial demographics of all people (Veterans and non-Veterans) who used these types of services in the region.
- **Veteran outcomes after leaving the homeless system.** Veterans who left the homeless system after receiving services were found to be slightly less likely than non-Veterans to re-enter the homeless assistance system, suggesting that they were able to find and maintain stable housing. Four percent of Veterans who left a homeless assistance program for a destination considered to be permanent (for example, owning or renting their own home or staying permanently with family or friends) experienced recurring homelessness and returned for assistance, compared to 6% of non-Veterans.

² https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Demographics/New_Vetpop_Model/8L_VP2016_Race_Ethnicity_State.xlsx

³ <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>, p. 55.

- **Homeless Veteran usage of other County services.** A cross-program analysis conducted for this report showed that a significant number of homeless Veterans utilize County services such as publicly funded mental health treatment and drug and alcohol counseling. Although many Veterans receive benefits and supportive services for a wide range of needs through programs operated by the VA, not all Veterans are eligible for VA services, while some Veterans who are VA-eligible nonetheless seek assistance from providers outside of the VA system. It is likely that Veterans of varying eligibility use County services, though this could not be assessed for this report.

BACKGROUND

In June of 2010, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released *Opening Doors*, a comprehensive federal strategic plan for eliminating homelessness across the country.⁴ In addition to establishing new guidelines for increased collaboration between federal agencies, the plan identifies several subpopulations in need of specialized attention. Veterans of the U.S. armed forces are recognized as one such group in need of targeted data analysis and improved service delivery, in large part due to their overrepresentation in homeless assistance programs relative to the general population.

This increased rate of homelessness among Veterans compared to the general population may be at least partly explained by their higher rates of mental health issues, substance use disorders, physical disabilities connected to their time in service, and difficulty securing gainful employment after separating from the military. As with any group, Veterans' ability to move from homelessness into safe and secure housing, or to avoid homelessness in the first place, is impacted not only by the availability of housing itself but also by the capacity for communities to direct Veterans to the most appropriate forms of assistance according to their specific needs and circumstances.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania ranks fourth among states' total Veteran populations, and the Pittsburgh metropolitan area has the highest concentration of Veterans within the Commonwealth. As such, Allegheny County bears a special responsibility for addressing the needs of Veterans facing homelessness and housing insecurity. A major shift toward eliminating Veteran homelessness in the County came in 2014 with Pittsburgh's acceptance of the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, followed shortly by the creation of the Pittsburgh Rapid Results Homeless Veterans' Boot Camp.⁵ A task force managed by public agencies, community providers and Veteran advocacy groups, the Boot Camp aimed to identify homeless Veterans and connect them with stable permanent housing as quickly as possible. This objective is reiterated in the Allegheny County Homeless Advisory Board's *Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, released in 2017. Modeled heavily upon *Opening Doors*, this strategic plan emphasizes the value of specialized coordination and improved service

⁴ <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1237/usich-opening-doors-federal-strategic-plan-end-homelessness/>

⁵ <https://archive.triblive.com/local/pittsburgh-allegheny/pittsburgh-allegheny-county-collaborate-to-end-veterans-homelessness/>

navigation for Veterans facing homelessness as one component of the plan's overall goal to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring in Allegheny County by 2022. By the time this plan was released in 2017, efforts spearheaded by the Boot Camp had helped reduce Veteran homelessness by over 52% from 2015, indicating that increased coordination around Veterans' specific needs is an effective approach to reducing homelessness.

Beyond the Boot Camp task force, Allegheny County implements homeless assistance and prevention services through the Continuum of Care (CoC)⁶ — a network of public agencies, housing providers and other organizations supported in large part by federal grants from HUD. Individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and those at risk for becoming homeless, can access these resources through the Allegheny Link, an intake hotline that connects callers to appropriate housing assistance programs based on needs and eligibility.⁷

CoC and HUD Housing Assistance Structure

While the CoC assesses individuals' needs on a case-by-case basis, HUD-funded projects are generally designed to address three broad groups of households based on their housing circumstances:

- 1) Households who are **at risk** of losing their housing and becoming homeless but who have not yet become homeless (served by homelessness prevention programs)
- 2) Households who are **currently homeless** (served by street outreach, emergency shelters and transitional housing programs)
- 3) Households who are in **permanent housing programs** but who were previously in homeless programs or places not meant for human habitation and are now no longer considered homeless (served by rapid re-housing [RRH] and permanent supportive housing [PSH] programs)

Veterans have access to the same types of housing services as non-Veterans, but some may also be eligible for a variety of programs reserved exclusively for Veterans and their families. Many of these programs prioritize needs such as substance abuse counseling and resources for those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI), both of which appear at much higher rates among Veterans than civilians and have been identified as serious risk factors for homelessness.⁸ These programs, often funded in part by the VA, include the Grant and Per Diem program (GPD), which assists community organizations that provide Veterans with supportive housing and case management services.⁹

⁶ <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Basic-Needs/Allegheny-County-Continuum-of-Care.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/About/Contact/Link/About-the-Link.aspx>

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3969134/>

⁹ <https://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp>

Veterans and their households may also be eligible to enroll in the VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), which awards funding to community providers to operate homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing programs, as well as case management, financial assistance and other related services. SSVF funding comprises the largest Veteran-specific housing program in the Allegheny County CoC. The Veterans Leadership Program (VLP), a CoC member and leading participant of the Veterans' Boot Camp, currently holds all SSVF awards allotted to Allegheny County, as was the case during the 2014 through 2018 study period. VLP and a handful of other organizations in the CoC also collectively hold two GPD case management awards and six GPD awards for housing assistance and service centers.^{10,11}

HUD and the VA also jointly administer the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, which awards vouchers to public housing authorities in order to establish permanent housing for Veterans who are eligible to receive VA healthcare, while the VA connects these Veterans to case management, counseling and other services to support their transition out of homelessness.¹² The Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) holds a total of 88 HUD-VASH vouchers, while the Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA) manages 345.¹³

METHODOLOGY

This analysis is based primarily on data from the County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), collected over a five-year period from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2018. These data were gathered through intake assessments conducted by contracted housing providers within the CoC and stored in the County's Data Warehouse.¹⁴

Analysis was centered around clients' entry into CoC housing assistance programs, as defined by the client's enrollment date in a given program. Additionally, analysis was limited to clients who enrolled in one or more of six major HUD project types, as described in the **Definitions** section:

- Emergency Shelter
- Homelessness Prevention
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Rapid Re-Housing
- Street Outreach
- Transitional Housing

¹⁰ <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/GPD/GPDPDOAwardsPD040121.pdf>

¹¹ https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/GPD/GPD_CM_Awards_9-4-19.pdf

¹² <https://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp>

¹³ https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/HUD_VASH_Awards_%282008-2020%29_-_Public%20Copy.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.alleghenycountyanalytics.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/18-ACDHS-20-Data-Warehouse-Doc_v6.pdf

Enrollments in domestic violence shelter programs were not included in this analysis. Data for these programs are not stored in HMIS due to federal mandates that prohibit domestic violence programs from entering data into an HMIS in any CoC. Additionally, beginning in 2016, enrollments in SSVF-funded housing programs were no longer reported to the County's HMIS, instead being sent to the statewide HMIS. A brief section of this report addresses SSVF enrollments from 2016 through 2018 using data provided by VLP. As these client records were de-identified, it was not possible to match this cohort of SSVF program clients to County HMIS records or integrate them with the rest of the study.

Because clients may experience multiple spells of homelessness and seek housing assistance more than once, this report uses two main sets of data for analysis. One dataset includes each unique client only once, to allow for high-level demographic analysis and cross-program analysis where multiple program entries by individual clients would skew the results. The second dataset was cleaned to remove duplicate records, but it retains every separate entry of a given client into a homeless assistance project during the five-year study period. This second dataset was used to examine trends in program placement over time.

Upon entering a homeless assistance program, clients complete an intake assessment and are asked whether they are a Veteran.¹⁵ For this analysis, those who answered “yes” are defined as Veterans; those who answered “no” as non-Veterans. Excluded from further analysis were 1,006 clients who declined to answer or for whom Veteran status was not collected.

All Veterans included in the analysis were age 18 or older at the time of their program start date. This is consistent with the minimum age for enlistment without parental consent in any component of the United States armed forces. To provide more meaningful comparison between Veterans and non-Veterans, all clients included in this analysis were limited to those age 18 or older at their program start date.

Due to very small raw counts and proportions of certain demographic groups, data from some of these groups cannot provide meaningful comparisons between Veterans and non-Veterans in this analysis. Since the number of Veterans who describe their race as other than Black or White is very low, all clients identifying with multiple or other races were combined in the category “Multiple/Other.” Given the extremely low incidence of gender identities other than male and female among Veterans in County HMIS data, gender-based comparisons include only data from male and female clients. Data from clients identifying as other than male or female have not been removed or excluded except where relevant.

To examine how clients receiving homeless assistance through the CoC interact with other County services, a cross-program analysis was conducted to examine involvement in six program types: aging, assisted housing,

¹⁵ See **Definitions** section for a description of what “Veteran” means in the context of this analysis.

child welfare, publicly funded drug/alcohol-related services, incarceration in the Allegheny County Jail, and publicly funded mental health services. Because not every client is eligible for every type of County program (based on age or other factors), only clients eligible for a given program were considered when calculating involvement rates. Any program involvement up to the end of 2018 was considered, including activity prior to January 1, 2014.

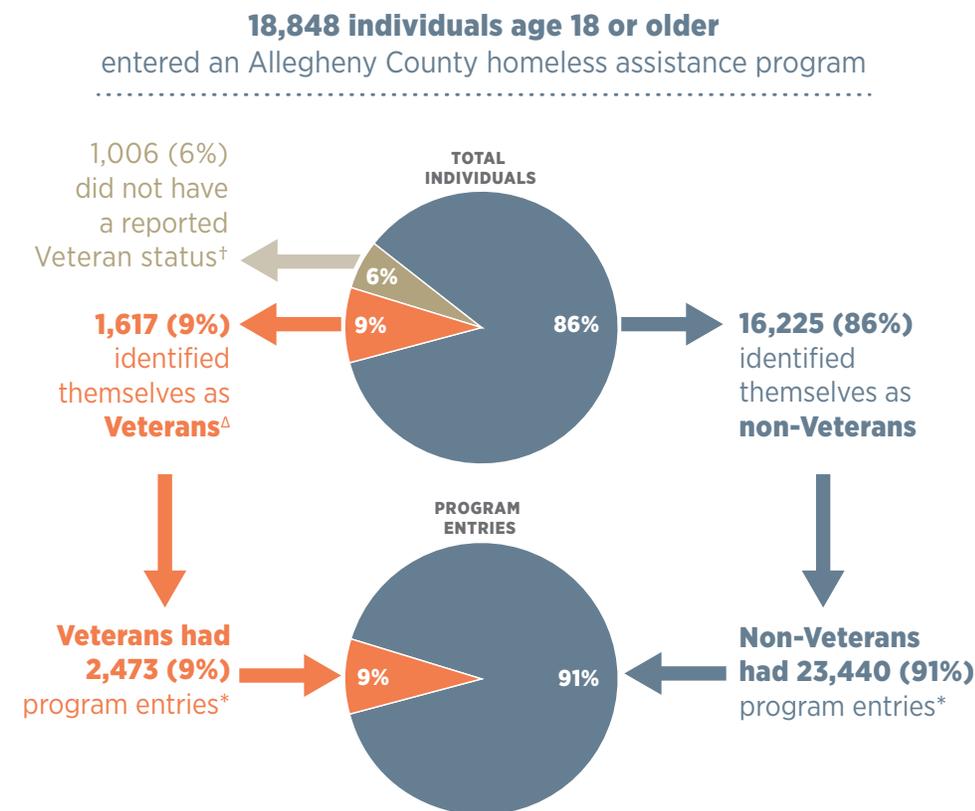
FINDINGS

Demographics of Homeless Veterans

Veteran Status

More than 18,000 distinct clients utilized one or more Allegheny County CoC homeless assistance programs from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2018 (Figure 1). Approximately 9% of these clients identified themselves as Veterans. Some clients used homeless assistance programs more than once over this period, for a total of approximately 23,000 program entries. Veterans accounted for 9% of these program entries.

FIGURE 1: Veterans and Non-Veterans in Allegheny County CoC Homeless Assistance Programs, 2014–2018



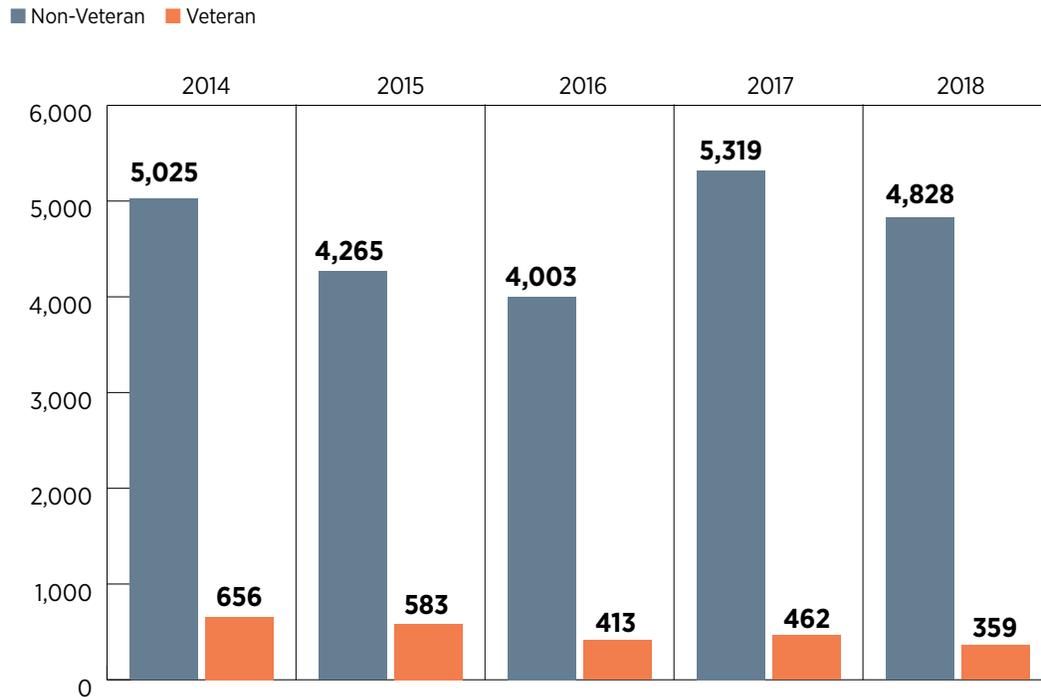
† These clients were removed from further data analysis.

Δ 6% of all County residents were Veterans at this time.

* An entry is defined as a client enrolling in a CoC homeless assistance program. Individual clients may enroll in multiple programs at different times if they experience more than one period of homelessness.

There was a notable downward trend in Veterans entering CoC programs over the five-year period, with a high of 656 entries in 2014 and a low of 359 in 2018, a net reduction of over 45% during those years (Figure 2). This decrease is consistent with the CoC's goal of reaching "functional zero" Veteran homelessness.¹⁶

FIGURE 2: Homeless Assistance Program Entries by Veteran Status, 2014–2018



N=25,913
 1,850 program entries by clients with missing Veteran status have been omitted.

Gender

Males accounted for 86% of Veteran clients and 88% of all program entries among Veterans (Figure 3). These figures for male Veterans are somewhat lower than national estimates, which have shown men to account for around 91% of sheltered homeless Veterans in both 2014¹⁷ and 2018.¹⁸ The VA estimates that males made up about 92% of all Veterans in Allegheny County in 2018, suggesting that female Veterans may be slightly overrepresented within CoC homeless assistance programs relative to the general Veteran population.¹⁹ This is in stark contrast to the gender breakdown of non-Veteran clients in homeless assistance programs, 47% of whom were men who accounted for 55% of total program entries.

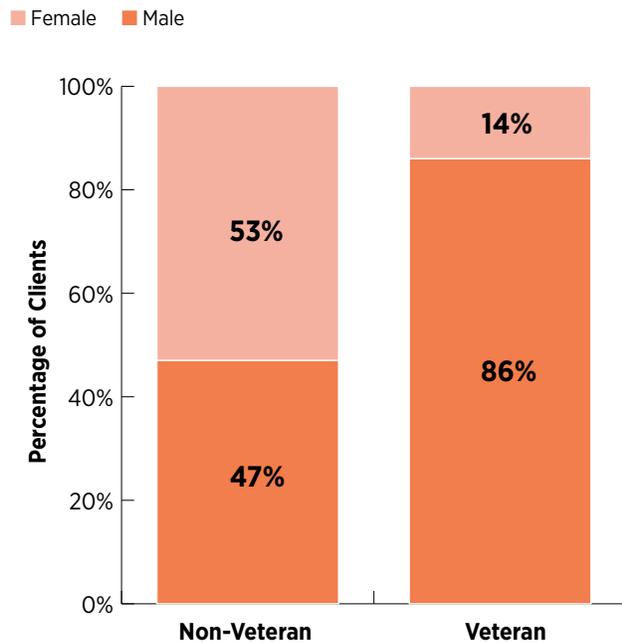
¹⁶ A community achieves functional zero Veteran homelessness when the inventory of housing interventions is sufficient to house Veterans experiencing homelessness.

¹⁷ <https://www.hudexchange.info/onecpd/assets/File/2014-AHAR-Part-2.pdf>, p. 104.

¹⁸ <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>, p. 54.

¹⁹ https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Demographics/New_Vetpop_Model/9L_VetPop2018_County.xlsx

FIGURE 3: Gender by Veteran Status of Homeless Clients, 2014–2018



N=17,759

1,006 clients with missing Veteran status and 83 identifying as other than Male or Female have been omitted.

Race

The two most common race identifications among Veterans entering homeless assistance programs were Black (52%) and White (41%), with 7% identifying as multiple races or another race (**Figure 4**). Among non-Veterans, Black individuals made up a slightly higher proportion of unique clients at 55%, while White clients accounted for 34% and multiple/other race clients for 11%.

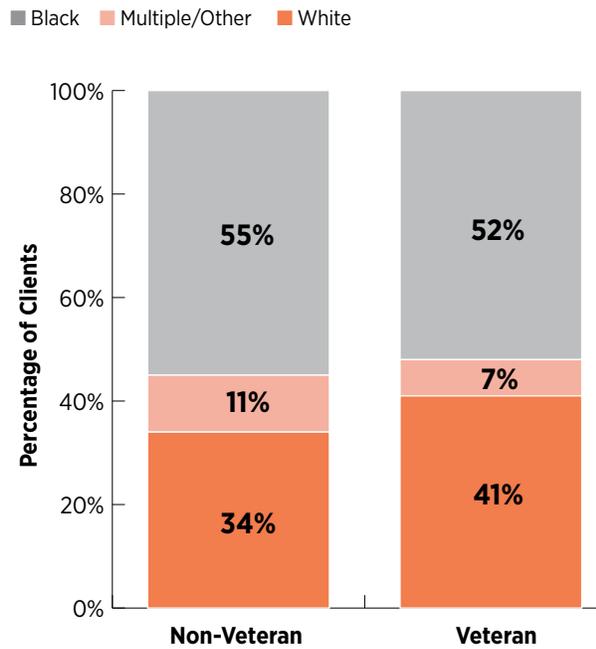
These figures echo a national issue of racial disparities in Veteran homelessness; despite VA estimates that only about 13% of all Veterans in 2018 identified as Black or African American,²⁰ HUD estimated that 33% of homeless Veterans were Black, compared to 58% who were White.²¹ Even at its lowest of 46% in 2016, the proportion of Black Veterans' program entries in Allegheny County far outpaced national figures for homelessness. However, these racial disparities extend to the non-Veteran population as well: Roughly 55% of homeless non-Veterans during the study period identified as Black, despite Black residents accounting for just 13% of the total County population over the past decade according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates.²²

20 https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Demographics/New_Vetpop_Model/8L_VP2016_Race_Ethnicity_State.xlsx

22 <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/alleghenycountypennsylvania#qf-headnote-a>

21 <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>, p. 55.

FIGURE 4: Race by Veteran Status of Homeless Clients, 2014–2018



N=17,786

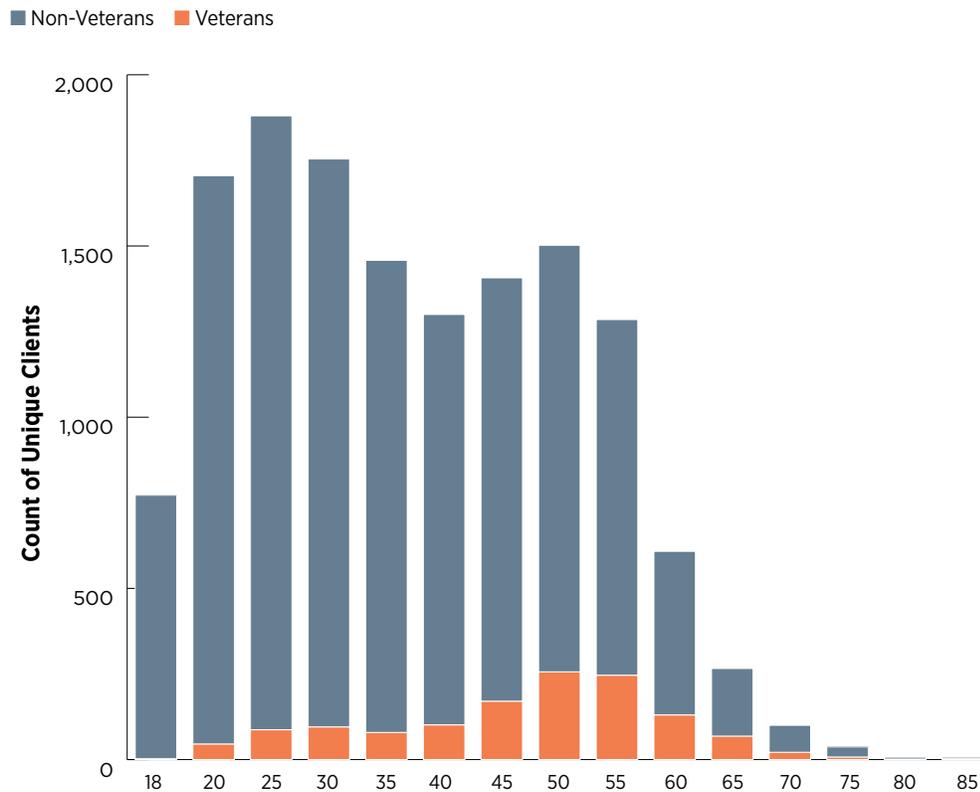
1,006 clients with missing Veteran status and 56 with missing race identification have been omitted.

Age

The median age of Veterans entering homeless assistance programs was 51, significantly older than non-Veterans in these programs (age 37). Men tended to be older than women in both Veteran and non-Veteran groups, with a median age gap of about nine years between genders.

For further analysis on homeless assistance involvement by age, clients were divided into three age brackets: 18 to 39, 40 to 59, and 60 or older. Fifty-nine percent of Veterans were aged 40 to 59 at the time of their first program entry in the study period, with 23% aged 18 to 39 and 18% aged 60 or older. By contrast, 38% of non-Veterans were aged 40 to 59; 55% were 18 to 39; and only 7% were 60 or older.

FIGURE 5: Age Distribution by Veteran Status for Homeless Clients, 2014–2018



N=17,842 (1,617 Veterans, 16,225 non-Veterans)

Age of each client was calculated from client's date of birth and the start date of client's earliest program entry within the period 01/01/2014–12/31/2018. Three clients with erroneous age data have been omitted.

Homeless Assistance Program Placement

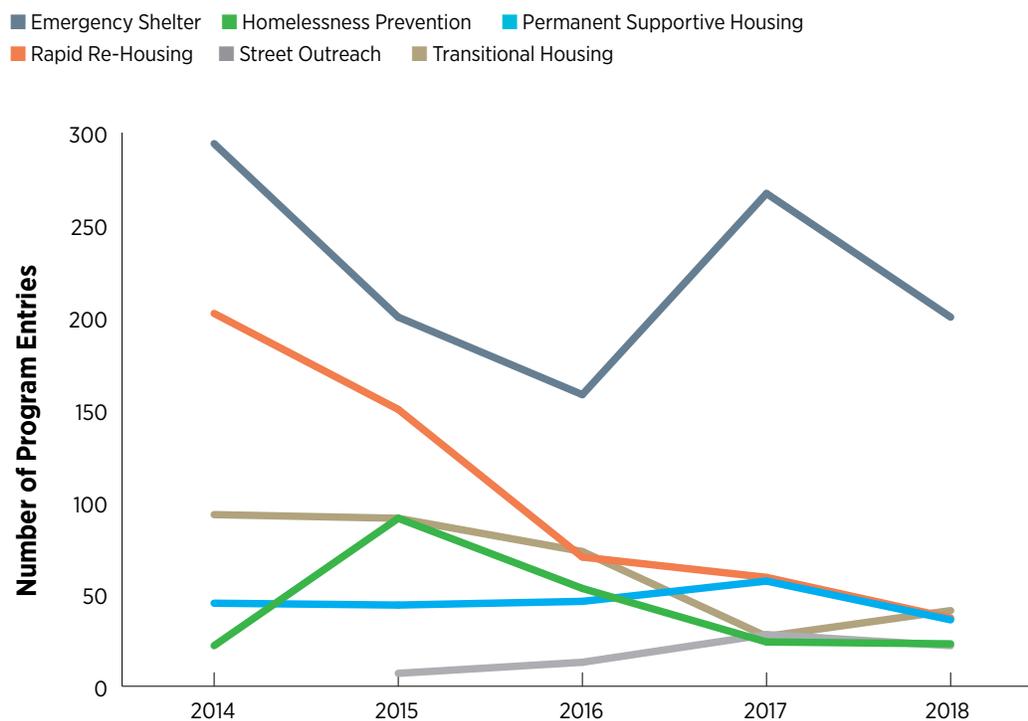
Clients are placed into different types of homeless assistance programs depending on each client's assessed needs and program vacancies. See **Definitions** section for details on each project type.

Emergency shelter was the most common homeless system program type for both Veteran and non-Veteran clients every year from 2014 through 2018, accounting for 45% of all program entries among Veterans and 52% of non-Veterans across the entire period (**Figure 6**). Street outreach was the only program type to see sustained growth over the period for both Veterans and non-Veterans, though this accounts for only a small portion of program entries overall (roughly 3% of Veteran entries and under 8% of non-Veteran entries). This increase in the recorded number of street outreach clients is most likely due to improved HMIS data collection processes within the CoC, as the CoC has not seen a significant increase in the number of street homeless among its clients, who are the clients typically involved with street outreach services.

Transitional housing (TH) saw steep declines for both Veterans and non-Veterans, except for an uptick among Veterans in 2018. The general decrease in transitional housing placements is a direct result of the CoC's shift toward a "housing first" model, as numerous TH programs were phased out and replaced with RRH programs, which prioritize the prompt placement of clients in permanent housing, as opposed to the temporary facility-based housing and mandatory supportive services emphasized in TH programs. However, the VA continued to fund TH programs for Veterans through this period, so TH placements became comparatively more common among Veterans than non-Veterans by the end of 2018.

Among non-Veterans, RRH was never a common project type, hovering between roughly 4% and 8% of non-Veteran placements each year. Among Veterans, however, RRH placements were initially very common but saw a sharp and steady decline, decreasing from 202 (31%) in 2014 to just 37 (10%) in 2018. Veteran involvement in homelessness prevention (HP) services also dropped off sharply after 2015, though HP placements were already much less common than RRH placements at the beginning of the period. At first glance, this steep decline in Veteran RRH placements seems strange, given the CoC's shift toward RRH programs as part of the housing first model. Much of this apparent decrease in Veteran RRH placements is due to changes to the way SSVF enrollments are stored in HMIS systems across Pennsylvania. SSVF enrollment data from 2016 through 2018 is addressed later in this section.

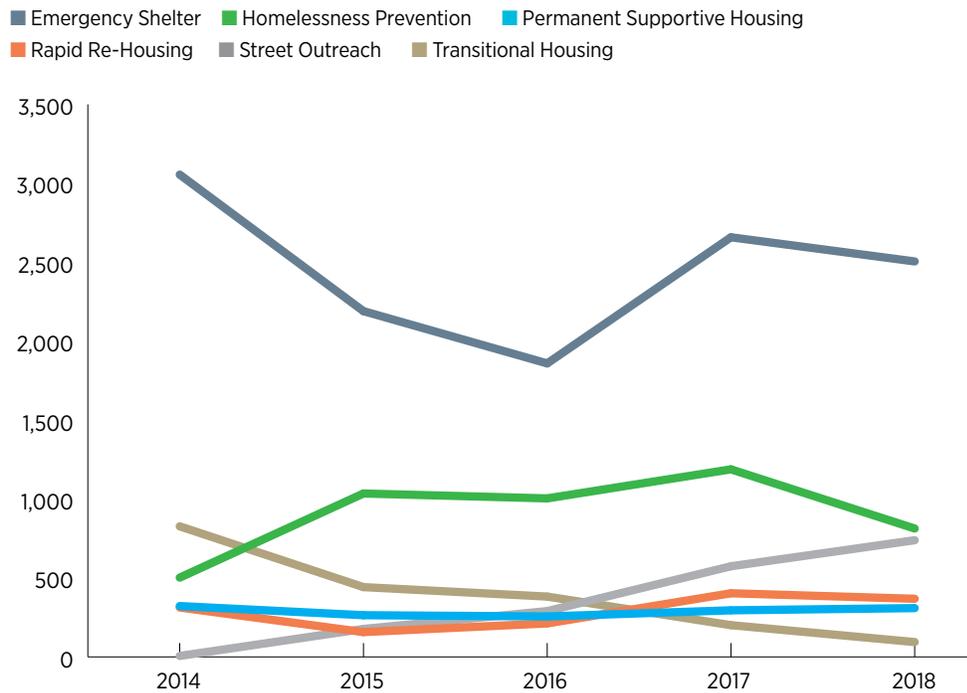
FIGURE 6: Homeless Assistance Program Types of Veterans, 2014–2018, N=2,473



N=2,473

Each count represents a client's entry into a given program. This count is higher than the total number of unique individuals as some clients entered multiple programs over the course of the study period.

FIGURE 7: Homeless Assistance Program Types of Non-Veterans, 2014–2018, N=23,440



N=23,440

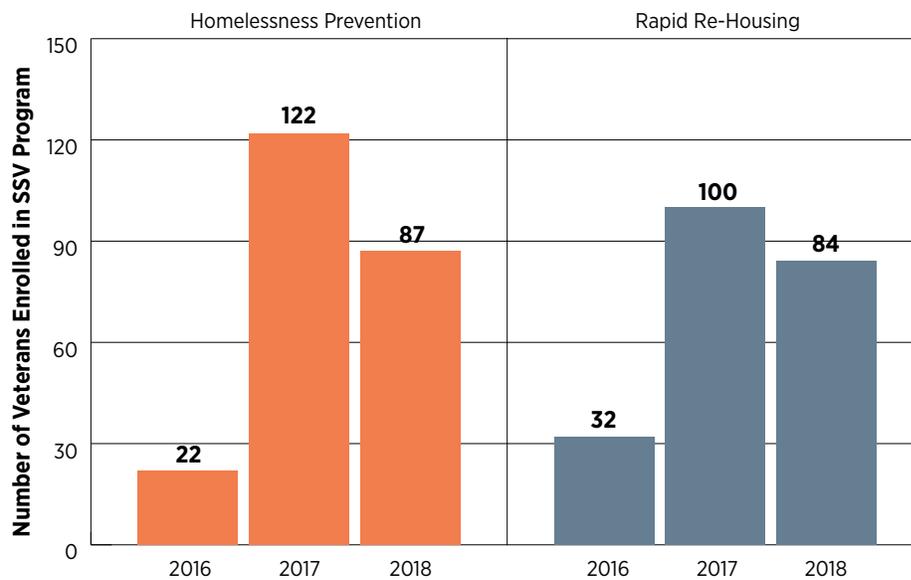
Each count represents a client's entry into a given program. This count is higher than the total number of unique individuals as some clients entered multiple programs over the course of the study period.

Snapshot: Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

- As noted above, apparent declines in HP and RRH placements among Veterans after 2015 can be attributed largely to SSVF enrollment records being stored in the Pennsylvania statewide HMIS rather than the County HMIS beginning in 2016. HP and RRH programs are the only two project types supported by SSVF funding. More information on the SSVF program is included in the **CoC and HUD Housing Assistance Structure and Methodology** sections.
- VLP, which administered all SSVF placements in the County during this period, provided enrollment data for all clients who enrolled between January 1, 2016, and December 31, 2018. The data were then cleaned to include only records of Veterans. Because this data was de-identified, VLP SSVF records could not be matched to clients in the County HMIS. For this reason, SSVF records were analyzed separately from the main data.

- Out of 660 total unique SSVF clients in this dataset, 447 were Veterans (**Figure 7**). Of these 447 Veterans, 373 (83%) identified as male and 73 (16%) as female, a gender ratio that aligns closely with the gender makeup of the Veterans in the data provided in the sections above. Two hundred thirty-three Veterans (52%) reported their race as Black, while 214 (48%) reported their race as White. Veterans in each of these demographic groups were placed into HP and RRH programs in roughly equal numbers, except for female Veterans: 45 out of 73 female Veterans (62%) received HP placements, while just 28 (38%) enrolled in an RRH program. On closer inspection, White female Veterans were split almost evenly between HP and RRH (17 and 15 placements, respectively), but Black female Veterans were much more likely to receive an HP placement (28 clients, or 68%) than an RRH placement (13 clients, or 32%).
- Both programs saw relatively low enrollment in 2016, but the substantial number of placements in 2017 and 2018 shows that the County was indeed implementing a shift to RRH for Veterans as required by the housing first model despite the project type's apparent diminishing presence in County HMIS records.

FIGURE 7: Veteran Enrollments in Allegheny County SSVF Programs, 2016–2018, N=447



N=447

Count of Veterans who enrolled in an Allegheny County SSVF program between 01/01/2016 and 12/31/2018. During this period, all SSVF placements in the County were administered by the Veterans Leadership Program, and VLP provided the data used for this figure.

Re-Entry into Homeless Assistance Programs

As nonrecurrence of homelessness is a key goal of the CoC, clients ideally would not have to return to the homeless assistance system after securing housing and making a permanent exit. HUD guidelines define a permanent exit as a client leaving a street outreach, emergency shelter, rapid re-housing or transitional housing program without returning for service for at least 730 days.²³ Permanent exit destinations include permanent housing programs, long-term care facilities, client-owned domiciles, client rentals and long-term arrangements for clients to live with friends or family.²⁴

Between the start of 2014 and the end of 2018, 484 Veterans and 8,015 non-Veterans made permanent exits from the homeless assistance system. Of these, 36 Veterans (4%) and 448 non-Veterans (6%) returned to a homeless service of any type at least once during the study period. Therefore, it appears that Veterans were somewhat less likely to face recurring homelessness than non-Veterans, though it should be noted that this may be due in part to the more pronounced decrease in Veterans entering CoC programs over 2017 and 2018 relative to non-Veterans as shown in the previous section.

Cross-Program Analysis of Other County Services

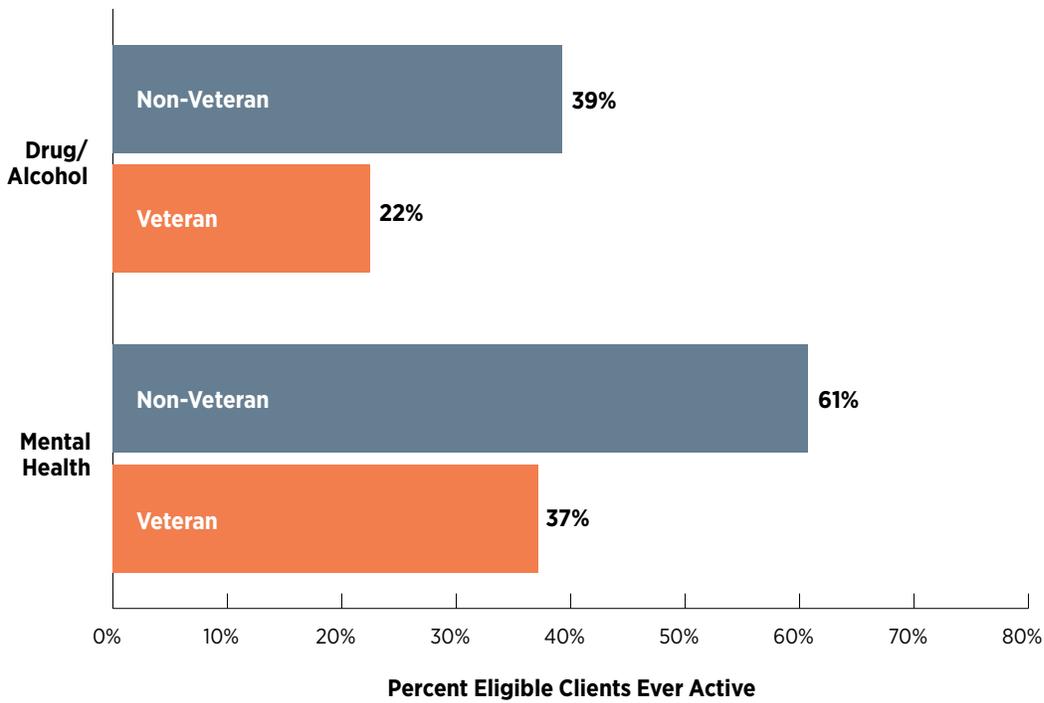
To better understand how Veterans receiving homeless assistance through the CoC interact with other County services, a cross-program analysis was conducted to examine involvement in six program types: aging, publicly funded drug/alcohol-related services, publicly funded mental health services, assisted housing, child welfare (involvement as a parent), and incarceration in the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ). A homeless system client was considered to be involved with other services if they had contact with other services at any point prior to the end of the study period (December 31, 2018).

Non-Veterans showed higher rates of involvement in County services than Veterans, except for ACJ involvement, where over 46% of eligible Veterans had records of involvement compared to 44% of non-Veterans. Additionally, the gap between Veterans and non-Veterans in assisted housing programs was substantially smaller than the gaps between involvement in other types of services. The large disparity between Veteran and non-Veteran involvement in child welfare services may be partially explained by the generally older ages of the Veteran cohort, as older clients are less likely to have children in their households. Despite this age gap, non-Veterans were still more likely to receive aging services than Veterans.

23 <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/System-Performance-Measures-HMIS-Programming-Specifications.pdf>, p. 31.

24 <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/System-Performance-Measure-7-Housing-Destination-Summary.pdf>

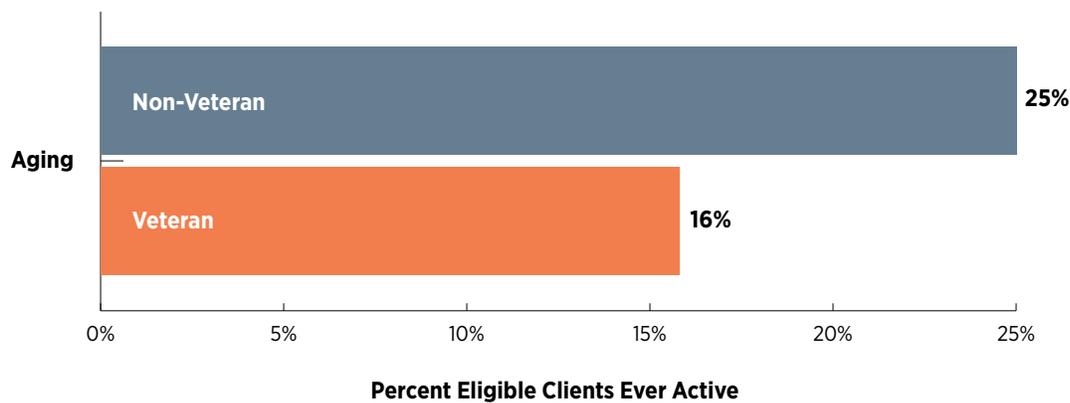
FIGURE 8: Behavioral Health Services Involvement by Veteran Status, 2014–2018



N=14,131

Only clients eligible for HealthChoices Drug/Alcohol and HealthChoices Mental Health programs have been included (1,397 Veterans, 12,764 Non-Veterans). Program involvement was calculated using no minimum date, up to the end of the study period (12/31/2018).

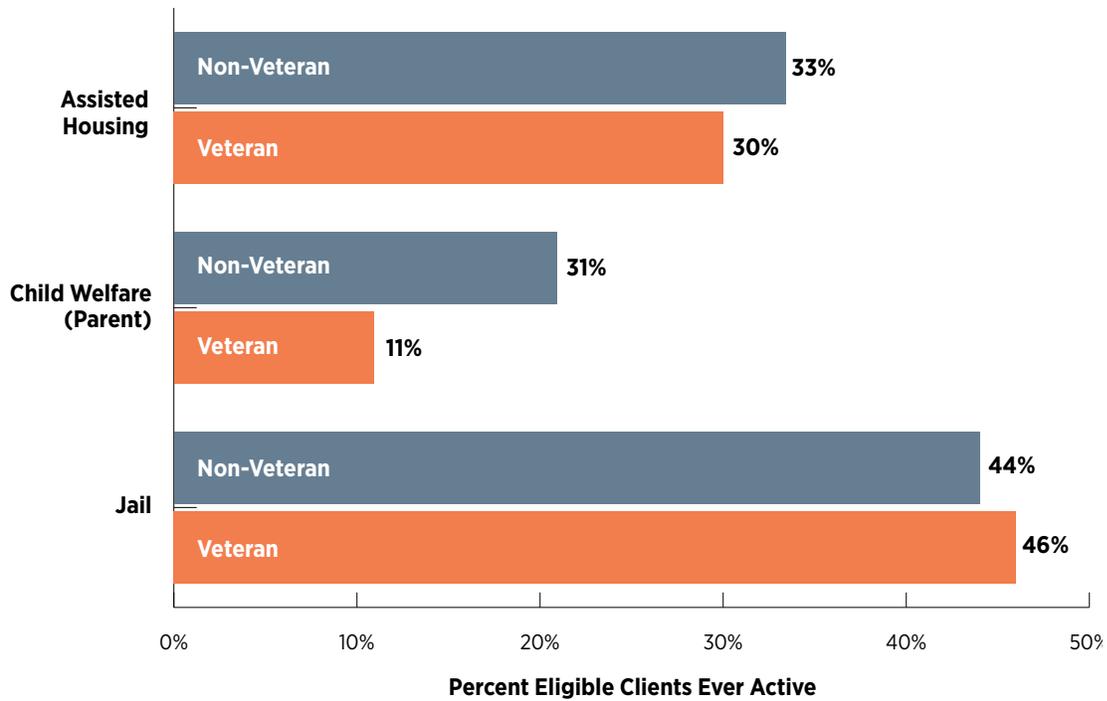
FIGURE 9: Aging Services Involvement by Veteran Status, 2014–2018



N=1,802

Only clients considered eligible for Aging programs (age 60 years or older) have been included (405 Veterans, 1,397 Non-Veterans). Program involvement was calculated using no minimum date, up to the end of the study period (12/31/2018).

FIGURE 10: Other Services Involvement by Veteran Status, 2014–2018



N=14,131

Only clients eligible for Assisted Housing, Child Welfare (parental involvement) and Jail have been included (1,397 Veterans, 12,874 Non-Veterans). Program involvement was calculated using no minimum date, up to the end of the study period (12/31/2018).

CONCLUSION

The number of homeless Veterans seeking housing assistance in Allegheny County has steadily declined over the past five years. Though substantial progress has been made toward decreasing non-Veteran homelessness as well, the consistent downward trend for Veterans indicates that the CoC has been particularly successful in its Veteran-focused work. That said, the extremely high proportion of Black clients among Veterans and non-Veterans alike suggests that racial inequities in housing access and security persist in the County. More research on such disparities, particularly among the Veteran community, is necessary to understand and address hidden barriers to preventing and eradicating homelessness. As the CoC seeks to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and nonrecurring, DHS and other partners in human services will benefit from more research on topics such as Veterans' length of stay in nonpermanent housing programs, as well as housing outcomes for Veterans after they permanently exit the CoC.

Analysis of clients' history of involvement in other County services revealed that while Veteran clients were less likely than non-Veterans to have utilized most types of services, Veterans' service involvement was far from negligible. Though DHS currently does not collect Veteran status across all of its applications, strengthened data collection practices through more thorough identification of Veterans across multiple data systems over the long term would allow more in-depth and advanced analysis on how Veterans interact with County services. This type of analysis would guide progress in developing methods to better help Veterans thrive in our community.

ANALYSIS

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