

Clarifications to the Federal Criteria & Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness

March 9, 2017

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.





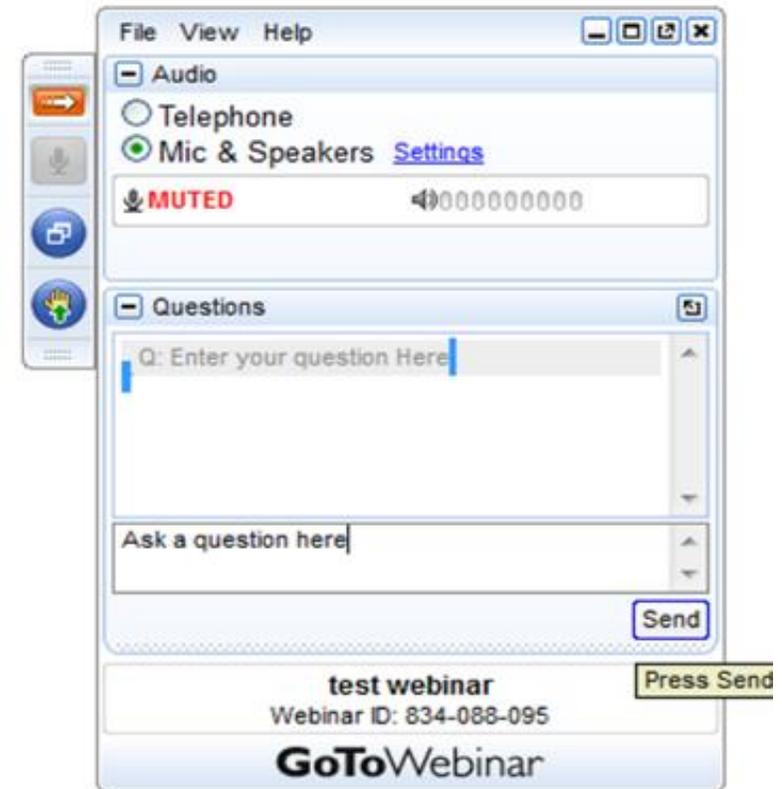
Webinar Format

- This webinar will last 60 minutes.
- Due to the relatively high number of participants, you are in “listen only” mode.
- Webinar slides and recording will be available on usich.gov and emailed to all registrants.
- Resources and contact information will be provided at the end.



Ask a Question

Please submit your questions via the *Questions* function found in your GoToWebinar toolbar.





Webinar Agenda

- Welcome
- Overview of Criteria
- Clarifications on Criteria and Benchmarks
- Questions



Presenters

- Matthew Doherty, USICH
- Keith Harris, VA
- Norm Suchar, HUD
- Bev Ebersold, USICH



What does it mean to end homelessness?

An **end to homelessness means** that every community will have a comprehensive response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or if it can't be prevented, it is a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.



Operational Definition

Specifically, every community will have the capacity to:

- Quickly **identify and engage** people at risk of and experiencing homelessness.
- **Intervene** to prevent the loss of housing and **divert** people from entering the homelessness services system.
- When homelessness does occur, provide immediate access to shelter and crisis services, without barriers to entry, while permanent stable housing and appropriate supports are being secured, and **quickly connect people to housing assistance and services**—tailored to their unique needs and strengths—to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.



Updates to the Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness

- Determined by federal partners (USICH, VA, HUD)
- For communities participating in Mayor's Challenge or that otherwise want federal recognition
- Represent a minimum standard to measure within a defined period, but goal is **ongoing assessment and improvement** even once confirmed
- May be periodically updated (newest version February 2017)
- New version consolidates various guidance documents into one package



Federal Criteria for Ending Veteran Homelessness

- The community has identified all Veterans experiencing homelessness.
- The community provides shelter immediately to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it.
- The community provides **service-intensive transitional housing** only in limited instances.
- The community has capacity to assist Veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing.
- The community has resources, plans, and system capacity in place should any Veteran become homeless or be at risk of homelessness in the future.



Federal Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness

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



Unchanged Definitions

- Chronically Homeless
- Permanent Housing Intervention (consistent with HMIS)
- Veteran
- Bridge Housing



Offer of Permanent Housing Intervention Emphasis Added to Definition

Clarifies/Re-emphasizes:

- The housing intervention offered must be immediately available (e.g., enrollment to SSVF, issuance of voucher).
- Does not require that the actual housing unit is identified.
- Placement on waiting lists or general referrals are not sufficient. Must be a direct offer of actual housing resources.
- ALL Veterans must be offered permanent housing. The type of TH a Veteran enters is determined by Veteran choice after a PH offer.



Long-Term Homeless: New Definition

Long-Term Homeless: Veterans who meet length of homeless requirement to qualify as chronically homeless, but:

- The Veteran does not have a qualifying disability
- The calculation of 12 months of homelessness includes time spent in Transitional Housing. This means Veteran can become long-term homeless while in TH.



Types of Transitional Housing

- 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.
- **Added subcategory of SITH to include:** 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.



Service Intensive Transitional Housing (SITH) Expanded Definition

- 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.
- 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.



Significant Change: Benchmark A

Benchmark A: Chronic and long-term homelessness among Veterans has been ended.

New specification that only those **chronic or long-term** homeless Veterans who choose SITH to address **an identified clinical need** are exempt from this benchmark.

- Long Term/Chronic Veterans who enter for general case management services (even if after PH offer declined) **no longer exempt from Benchmark A**
- Communities must **end chronic AND long-term homelessness**
- Veterans **age into** long-term homelessness while in TH unless housed before timeline triggers designation
- Re-emphasizes need to expedite PH placements from TH for those who do not have a clinical need and do not express a desire for clinical services
- Emphasizes need to ensure no Veterans are unnecessarily homeless, including in Transitional Housing, for long periods of time, regardless of disability status



Benchmark A: Exempted Groups

Exempted Group 1: Those Veterans experiencing either chronic or long-term homelessness who have been identified and offered a permanent housing intervention within the last two weeks but who have not yet accepted. Communities are responsible for ensuring that these Veterans are continually engaged and receive a documented offer of permanent housing at least every 14 days.

Exempted Group 2: Those Veterans experiencing either chronic or long-term homelessness 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. Veterans who have chosen to enter transitional housing programs in order to access generalized case management or job training are not included within this exempted group. (Note: Federal agencies will not be asking for detailed or personalized information regarding such exemptions, such as official confirmation of clinical needs.)

Exempted Group 3: Those Veterans who have accepted a permanent housing intervention but who are still actively in the process of identifying, securing, or moving into a unit. Veterans who have been actively in the process of identifying, securing, or moving into a unit for more than 90 days are not included within this exempted group



Benchmark B: Quick Access to Housing

The community has a system in place to connect Veterans experiencing homelessness to permanent housing in an average of 90 days or less, measured from the day they are identified as experiencing homelessness to the day they enter permanent housing (with the exceptions described below). The calculation of this average should include all Veterans who entered permanent housing in the past three months, with two rare exceptions:

1. For any Veteran who was identified and offered a permanent housing intervention, but did not initially accept the offer, the calculation of the average should only include the time from when they accepted the intervention until they moved into housing; and
2. Any Veteran who was offered a permanent housing intervention but declined and has instead chosen to enter service-intensive transitional housing, whether to address a clinical need or not, prior to moving to a permanent housing destination should not be included. Offers must be documented through a transparent, coordinated process within the homelessness service system so that a refusal of permanent housing intervention and the Veteran's choice to enter service-intensive transitional housing is easily verifiable.

Note: Special circumstances with local context can be documented for review.



Benchmark C: The Community Has Sufficient Permanent Housing Capacity

- The number of Veterans exiting homelessness and moving into permanent housing is greater than or equal to the number of Veterans entering homelessness.
- Note: In cases where the community has very small numbers of Veterans experiencing homelessness, the number of Veterans entering homelessness may, at times, temporarily exceed the number of Veterans placed into permanent housing. Even in these cases, however, the long-term trend must still be consistent with reducing or preventing increases in the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness.



Significant Change: Benchmark D

Benchmark D: The community is committed to Housing First and provides service-intensive transitional housing to Veterans experiencing homelessness only in limited instances.

- Number of Veterans experiencing homelessness who enter service-intensive transitional housing **is significantly less** than the number of Veterans entering homelessness.
- Previous version required Veterans entering SITH to be less than the number of Veterans becoming homeless, but only required a difference of one (1).
- Now, federal partners will have discretion in determining benchmark success based on broader system data and localized conditions.



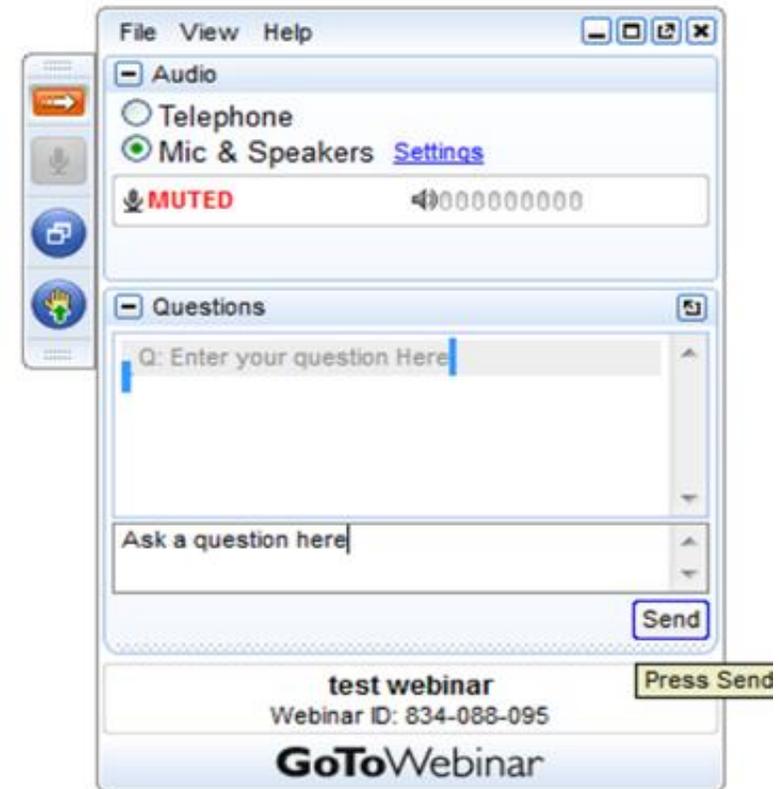
Other Noteworthy Highlights

- Heavy emphasis on exemptions/exceptions **being rare**. Don't try to find ways to exempt Veterans – find ways to house them quickly!
- Sets expectation that communities engage in ongoing review, evaluation and improvement efforts even once confirmed by federal partners – **A milestone, not an end goal**.
- The federal review **looks at entire system** and other data points specific to the community. Community may meet Benchmarks and not be confirmed if the system in place doesn't seem truly adequate to meet the federal vision.
- Emphasizes that “housing offers,” and Veterans’ decisions based on those offers, should be **documented through a transparent, coordinated process**.
- Updates to Master List Template Generation Tool and other guidance coming soon.



Ask a Question

Please submit your questions via the *Questions* function found in your GoToWebinar toolbar.





Resources

- [Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Veteran Homelessness](#)
- [Ending Veteran Homelessness: Our Progress, Essential Strategies, and the Work Ahead](#)
- [10 Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness](#)
- [Vets@Home](#)
- SSVF: [Community Planning Toolkit](#) includes guides and info for BNL, community planning, and case conferencing.
- GPD: [Bridge Housing](#)
- GPD: [NOFA and Transformation Fact Sheet](#)



USICH National Initiatives Team

- Beverley Ebersold, Director of National Initiatives
 - Region 5 and California
 - Beverley.Ebersold@usich.gov
- Bob Pulster, Regional Coordinator
 - Regions 1, 2, 6 and 7
 - Robert.Pulster@usich.gov
- Joe Savage, Regional Coordinator
 - Regions 3 and 4
 - Joe.Savage@usich.gov
- Katy Miller, Regional Coordinator
 - Regions 8, 10 and part of Region 9 (HI, NV)
 - Katy.Miller@usich.gov



Stay Connected



Subscribe to our newsletter: usich.gov/signup



facebook.com/USICH



twitter.com/USICHgov



www.usich.gov