

NVTAC Monthly Newsletter: December 2023

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DECEMBER SPOTLIGHT



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Surpasses Goal to House More Than 38,000 Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Two Months Early

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has successfully housed 38,847 homeless veterans through October 2023, surpassing the annual goal two months ahead of schedule. The VA's efforts included engaging with 34,498 unsheltered veterans, achieving a 123 percent increase over the annual goal, and ensuring that 96.2 percent of housed veterans remained in stable housing. Additionally, 93.1 percent of veterans who returned to homelessness were rehoused or on a path to rehousing, surpassing the annual goal by 3.1 percent. President Biden and the VA have prioritized ending veteran homelessness, and the initiatives, including the evidence-based "Housing First" approach, have contributed to an 11 percent reduction in veteran homelessness since early 2020 and over 55 percent since 2010. VA Secretary Denis McDonough emphasized the commitment to continue efforts until every veteran has a safe, stable home. The Greater Los Angeles area has seen notable progress, with 1,464 homeless veterans receiving permanent housing in 2023.

[Read the VA Article](#)

RESOURCES



National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) Courses for Special Veteran Populations

Did you know that the NVTI offers courses designed specifically for special veteran populations? These include veterans experiencing homelessness, veterans with substance use disorders (SUDs), justice-involved veterans (JIVs), and [more](#)! The special populations courses are offered as targeted one-day classes to better meet your busy schedules, needs, and interests. Participants from the most recent offering of the 9610: Career Coaching for Special Populations: Veterans Experiencing Homelessness and Justice-Involved Veterans (JIV) course responded enthusiastically, "This was probably one of the most informative NVTI classes I have taken" and this course "has literally taught me to bridge the gap to 'reach out' our hands to our veterans without leaving me to question case management styling, approach, navigating, and accepting the situation at hand."

Don't miss out on the opportunity to experience the 9610: Career Coaching for Special Populations courses for yourself! Check out [NVTI's Class Schedule](#) to find the next special populations course that most interests you!

Improving Access and Outcomes for Women Veterans

The Ending Veterans Homelessness podcast had [an episode](#) featuring Lourdes Tiglaio, the Director of VA's Center for Women Veterans, and Tracy Emmanuel, the Deputy Director for the Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing Program, to discuss

homelessness among women veterans. The guests elaborate on the unique challenges and barriers that homeless women veterans confront when seeking services and discuss the initiatives implemented by the VA to address these issues.



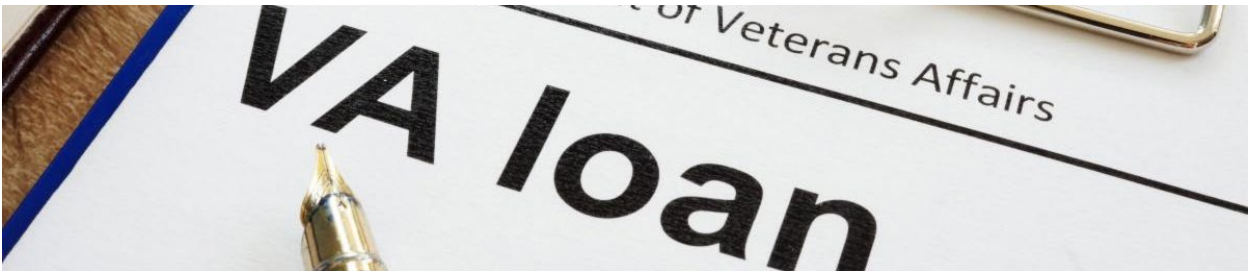


Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Home

The VFW National Home assists military service members, veterans, and their families with children, by providing services and resources to achieve their personal and family goals in order to move forward in a positive, safe, and healthy environment. Services include free housing, education, daycare recreation, and case management to help them.

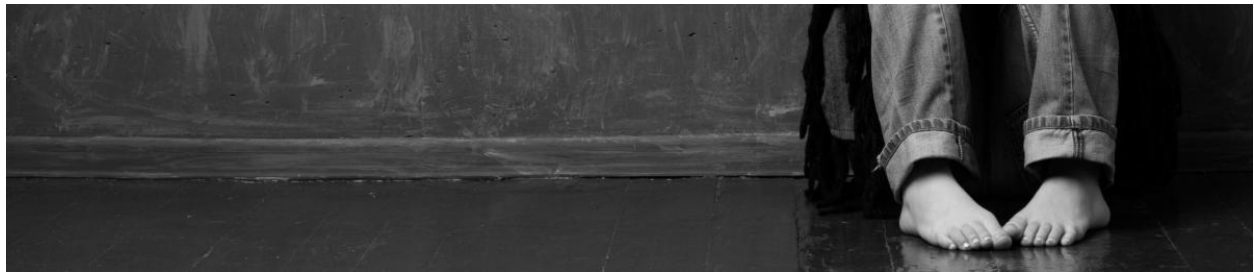
[Watch Stories of Former VFW National Home Residents](#)

NEWS UPDATES



Foreclosures for Veterans and Service Members with VA Loans Halted for Six Months

The VA has [halted foreclosures for six months](#) for veterans and service members with VA loans. This move addresses the aftermath of the VA's termination of a crucial part of the COVID forbearance program in October 2022, leaving veterans without an affordable means to catch up on their loans. The foreclosure pause, effective until May 31, 2024, aims to protect veterans currently facing foreclosure, while the VA works on implementing a new home retention option. This initiative involves purchasing loans back, modifying them, and maintaining them within a VA-owned loan portfolio, empowering the VA to assist veterans experiencing severe financial hardship. The VA encourages struggling veterans to seek assistance through the [VA Housing Assistance page](#) on their website or by calling 877-827-3702.



National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report Released

The VA has released the [National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#), providing a comprehensive analysis of veteran suicides through 2021. The report reveals that 6,392 veterans died by suicide in 2021, marking an increase of 114 from the previous year. The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on financial strain, housing instability, anxiety, and depression likely contributed to the rise, affecting both veterans and non-veterans. The report also notes an increase in firearm availability, a factor linked to suicide risk.

Recognizing veteran suicide as a top clinical priority, the VA, in collaboration with the Biden-Harris Administration, has expanded support measures, including no-cost healthcare for veterans in crisis, the launch of the 988 helpline, partnerships with suicide prevention organizations, and firearm suicide prevention efforts. Despite decreases in veteran suicide in 2019 and 2020, the 2021 report underscores the urgency of ongoing public health initiatives to address this critical issue and save lives.



VA Hiring Initiative' for Mental Health Care Amid Uptick in Veteran Suicides

The VA aims to [address the surge in veteran suicides](#) by expanding mental health resources, hiring more professionals, and launching new initiatives, as per its National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report for 2021. The VA plans a comprehensive hiring initiative for mental health experts, emphasizing the importance of addressing financial strain, housing instability, and decreased socialization among veterans. Additional measures include increasing peer-to-peer support specialist hires, expanding the Veterans Crisis Line workforce, establishing a financial consultation hub, and launching a national veteran suicide prevention awareness campaign. Despite stable

suicide rates for veterans receiving VA health care, specific groups, including women veterans, American Indian and Alaskan Native veterans, and homeless veterans, witnessed notable increases in suicides.



Addressing Los Angeles' Challenges with Homelessness

The VA is facing challenges in assisting homeless veterans in Los Angeles, which has the largest population of homeless veterans, nearly 4,000 according to the annual count. The VA's 387-acre facility in Brentwood, West Los Angeles, intended for veteran housing, has faced criticism for leasing parts of the campus for unrelated purposes, leading to lawsuits. Despite ongoing construction efforts, skepticism persists among some veterans and advocates. The campus aims to develop a community with affordable housing, including units for women veterans with children, cafes, restaurants, and other amenities. The VA is urged to address trust issues and bureaucratic obstacles faced by veterans seeking assistance, including the miscounting of VA disability as income. Officials emphasize the need for transparency and commitment to ending veteran homelessness through a public health approach that combines community-based and clinically-based strategies.

[More about VA's Challenges in Los Angeles](#)



Veterans Still Harbor Significant Concern About Military Toxic Exposure Injuries

VA medical staff are addressing [concerns about potential military toxic exposure injuries](#) as part of outreach efforts mandated under the Promise to Address

Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. VA officials began administering toxic exposure screenings during veteran health care visits, completing nearly 5 million screenings in the last year. Approximately 40 percent of surveyed veterans reported potential health concerns related to burn pit smoke, Agent Orange poisoning, water contamination, or other toxic exposures during their military service. The screenings aim to identify and address potential health problems early, with referral procedures and additional clinician training in place.

The collected data will be used to analyze trends in military toxic exposure illness rates and potentially expand the list of conditions presumed to be caused by military service, streamlining disability benefit processes for veterans. The VA plans to reach out to veterans who do not regularly use VA healthcare to assess their medical status.



Federal Loans to Veteran-Owned Small Businesses Up in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023

Federal loans to veteran-owned small businesses [increased by 14 percent in FY23](#), continuing a trend of growth for entrepreneurs in the military community, according to officials from the Small Business Administration (SBA). In FY23, the SBA distributed over \$1.1 billion in support to more than 2,800 veteran companies, representing a 40 percent increase in funding and a 33 percent rise in total loan numbers since 2020. This positive trend contrasts with the declines observed from FY17 to FY20. SBA Administrator Isabel Guzman attributes the recent uptick to the entrepreneurial spirit of American heroes and the agency's commitment to simplifying access and cutting red tape for veterans. The administration estimates there are approximately 1.9 million veteran-owned small businesses employing about 5.5 million Americans, constituting a significant portion of the country's workforce.

In June, President Joe Biden signed an executive order directing the SBA to develop more tools to assist veteran entrepreneurs, resulting in plans to add six new Veteran Business Outreach Centers. The SBA has also launched a Veteran Business Certification program and expanded entrepreneurship training programs, particularly focusing on women veterans and disabled veterans.

SUCCESS STORY



Do you have a success story you would like to share? If you are a grantee who helped a veteran who is struggling with housing or employment, we would love to hear from you.

[Submit Your Success Stories](#)

