

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Maine's Plan to End and Prevent Veteran Homelessness

Presented to the

Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

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The Situation

Who is a homelessness veteran?

For the purposes of this plan, a homeless veteran is anyone who has ever served in uniform and whose housing is unstable.

However, the federal definition of a homeless veteran is more restrictive. The federal definition provided by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is **literally homeless**. **Literally homeless** means that a veteran is sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g., abandoned buildings, train stations, or camping grounds) or sleeping in some sort of a homeless shelter. As a result, most services to assist veterans only provide financial assistance to those who meet the criteria of the federal definition.

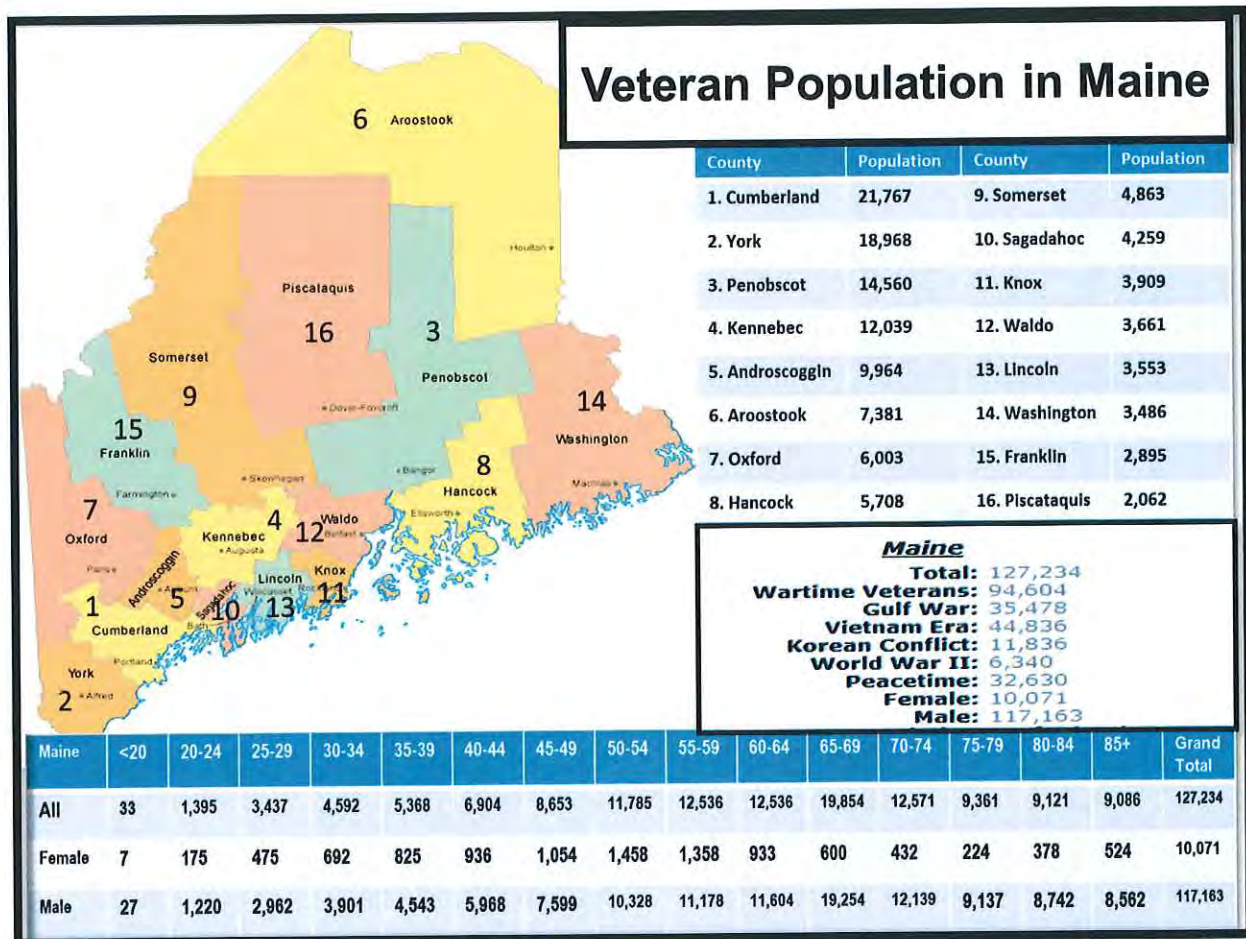
Maine's definition of a homeless veteran is very broad. It includes all people who have served or are currently serving in any type of military position including reserves AND whose housing is unstable, such as:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship or a similar reason,
- Living in a motel, hotel, trailer park or camping ground due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodation,
- Living in an emergency or transitional shelter,
- Abandoned in a hospital,
- Living in a car, park or public space or in an abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station or similar setting, or
- Having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

This new, expanded definition of a homeless veteran is necessary to meet the State of Maine's desire to expand responsiveness to all homeless veterans in need of assistance. However, an expanded definition on paper does not translate to direct services provided in practice. The initiatives outlined in this plan call for the State of Maine to fund these initiatives that fall outside the federal funding criteria of serving literally homeless.

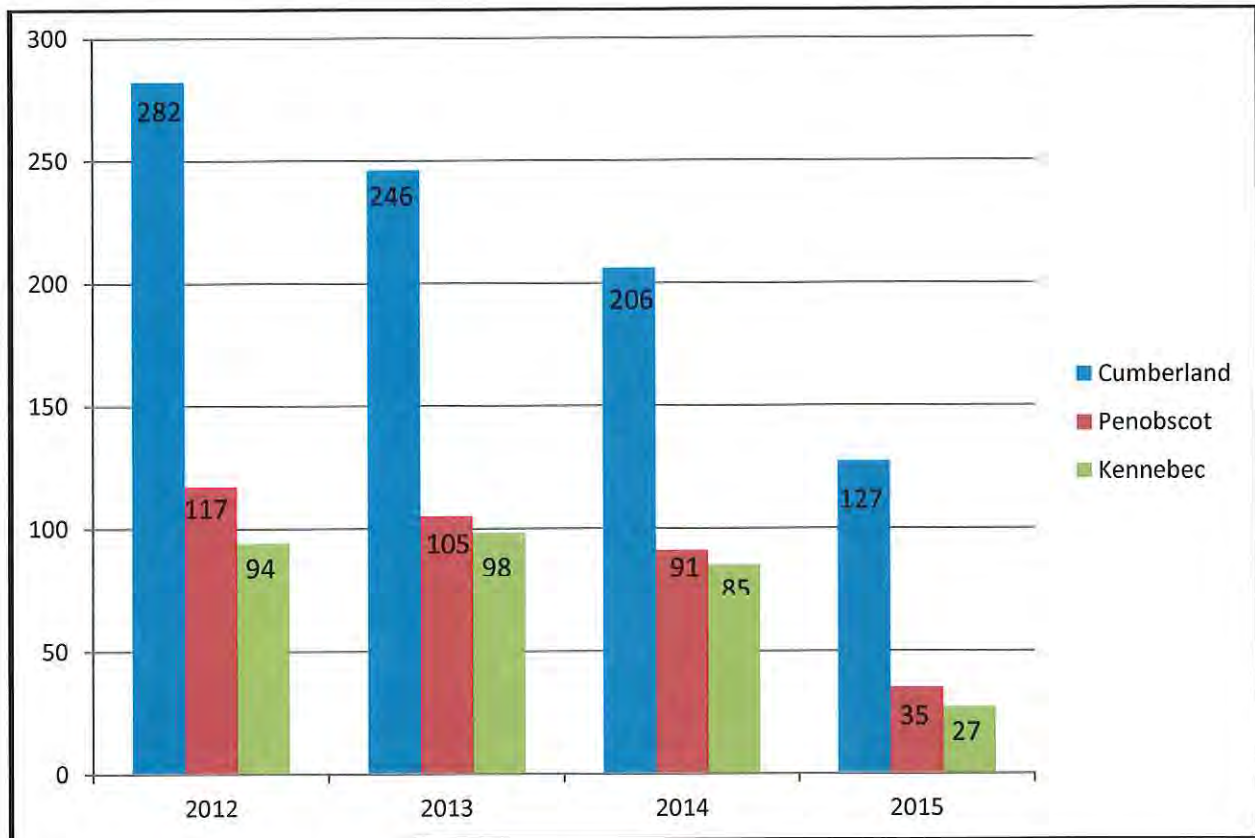
How many homeless veterans do we have in Maine?

To fully understand the homeless veteran population, it is helpful to understand the entire veteran population in Maine which encompasses approximately 127,000 veterans. The illustration below shows both male and female veterans of all ages and war periods in each county in Maine.



Some of Maine's homeless veterans are **literally homeless**. On January 27, 2016 according to the annual Point in Time survey there were 84 homeless veterans counted across the state who met the definition of literally homeless. For the remainder of the year, 173 veterans presented at 16 separate emergency shelters across the state. Of those veterans, 48 have been identified as chronically homeless and 19 of those 48 have been identified as non-VA eligible meaning these veterans are not able to be housed with a VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) voucher. Veterans who are eligible for a VASH voucher are also eligible for other VA benefits and services. As of January 2017, there were 215 VASH vouchers in Maine. Currently 208 are being used.

In line with the majority counties of normal veteran population, statistically, the homeless veteran counts are also found in three of the top four counties.



The chart above shows remarkable success and commitment from the greater homeless provider community in Maine with a 46% reduction in veteran homeless in 2015 alone. In 2015, there was also a 57% decrease in chronically homeless veterans and a 48% decrease in veterans with disabilities.

However, though counts of homeless individuals at shelters occur frequently many of Maine's homeless veterans are missed during the annual Point in Time survey. Many veterans are not literally homeless but considered **at risk of homelessness** and as a result, not counted in the total numbers or serviced through established channels. These are veterans who might for example be exiting incarceration and not have any home to return to, have a pending foreclosure, or are facing eviction. The Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee maintains a "by name list" (BNL) of homeless veterans according to this broad definition and according to the latest list it is estimated that there were 201 at risk homeless veterans in Maine as of July 2016. Some additional shelter statistics as of February 2017:

- Over 60% of Maine's homeless veterans are 65 years old or higher
- Women veterans comprise approximately 4% of Maine's homeless veteran population
- Cumberland and Penobscot counties account for 90% of the homeless veterans

Current response to veteran homelessness in Maine

Maine has a relatively segregated response to homelessness and for the most part, it has been segregated along the federal funding lines of homeless funding opportunities. The Department of Housing and Urban Development view Maine in two Continuums of Care (CoCs): Portland and The Balance of Maine.

Created in 2005, the Statewide Homeless Council (SHC) addresses veteran homelessness at their weekly meetings but the most recent statewide plan to end and prevent veteran homelessness does not specifically recognize veterans as an identified target audience like youth, for example.

One of USICH's key strategies for ending veteran homelessness has simply been to "Identify and Be Accountable to all Veterans Experiencing Homelessness". New directives from the Maine State Legislature have mandated the addition of the Director of the Bureau of Veterans Services to the SHC, and requires identification of strategies to identify homeless veterans in need and to better coordinate services.

The Togus VA Regional Benefits Center has a Homeless Team that is able to expedite claims and process HUD-VASH vouchers for those veterans identified as VA-eligible and meet the federal definition of literally homeless. However, not all veterans are VA eligible.

Maine has four non-profit federal grantees for three different programs that address veteran homelessness.

- **Grant and Per Diem (GPD):** A VA program for reduced cost transitional housing.
 - Community Housing of Maine (CHOM)
 - Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE)
 - Veterans Inc
- **Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families (SSVF):** A VA program that includes case management in addition to rapid re-housing.
 - Veterans Inc
 - Preble Street Homeless Shelter (Portland and Bangor)
- **Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP):** A USDOL program that provides employment services for those identified as homeless.
 - Veterans Inc
 - Easter Seals Military & Veteran Services Maine

Lastly, there is a recently formed group named the Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee (MHVAC) that when created was co-chaired by the Veteran Program Manager at Preble St and the HUD-VASH Program Manager from the VA. The purpose of this committee is to meet bi-monthly and review the by-name list of homeless veterans. It is comprised of grant recipients listed above. This committee will be addressed further in the plan.

The Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services has located all providers of housing and services and listed them in table form and geographically on the Resources Tab of its website, www.maine.gov/resources. Currently, there are 16 different shelter, housing and/or service providers solely focused on homeless veterans in Maine.

- Housing (specific to veterans, not including shelters)
 - Bread of Life Ministries, Augusta
 - Community Housing of Maine (CHOM), Portland Office (Statewide housing)
 - VOANNE, Huot House, Saco (Male only)
 - VOANNE, Veterans Career House, Biddeford
 - Veterans' Inc (Male Only, Single Only)
- ----- Non participating members of the CoC-----
 - Betsy Ann Ross House of Hope, Augusta (Women Only)
 - United Veterans of Maine, Caribou (In construction)
 - Garry Owen House, Searsport (In construction)
 - Internity House, Ellsworth (TBD)
 - United Farmer Veterans of Maine Cottage Projects, Statewide
- Services
 - Maine Homeless Veterans Alliance
 - Vets Serving Vets
 - VFW Homeless Standdown support (table gaming monies are allocated to the VFW through the Coordinated Veterans Assistance Fund and given to the VFW for support of the VA annual Homeless Veteran Standdown)
- Meeting Groups
 - Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee
 - Maine Homeless Veteran Networking Group
 - Statewide Homeless Council

How this plan was developed

In 2015, based on the findings of the Commission to Strengthen and Align Services to Maine's Veterans, the Maine State Legislature developed recommendations that led to revised statute for the core function of the Bureau of Veterans' Services. It established the following mandate:

- Develop a strategic plan regarding homelessness among veterans.
- 1) Develops a baseline for homeless in the State from which improvements can be measured. In determining the baseline, the SHC is not required to use the federal definition of homelessness and may include levels of housing instability or ranges of homelessness.
- 2) Develops a method of measuring homelessness among veterans in the State to demonstrate whether efforts to reduce the number of homeless veterans in the State have been successful.
- 3) Identifies specific processes for improving communication among agencies that provide services to veterans, including services unrelated to homelessness, that will facilitate identification of veterans in need of housing assistance or veterans who may be at risk of homelessness and maximize resources available to address homelessness among veterans
- 4) Develops a framework and timeline for determining progress of communication and coordination efforts targeting homelessness among veterans and the effectiveness of those efforts in reducing homelessness among veterans

The Director of the Bureau of Veterans Services wanted the strategic planning process to be broadly inclusive, including activities both within and outside the Continuums of Care. On October 25, 2016, a meeting of over 85 stakeholders was convened to gather input to help form the basis of the strategic plan. As stakeholders emerged, the Bureau of Veterans' Services ensured all partners and resources were reflected on their website as a veteran resource in Maine.

About this plan

Based on three factors:

- 1) The Five Strategies of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), updated February 2017
- 2) Honoring Maine's Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness, updated November 2011
- 3) Collective feedback from stakeholders across the state given at the October 2016 'Ending Veteran Homelessness Summit'

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness has identified five Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness and we think this provides an excellent framework for our plans. **Maine's Plan to End and Prevent Veteran Homelessness is built on the framework of these five strategies.**

Honors the Maine Statewide Homeless Council's Plan

Here in Maine the Statewide Homeless Council has developed a plan to achieve four goals by targeting five specific populations. While homeless veterans are not one of the targeted populations of the 2011 plan, we understand that the plan is being revised and **in this plan we have tried to incorporate the four goals:**

- A. That emergency shelters and outreach programs work together to quickly engage people and move them into housing, and provide them with support that follows them from emergency through to stability in the community.
- B. That there is an adequate supply of appropriate housing and rental subsidies to allow stability.
- C. That issues such as mental illness, substance abuse, and traumatic brain injury receive adequate support or treatment to allow stability.
- D. That all other issues underlying homelessness, such as poverty, self- esteem, and skill development are addressed, and an adequate support system is in place to allow stability.

Collective Feedback

At the October 2016 Summit, the group spent two hours addressing all the potential gaps in services and wishlist items they felt as onlookers, providers, and stakeholders that would truly assist the State of Maine in ending and preventing veteran homelessness.

Distinguishing Features of This Strategic Plan

This strategic plan tries to strike a balance between describing an ideal vision for our future - regardless of anticipated tools to achieve it - and describing a set of actions that can realistically be taken with the tools and resources we expect to have.

As described, a lot is being done in Maine to end and prevent veteran homelessness but gaps in definitions, criteria, funding, and coordination are sure to prevent Maine from truly reaching its goal. This plan calls for significantly increased effort of three types. Without strong conviction to apply resources and implement these three things, our ability to prevent veteran homelessness is seriously compromised. Details regarding each of these things are provided in the plan below.

1. Inter-agency communication and coordination through a new Maine Veteran Homeless Committee
2. State funding for specific one-time and ongoing initiatives
3. Institutionalized training, monitoring and reporting on our progress

The Plan

Goals of this Plan

The goals of this strategic plan are to:

1. Reduce the number of literally homelessness veterans to functional zero* by 2020 and keep the number at functional zero* indefinitely.
2. Reduce the number of at risk homeless veterans by half by 2020 and reduce the number by half again every three years indefinitely.
3. Significantly increase interagency coordination of veteran homelessness prevention.

** "Functional zero" is reached when the number of veterans who are homeless, whether sheltered or unsheltered, is no greater than the monthly housing placement rate for veterans. In other words, there will likely always be some individuals who become homeless in a given month and others who become housed in the same month, and we do not want the former to outpace the latter.*

Strategies

1. The community has identified all Veterans experiencing homelessness.

Guidance from USICH: The community has used coordinated outreach, multiple data sources, and other methods, to identify, enumerate, and engage all Veterans experiencing homelessness, including Veterans who experience chronic homelessness and Veterans who are unsheltered, as well as Veterans in shelters, Grant and Per Diem programs, other VA residential programs, other transitional housing programs, etc. For these purposes, a "Veteran" is any person who served on active duty in the armed forces, regardless of how long they served or the type of discharge they received.

Public support from state and local leaders is essential to securing and aligning the resources and partners you need to end Veteran homelessness in your community. Joining the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, for example, is a great way to promote coordination and ensure accountability across all partners.

What needs to be done in Maine

1.1 Accept the Mayors Challenge as a State

- Establish an actual date by which functional zero homelessness should be achieved (see above)
- USICH Mayor Challenge Benchmarks:

- A. Chronic and long-term homelessness among Veterans has been ended.
- B. Veterans have quick access to permanent housing.
- C. The community has sufficient permanent housing capacity.
- D. The community is committed to Housing First and provides service-intensive transitional housing to Veterans experiencing homelessness only in limited instances.

1.2 Establish the Maine Homeless Veteran Committee

- Purpose
 - To share information about results and efforts among all state organizations working to prevent veteran homelessness
- Composition
 - Chaired by a representative of the Maine Bureau of Veteran Services
 - Vice-Chaired by a representative from the US Veterans Administration
 - Made of up members of the current Maine Homeless Veterans Action Committee (ME HVAC) plus:
 - A homeless veteran representative
 - The justice action coordinator from the VA
 - A representative from the Veterans Justice Outreach Program
 - A representative from the Maine Department of Labor
 - A representative from the Maine Apartment Owners And Managers Association
 - A VA employment specialist
 - A representative of Shelter Plus Care and/or Bridging Rental Assistance Program at Maine DHHS
 - Others who serve homeless veterans
- Meetings
 - Quarterly, in person to address policy issues
 - Monthly calls might also be organized to
 - Discuss specific cases
 - Review the By-Name list
- Committee responsibilities
 - Act as the lead point of contact for managing the By-Name List veterans
 - Regular review of the list, recent count, and case conference coordination of resources
 - Agencies and concerned citizens can call any Committee member to add a homeless veteran to list
 - Coordinate with State's coordinated entry system as it evolves
 - Provide training on referral best practices to other agencies and groups
 - Report finding to the Statewide Homeless Council
- Participant responsibilities
 - Sign an MOU to share information and coordinate services
 - Use HMIS
 - Participate in "The By Name List"
 - Participate in quarterly meetings

1.3 Add capacity to report a homeless veteran to the Maine Crisis Line / 2-1-1

- Identifying veterans is the first step in helping veterans. Identifying homeless veterans is the first step in housing homeless veterans. However the public does not have a known option to report homeless personnel like they do in other public calls-to-action. If Mainers were asked to report a homeless person if they saw one, the stakeholders working in the community could utilize community outreach to assist in identifying this vulnerable population. See 1.5, 2-1-1 Enhancements.

1.4 Be prepared for new emerging homeless veteran populations and actively engage in outreach

- Use existing federal forecast data to identify new emerging populations, such as women veterans, and any veteran leaving the incarceration system, and proactively plan for resources to serve these populations. Emerging trends should be captured in Statewide Homeless Council reporting when appropriate.
- Provide regular opportunities for representatives of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, Veterans Treatment Courts, Maine Pretrial Services, and sober housing providers to meet with the Statewide Homeless Council to discuss veterans who are leaving the justice system

1.5 State Funding for Coordination

- Veteran Homeless Assistant Coordinator
 - Responsibilities include:
 - Staffing and coordination of the Maine Homeless Veteran Committee
 - Working with agencies and organizations to coordinate service delivery, data collection, and data analysis and reporting
 - Administration of the Landlord Assistance Fund (see 6. Engage and Support Private Landlords as Partners)
 - Requires establishment of a new position and ongoing funding.
 - **Amount of annual funding required: Maine Office Specialist level***
- HMIS Enhancements
 - HMIS is the software used by agencies and organizations to track and report homeless veterans. The software needs some one-time improvements to bolster its functionality, make case consultation easier, and be more useful to Maine agencies and organizations.
 - **Amount of one-time funds required: \$10,000**
- HMIS License Grants
 - For some agencies and organizations, purchasing an HMIS license is prohibitively expensive. Yet we need these agencies and organizations to participate in HMIS in order to provide complete and seamless data on veteran homelessness. Therefore we need a fund from which agencies and organizations can apply for funding to purchase HMIS licenses.
 - **Amount of funding required: \$7500**

- **\$1500 per license; total determined based upon non-profit agreement and MOU to participate (Appx, \$7500)**
- **2-1-1 Enhancements**
 - As discussed in 1.3, 2-1-1 is the State of Maine referral source. This plan calls for an increased capacity and/or training for 2-1-1 call center employees. The public must also know that 2-1-1 is the referral source for the State of Maine as well as the call-to-action with a public service campaign. This increased capacity, training, and marketing/brand awareness will come at a cost to the State of Maine.
 - **Amount of funding required: TBD**
- **Grants for Service Gaps**
 - Throughout the statewide system of veteran homelessness prevention there are critical gaps in service. Care Coordination, emergency financial assistance, among others. Rather than provide actual services, the Maine Bureau of Veterans Services would create a fund from which to draw and provide grants to front line agencies and organizations filling critical gaps.
 - **Amount of annual funding required:**
 - **\$375,000 in BVS SFY17 Supplemental Budget Request to fund the financial mandate in BVS statute.**
 - **Consistent, separate funding for homeless veterans regardless of other funding or services received.**

2. The community provides shelter immediately to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it.

Guidance from USICH: While ending Veteran homelessness is primarily about the community's capacity to connect Veterans to permanent housing, the community also has the capacity to immediately offer and provide some form of shelter (i.e., emergency shelter, bridge or transitional housing, other temporary settings) to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the community who wants it, while assisting the Veteran to swiftly achieve permanent housing. Access to shelter is not contingent on sobriety, minimum income requirements, lack of criminal record, or other unnecessary conditions.

What needs to be done in Maine

2.1 Remove and prevent barriers and inefficiencies in current Housing First strategies being implemented in Maine

- Homeless veterans and the greater homeless population frequently have barriers and past issues that might prevent a landlord from wanting or being able to rent a unit to a high-barrier individual. These barriers include but are not limited to the following:
 - Substance abuse
 - Mental illness
 - Felony charges
 - Lack of driver's license
 - Physical disability
 - Lack of case management

Other aspects of this plan include specific ways to address these issues but collectively, these high-barrier individuals are the hardest to place in permanent housing and have the greatest needs and benefit the most from policy change.

2.2 Acknowledge the contributions of non-CoC housing partners

- Recent efforts related to the creation of this plan have provided opportunities or perceived opportunities for the establishment of organizations that hope to provide services to a greater population of homeless veterans that will be included as part of the expanded definition. These groups, typically not part of the Continuum of Care (CoC) do not receive federal funding and do not participate in the HMIS system. They are, however, valuable and should be recognized for their contributions and commitment to helping veterans without the option to even compete for a federal grant. Non-CoC partners help identify homeless veterans and without their willingness to serve a known and missed population, the State of Maine as a whole would be unable to meet their goal of reaching functional zero.

3. The community provides service-intensive transitional housing only in limited instances.

Guidance from USICH: When transitional housing is provided to a Veteran, priority is placed on using it as a short-term option while working on a permanent housing solution. That may include: 1) using it as bridge housing for Veterans who are provided with permanent housing assistance but will need a place to stay while a unit is located, or 2) providing Veterans with a place to stay while they attempt to quickly find a permanent housing option for themselves. The community provides longer-term service-intensive transitional housing (i.e., transitional housing not being used for the purposes just described) only when Veterans are offered a choice of a permanent housing intervention, including HUD-VASH, SSVF, or similar assistance, but instead choose to enter a transitional housing program to receive specialized services, such as recovery supports, prior to moving into permanent housing. Further, Veterans who choose to enter service-intensive transitional housing are provided with ongoing opportunities to express a preference for, to request, and to access a permanent housing intervention instead, through an at-least-monthly review of their individualized service and housing plans and their desired outcomes for services and housing.

4. The community has capacity to assist Veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing.

Guidance from USICH: The community has identified a permanent housing intervention for all Veterans known to be experiencing homelessness, including those Veterans who have chosen to enter transitional housing, and are able to assist Veterans to move into their permanent housing quickly and without barriers to entry, using Housing First principles and practices.

What needs be done in Maine

4.1 Increase the number of permanent supportive housing units

- Chronically homeless and long-term stayers tend to be considered high-risk and hard-to-place in permanent housing without case management and care coordination. USICH, HUD, and other lead agencies have made it clear that permanent housing is the first and desired option to house homeless populations. Transitional housing models have not contributed to a direct reduction in homelessness but there remains a population unable to be fully independent. For these homeless, a permanent supportive housing model is a necessity but very few exist around the state to meet the demand of those requiring it. See 4.3 for potential in assessing the feasibility of permanent supportive housing creation.

4.2 Clarify and consistently enforce existing regulations regarding housing eligibility

- Encourage all Maine Housing Authorities to consistently enforce veteran-related rules regarding eligibility, Section 8 homeless veteran preference, and tax credits.

Housing Authorities in Maine operate independently which creates confusion and inconsistency across the state for service providers to adapt their housing capabilities to each housing authority. Consistently applied rules across the state will undoubtedly contribute to a greater understanding of placement, a faster placement rate, and could help identify targeted areas of improvement that would benefit all those who use housing vouchers. Additionally, the relationship and relationship building goals varies greatly between housing authorities. Disjointed systems lead to fragmented solutions and there is a distinct opportunity to make this a smoother and more streamlined process for users and service providers alike.

4.3 Study the potential of utilizing existing housing stock

- Local, municipal, and state programs across the country have invested in new construction units for permanent and/or permanent supportive housing models. New construction is costly, time consuming and space is not always available in desirable locations to house homeless veterans. Existing housing stock is available but presents its own challenges. Often a renovation can be more costly than new construction and zoning issues present additional housing dilemmas. There is no specific course of action that would be preferable over another but in a highly rural state, housing solutions are simply less available. A full study of the benefits, risks, challenges, opportunities and recommendations to renovate the existing housing stock in addition to housing donations from generous Mainers could serve to educate everyone on a potential way ahead for housing across the State of Maine.

4.4. Engage Landlords in the Maine Homeless Veteran Committee

- Provide a seat on the Maine Homeless Veteran Committee specifically for the Maine Apartment Owners and Managers Association. Landlords and their concerns and needs have been omitted from the housing-to-end-homelessness conversation for entirely too long. They are critical partners and their voice, action, and housing will contribute to ending veteran homelessness.

4.5. Landlord Call to Action: Honor Section 8 Housing Vouchers

- Establish a percentage of Section 8 vouchers that will be given homeless veteran preference at each Maine Housing Authority.
- Upon the public release of this plan the Governor will issue a Call to Action in which he will implore all Maine landlords to honor all VASH/Section 8 housing vouchers held by veterans as required by law.

4.6. Promote and fund the Landlord Assistance Fund

- Administered by Maine State Housing Authority and promoted jointly by MSHA and MBVS
- Whenever a veteran holds a housing voucher but cannot be placed into a particular apartment because it is “substandard,” and when it can be brought up to standard

with improvements costing \$5,000 or less, the Landlord may apply to the Landlord Assistance Fund for a one-time grant to make the improvement and house the veteran.

- This program already exists and is administered by the Maine State Housing Authority but very few landlords know about it, MSHA does not promote it regularly, and more can be done to ensure that landlords know about this funding opportunity and that this is non-punitive assistance that contributes to ending homelessness – as well as making necessary upgrades to Maine’s aging housing stock.
- Amount of annual funding required is unknown at this time.

4.7. Provide Landlord Incentives and Protections for Housing Veterans

- Consider providing special insurance for damage repair and recovery costs for landlords who house high-risk veterans
 - Model this program on the CAP roof repair program or even the federal bonding program that employs those who were incarcerated. The FBP insures up to a certain amount and only for a specific duration of time but the concept and availability of insurance for high-risk/hard-to-place veterans could be an incentive to a landlord to become a community partner in ending veteran homelessness.

5. The community has resources, plans, partnerships, and system capacity in place should any Veteran become homeless or be at risk of homelessness in the future.

Guidance from USICH: The community has resources, plans, and system capacity in place for identifying and addressing the housing and services needs of (1) Veterans entering or returning to homelessness, and (2) Veterans at risk of homelessness. That means:

- a) The community is routinely using multiple data sources and conducting comprehensive outreach and engagement efforts to identify and assist homeless and at-risk Veterans and to understand where Veterans are entering the system.
- b) The community has an adequate level of resources and the capacity to provide appropriate services that will, whenever possible, prevent homelessness for at-risk Veterans.
- c) The community has an adequate level of resources and appropriate plans and services in place to continue to assist Veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing and to promote the long-term housing stability of all Veterans who have entered permanent housing.

What needs to be done in Maine

5.1. Establish an Office of Maine Homelessness

- The Chair of the Statewide Homeless Council is typically filled by a willing candidate who already has a fulltime job. The State of Maine should establish a director level position for coordination and administration of services to oversee the Homeless Council or other area where mission and accountability to report on and reduce homelessness is his or her primary function. One position who oversees all efforts related to homelessness in Maine would greatly contribute to coordinating services and focus on individual services.

5.2 Establish Inter-Agency MOU's for mandated data-sharing

- Data-sharing among providers of direct and wrap-around services for veterans is critical to providing holistic understanding and care for by-name assistance to each and every homeless veteran. However, agencies are each governed by privacy laws and inter-agency Memoranda-of-Agreement provide a framework of compliance and understanding how each named agency and/or organization will assist in the effort to prevent and end veteran homelessness. This would be managed and coordinated by office of the state homelessness director in the Office of Maine Homelessness.

5.3 Referral training for service providers and law enforcement

- Provide training on how to refer a homeless veteran to police, game wardens, hospital staff, and 211 help line staff, incorporating into quarterly mandated training as

appropriate OR add veteran-specific referral capacity to the 211 call center. This has been effectively implemented in various cities across the country through an initiative called Vet Connection. The Maine Homeless Veteran Committee could create training and provide training statewide.

5.4 Mandate a coordinated entry system in Maine

- Office of Maine Homelessness will lead this effort
 - All COC and non-COC users of HMIS must agree to use a coordinated entry system to ensure entry of homeless into the system is standard
 - OMH will review compliance and issue best practices for coordinated entry
 - OMH Oversight and accountability for coordinated entry

5.5 Deliver an Annual “State of Homelessness” Address

- An annual report, presentation or speech prepared and delivered by the Statewide Homeless Council or Director, Office of Maine Homelessness
- Includes
 - Updated statistics
 - Shelters
 - Number of homeless by category
 - Success stories
 - Needs
- Could be delivered in a formal setting at the Legislature, or could be a public event to which the media are invited

5.6 Utilize, support and promote existing employment programs

- Continue to promote and support the successful work of existing programs such as Maine Hire-A-Vet Campaign and the State of Maine’s veteran’s preference hiring policy.
- Publicize success stories from the 2015-2016 Maine Hire-A-Vet Campaign

5.7 Make better use of the Federal Bonding Program

- Educate and encourage employers to take advantage of the US Department of Labor Federal Bonding Program, which supports at-risk job seekers including veterans

5.8 Facilitate regular communication between employers and veterans service providers

- Provide regular opportunities for representatives of the Maine CareerCenters and potential employers to meet with the Statewide Homeless Council to discuss job openings, challenging placements and issues concerning placement of veterans and homeless veterans. Firsthand feedback is critical to understanding how to help those who help homeless veterans.

5.9 Conduct analysis of laws and regulations that can inadvertently accelerate the path to homelessness and supporting feasibility study of amending/changing the laws

- For example, immediate loss of license for back child support could propel a veteran (anyone) into homelessness
- Findings and results should be included as standing aspect of State of Homelessness report

5.10 Increase capacity in service-need areas

- Low barrier and reduced cost/free legal assistance: Legal issues and lingering legal issues often contribute to a homeless situation and almost always contribute to a veteran have a slower than necessary path out of homelessness.
- Personal financial counseling: Personal financial counselors and fiduciaries used to be available through grants in the State. As the capacity diminished, providers report that veterans in receipt of disability benefits and other sources of income still remain homeless or housing instable because they are simply not capable of managing their finances.
- Case management. Case management services for veterans are seriously deficient. Rarely does a veteran, let alone a homeless veteran have a single issue for resolution. The VA provides case management in limited circumstances. For those veterans in receipt of a VASH voucher, limited case management is a requirement for utilization of the voucher. For others, Easter Seals, Preble Street, Veterans Inc, and VOANNE provide limited case management for those veterans that are literally homeless and being served under the SSVF, GPD, and HVRP grant authority. There is no availability of case management for any veteran that does not meet the literal definition of homeless. As the definition of homelessness is expanded by request, the need for case management will be critical. 2.1 reference case management as a barrier to housing. Frequently, higher risk veterans will not be housed because he or she does not have a case manager for connection purposes with the landlord. If the barrier to housing is a veteran having a case manager, exploring the ability to provide case managers is an investment in the goal to eliminate veteran homelessness. State funding is required to make this happen.

The Results

How will we measure progress?

Each recommendation in this plan was created not just to assist in ending veteran homelessness but to be observable and measurable. Either in direct response implementation or natural progression, the Bureau of Veterans' Services Homeless Veteran Coordinator in conjunction with the Statewide Homeless Council will report on the progress made against each of the strategic tasks identified in this plan.

It should be noted, however, that the Bureau of Veteran Services is a coordinating partner in the greater effort to end and prevent veteran homelessness. The Bureau does not provide direct services and should a partner organization be unwilling or unable to share reporting and results, the actual measurement capacity of the Bureau will be compromised.

How will we measure the effectiveness of our efforts?

While the goal is when the State of Maine has reached functional zero, the effectiveness is when the number of homeless veterans declines year after year until functional zero is achieved.

Effectiveness also implies that our collective efforts in the State have contributed to reducing barriers for those experiencing homeless and enhancing communication, education, and action efforts that address levels of homelessness for all those experiencing it.

However, as the definition or expanded definition takes shape and the plan is enacted, the State of Maine may experience an increase in identification of homeless veterans. This is a normal and expected acknowledgement that a wider pool of veterans may now be counted where previously, they had not been.

See chart for specific performance and effectiveness measurements.

#	Title	SOM Requirements	Measure of Performance	Measure of Effectiveness
1.1	Accept the Mayors Challenge as a State	Governor issues acceptance and community challenge across the state with reporting of expanded criteria	1) Communities across Maine in COCs accept new reporting requirements to reach functional zero 2) Reporting of homeless increases	Maine Declares Ends to Veteran Homelessness by 2020
1.2	Establish the Maine Homeless Veteran Committee	SHC legislation is amended to include MHVC as a statutory sub-cmte with reporting authority to SHC	1) MHVC meets monthly/quarterly	1) Homeless veterans on BNL rapidly housed and reported back to SHC
1.3	Add mission rqmt to report a homeless veteran to the Maine Crisis Line / 2-1-1	1) 2-1-1 should be advertised as the 'person' referral line ICW Crisis line 2) Funding appropriated for increase in contractual capacity	Advertising makes public call to action for reporting of homeless veterans	1) Increased reporting from public, family, concerned citizens 2) 2-1-1 / Crisis Line increase referrals to veteran resource providers
1.4	Be prepared for new emerging homeless veteran populations and actively engage in outreach	SHC reporting requirements should include new and emerging populations	Annual reports include review of potential populations	1) Increase in 2-1-1/Crisis line reporting 2) Providers meeting needs of new pops

#	Title	SOM Requirements	Measure of Performance	Measure of Effectiveness
1.5	State Funding for Coordination			
	Veteran Homeless Assistant Coordinator	Establish new position of Office Specialist, \$50K	Legislative headcount increase for BVS is approved and funded for SFY18 supplemental budget	VHAC provides direct support to Homeless Veteran Coordinator
	Enhancements to the Homeless Management Information System	\$10,000 to Maine State Housing Authority	1) MSHA has capability to track BNL 2) MSHA has expanded capability to add at-risk of tracking	1) BNL of homeless meeting expanded definition actioned by MHVC
	HMIS License Grants to non-COC member organizations	1) MSHA has authority and jurisdiction to issue licenses 2) Funding for licenses of non-COC managed through MOA with BVS at \$1500 per license (\$7500 total)	1) Non-COC veteran homeless groups participate in the MHVC BNL review for all categories of veterans experiencing homelessness in ME 2) Number of unidentified homeless veterans increases	Homeless veterans previously unidentified are more quickly housed and serviced than previously possible
	Enhancements to 2-1-1 Capacity/Capability/Training	DHHS review contract with BVS, other agency requirements. Funding TBD.	SOM/2-1-1 Contract is amended to reflect needs	Reporting/tracking of homeless and veteran referrals
	Grants for Service Gaps	1) Fund \$375K for BVS Financial Assistance unfunded mandate 2) Amend BVS statute to ensure granting authority to veteran orgs	1) RFP issued to organization (s) 2) Tracking of all veterans engaged with organization to BVS	1) Veterans of all age/war periods housed, prevented from loss of housing, or other areas that could have contributed to their homelessness

#	Title	SOM Requirements	Measure of Performance	Measure of Effectiveness
4.1	Increase the number of permanent supportive housing units	Coordinate with CoC for funding limits and augment PSH units	State funding allocated for permanent supportive housing units	Chronically homeless veterans housed in PSH; functional zero met
4.2	Clarify and consistently enforce existing regulations regarding housing eligibility	MSHA report on housing authority coordination and barriers to placement	Policy changes to ensure all housing authorities enforce consistency among housing authorities	1) Service providers have increased placement rates 2) Veteran preference consistently applied and enforced
4.3	Study the potential of utilizing existing housing stock	MSHA study the potential usage of existing housing stock across the state	Policy changes that encourage property owners to partner with communities	Existing housing stock used as permanent housing for homeless veterans
4.4	Engage Landlords in the Maine Homeless Veteran Committee	N/A	Landlords attend MHVC meeting	Homeless veterans housed more quickly
4.5	Landlord Call to Action: Honor Section 8 Housing Vouchers	MSHA be lead agency in communicating with landlord associations	1) Housing authorities across state receive new landlords to take advantage of section 8.	Increase in landlords accepting homeless veteran tenants with vouchers
4.6	Promote and fund the Landlord Assistance Fund	MSHA required to promote the LAF	1) MSHA issues funding for landlords taking advantage of the fund. 2) MSHA needs additional funding to meet landlord demand	1) Homeless veteran is housed due to landlord taking advantage of fund 2) Aging housing stock receives minor upgrades across state through fund.
4.7	Provide Landlord Incentives and Protections for Housing Veterans	MSHA given authority and funding to be lead agency in bonding program for high barrier homeless veterans	1) Landlords house veterans due to insurance coverage of bonding program	Other homeless programs invest and house homeless due to bonding program

#	Title	SOM Requirements	Measure of Performance	Measure of Effectiveness
5.1	Establish an Office of Maine Homelessness	Establish and fund new FTE positions charged with coordination and oversight (MSHA, DHHS, DECD)	1) Legislation enacted 2) Funding Appropriate	Homeless veteran population remains at functional zero, great homeless pop benefits
5.2	Establish Inter-Agency MOU's	MSHA given authority to require MOUs for homeless data-sharing initiatives	MOUs established; Data shared	Coordinated effort leads to reduction in time of individual homeless.
5.3	Referral training for service providers and law enforcement	Facilitate annual/as-needed training for those who might make first contact	Trainings occur regularly	Increase in number of homeless referrals from SPs/LEs
5.4	Mandate a coordinated entry system in Maine	Designate MSHA as lead agency to require homeless providers in CoC to participate in Coordinated Entry	MSHA lead agency to role out requirements of participants for CES NLT May 2018.	Homeless veterans / individuals are identified, assessed, and placed faster.
5.5	Deliver an Annual "State of Homelessness" Address	Legislative action to require the addition of this type of annual address	Inaugural address occurs in February 2018	1) New legislation to support homeless programs 2) Increase in public/decision-maker awareness of homelessness issues
5.6	Utilize, support and promote existing employment programs	N/A	Maine Hire-a-Vet continues with widespread support until 2022	Greater increase of SOM employment placements by homeless veterans

#	Title	SOM Requirements	Measure of Performance	Measure of Effectiveness
5.7	Make better use of the Federal Bonding Program	MDOL FBP POC brief employers, shelter personnel, case managers on benefits of program, how, and when to use it.	Increase in number of bonds issued to assist homeless veterans	1) Increase in number of homeless job seekers hired 2) SOM requests more bonds
5.8	Facilitate regular communication between employers and veterans service providers	MDOL attends SHC meetings to present employment opportunities and discuss placement issues with service providers	Increase in homeless veterans employment placement	1) MDOL, MSHA, Municipal housing authorities, and SHC integrated better and connected to employing homeless veterans quicker
5.9	Conduct analysis of laws and regulations that can inadvertently accelerate the path to homelessness and supporting feasibility study of amending/changing the laws	Establish a commission to study the laws and regulations that contribute to accelerating a person into homelessness	1) Commission formed 2) Commission reports recommendations and findings for potential changes, amendments to reduce potential of homelessness	1) Decrease in preventative homelessness 2) Increase in early identification of at-risk population for homelessness
5.10	Increase capacity in service-need areas	1) Conduct needs assessment and/or feasibility study of increasing capacity in service-need areas 2) Legislation to support filling identified gaps	1) Recommendations and report on service gap areas that accelerate paths to homelessness 2) SOM funding and legislation to support programs that end and prevent homelessness outside of federal funding streams	Barriers to homelessness are removed enough to make a marked impact on reaching the functional zero goal to end veteran homelessness.

----- Definitions -----

Chronically homeless – The definition of “chronically homeless” currently in effect for the CoC program is:

- (1) A “homeless individual with a disability,” as defined in section 401(9) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360(9)), who:
 - (i) Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a Safe Haven, or in an emergency shelter; and
 - (ii) Has been homeless and living as described in paragraph (1)(i) of this definition continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights of not living as described in paragraph (1)(i). Stays in institutional care facilities for fewer than 90 days will not constitute as a break in homelessness, but rather such stays are included in the 12-month total, as long as the individual was living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a Safe Haven, or an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility.
- (2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility.
- (3) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraphs (1) or (2) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

Long-term homeless – A homeless Veteran who meets the length of time and stay requirements to qualify as chronically homeless, but:

- (1) The Veteran does not need to have a qualifying disability; and
- (2) The calculation of 12 months of homelessness includes stays in transitional housing.

Permanent housing destination – Comprises the following response categories as defined in HUD’s data standards (data element 3.12):

Moved from one HOPWA funded project to HOPWA permanent housing (PH)

Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy

Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy

Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons (such as: CoC project; or HUD legacy programs; or HOPWA PH)

Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy

Rental by client, with VASH housing subsidy

Rental by client, with GPD Transition-In-Place (TIP) housing subsidy

Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy

Staying or living with family, permanent tenure

Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure

Permanent housing intervention – An intervention which provides access to a safe, stable, and affordable permanent housing destination, which might include a subsidy or other form of rental assistance, with appropriate services and supports. Interventions can include HUD-VASH, SSVF, and CoC program-funded rapid re-housing (where rental assistance is included), CoC program-funded permanent supportive housing, Housing Choice Voucher (HCV), access to an affordable housing unit, or other form of permanent housing subsidy or rental assistance.

Offer of permanent housing intervention – An offer of an intervention in which the intervention is available at the time the offer is made. For example, a Veteran is offered the option of being issued a HUD-VASH voucher or getting access to a SSVF subsidy right away, and can begin the housing search process to secure a unit. In instances in which the Veteran is being offered a tenant-based subsidy, it means that the tenant-based subsidy is available to be issued and the Veteran can immediately be enrolled in the program. It does not mean that the Veteran is offered a specific unit to rent with that subsidy. In instances in which the Veteran is being offered an option to enter a subsidized or affordable unit, an offer does mean that the Veteran is being offered the opportunity to enter such a unit right away. An offer is not, for example, placement on a waiting list for an affordable unit or a subsidy program, or enrollment in a HUD-VASH program without an available voucher that can be issued right away. Offers must be documented through a transparent, coordinated process within the homelessness service system so that a refusal of permanent housing intervention or a choice to enter service-intensive transitional housing is easily verifiable.

Transitional housing – Transitional housing provides time-limited housing and services to Veterans. There are several different kinds of transitional housing programs and they are funded by a variety of sources, including VA's GPD program and HUD's CoC Program. This document refers to three distinct scenarios for providing transitional housing described below. To ensure that communities are quickly housing Veterans and supporting Veterans' choices, some stays in transitional housing may be exempted from benchmark calculations.

Bridge housing – Transitional housing used as a short-term stay when a Veteran has been offered and accepted a permanent housing intervention prior to entering transitional housing but is not able to immediately enter the permanent housing. Generally provided for up to 90 days. Veterans within such programs or beds are included within calculations of all the benchmarks.

Service-intensive transitional housing – Transitional housing not being used as bridge housing, in which Veterans are actively working to achieve permanent housing while they engage in clinically appropriate or other transitional housing services, such as generalized case management or job training services. Veterans who have been offered an available permanent housing intervention but have declined and instead chosen to enter a service-intensive transitional housing program are exempted from Benchmark B.

Transitional housing appropriately addressing a clinical need – A subset of service-intensive transitional housing in which Veterans are receiving targeted treatment and services for specific clinical needs, such as treatment and services for homeless Veterans with substance use disorders or other mental health disorders, Safe Haven-like services for chronically homeless Veterans, or recuperative care for homeless Veterans post hospitalization. Veterans who have been offered an available permanent housing intervention but have declined and instead chosen to enter a transitional housing program in order to appropriately address a clinical need are exempted from both Benchmarks A and B.

Veteran – An adult who served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States, including persons who served on active duty from the military reserves or the National Guard. For the purposes of these criteria, a Veteran is any person who served in the armed forces, regardless of how long they served or the type of discharge they received.