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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES NEW YORK CITY HAS ENDED CHRONIC VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

NEW YORK—The federal government announced today an end to chronic veteran homelessness in New York City, following a two-year effort by Mayor de Blasio to help veterans who have been homeless for a year or longer find a home.

“The brave women and men who valiantly protected our nation abroad should never be left without a home. Today, we have ensured that those in the veteran community who have struggled to find and remain in housing time and time again will have a stable place to call home. I’m grateful to the city agencies, federal partners and the City Council, who all worked tirelessly together to make this pledge a reality,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

In a [letter](#) dated December 29, 2015, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, along with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, notified New York City that it has effectively ended chronic homelessness among veterans. This achievement was made possible through a coordinated effort, bringing together partners across City agencies and the federal government, as well several non-profit organizations serving veterans.

The federal homelessness designation by HUD and the federal government signifies that all known veterans experiencing chronic homelessness have either been housed or are on an immediate path to permanent housing, with the exception of those who have been offered housing but have not yet accepted it. There are currently five chronically homeless veterans who have not yet accepted the housing assistance available to them, but providers continue to contact those veterans and to offer that assistance.

“We are confident that the infrastructure and systems you have built will ensure that any Veteran experiencing chronic homelessness in the City of New York will get the support they need to quickly obtain a permanent home,” the federal agencies wrote. “We also appreciate your continued focus on ending homelessness for all Veterans in New York City.”

Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual with a disability who has been homeless for a period of at least one year or has experienced four separate episodes of homelessness in the past three years. These individuals are some of the City’s most vulnerable clients, who have experienced homelessness for the longest time and often have significant barriers to housing, including mental illness or physical disabilities. The City is committed to sustaining these efforts and has put a process in place to rapidly identify, target and prioritize housing resources for veterans who are at risk of becoming chronically homeless.

“Ending chronic veteran homelessness in NYC represents an enormous achievement for which all New Yorkers may take great pride,” said **Brigadier General (Ret.) Loree Sutton, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs**. “Under the visionary leadership of Mayor Bill de Blasio, NYC is poised to lead the nation in fulfilling our moral obligation to serve those who have served us. Committed to growing community, restoring

dignity, improving lives and tracking impact on behalf of veterans and their families – there simply is no greater privilege. . . Onward!”

“This is an important first step. This Administration is committed to continuing to work full-time to provide all homeless veterans with quality care, services, resources, and housing,” said **Human Resources Administration Commissioner Steven Banks**.

Multiple City agencies, including Mayor’s Office of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Homeless Services, and the Human Resource Administration, coordinated efforts and prioritized this work in order to meet this goal by the end of 2015. Over the course of the year, the City implemented a number of innovative policies, procedures, and strategies aimed at connecting veterans to quality housing resources, partnering with communities across the city and running public outreach campaigns to urge landlords to house homeless veterans.

The federal government will determine in the coming months whether the City has met the goal of effectively ending homelessness for all veterans based on federal criteria that includes an evaluation of whether more veterans are moving from shelter to housing than are entering the shelter system.

Since January 1, 2014, DHS has placed 1,986 veterans into permanent housing. In 2015 alone, the City has placed over 1,000 veterans into stable, permanent housing. Today, there are 760 homeless vets in New York City, including about 100 in federal VA-funded emergency residential and transitional housing beds and 60 in independently operated housing programs run by not-for-profits, down from 1,558 at the beginning of the year.

Excluding about 200 veterans in the DHS shelters who have a place to live and will move in January, there are about 400 homeless veterans still in City DHS shelters. During January, the administration will continue its work to move additional veterans into permanent housing.

“Our veterans, those who have bravely served our nation in uniform, deserve nothing less than a safe, stable home. New York City has today reached a critical milestone by effectively ending chronic veteran homelessness. I congratulate Mayor de Blasio and his team and enthusiastically anticipate New York City declaring an end to all veteran homelessness in the coming year. This achievement should inspire the city and its partners who are working diligently to house all those experiencing homelessness,” said **U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro**.

“Ending Veteran homelessness is a priority for the Department of Veterans Affairs and we remain focused on that goal,” said **VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald**. “For VA, it’s about helping communities put a system in place that can house every Veteran experiencing homelessness today and prevent it in the future. We congratulate Mayor de Blasio and his team along with our VA colleagues in New York and HUD who are working together to make sure all Veterans in New York City have a place to call home.”

“New York City’s remarkable achievement adds significantly to our growing proof that we can end homelessness in this country, including for people with disabilities with the longest experiences of homelessness,” said **Matthew Doherty, Executive Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness**. “If we know that we can end homelessness, then we know that we must end homelessness, for every New Yorker, for every Veteran, for every individual, for every family, for every child, for every young person, for everyone.”

“When our brave military men and women return home from service, it is our duty to ensure they have homes to return to,” said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “Together with the City, federal agencies, and our veteran community, we have successfully connected veterans to the critical services, benefits, and stable housing they so abundantly deserve. The City Council is proud to support our veterans and will continue to work to make sure they have the tools and resources to lead fulfilling and independent lives.”

“Veterans who put their lives on the line overseas to defend us here at home must have a safe and secure home of their own when they return; that is the absolute minimum our city, state, and federal governments owe the heroes and she-roes of our armed forces. As the former chair of the of the Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs during my tenure in the State Senate, I have seen firsthand how we have fallen short on this mission in the past. Recognition that New York City has ended chronic veteran homelessness is a significant milestone for us to build upon in the coming year – working to improve the welfare of every struggling vet, and to care for every New Yorker in need of a place to call home,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

“The elimination of chronic veterans’ homelessness in our city is good news, and demonstrates that when city and federal agencies work together, and with veterans’ nonprofits, we can make real progress on tough problems,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**.

“I applaud the joint effort by the federal government and Mayor de Blasio to ensure that no veteran is left on the streets of New York City without a place to call home. As a veteran, I know all too well the extraordinary sacrifices that our servicemembers and their families make in defense of our country. Saying thanks to a veteran is never enough. I am proud we are proactively working to take care for those who risked their lives to protect ours,” said **Congressman Charles Rangel**.

“Veterans are owed government’s assistance when it comes to curing homelessness and providing services. I appreciate the efforts of our federal agencies, the Mayor’s office and various veterans organizations in addressing the issue of chronic homelessness among veterans. I am hopeful, that with a credible, strategic plan and resources, veterans throughout the five boroughs will no longer experience the concern of being homeless,” said **State Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr., Ranking Member of the New York Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs**.

“We applaud the federal government and the City of New York for tackling this too often ignored tragedy, the tragedy that people who served proudly in our armed forces and defended our country would be forced to live in the streets. Although providing housing is a step in the right direction, proper placement of this housing must be agreed upon with the cooperation and input of the community. I look forward to working with the Mayor’s Office in examining how to do this,” said **State Senator James Sanders Jr.**

“Our heroic Veterans serve us in our time of need and are called upon to make unbelievable sacrifices born of courage, duty and humanity. When they return to civilian life, it is our duty, as a collective community to serve them with open arms and compassionate hearts. I am confident that any effort to ending chronic homelessness is obviously an imperative step in the right direction. However, there is much more to be done by all of us in public service. My office is committed to joining the Mayor and pertinent government agencies in providing continued assistance to veterans with a number of resources and avenues of support. Our unyielding thanks and humble gratitude for their service; I have an outstanding veteran on my staff – Rafael Escano – to fulfill this mission,” said **State Senator Bill Perkins**.

“As a member of the Committee on Veterans, it’s clear that ending chronic veteran homelessness is a crucial first step to providing any and all veterans in need the permanent housing they deserve,” said **Council Member Paul Vallone**. “I look forward to continuing to work with the Mayor and the Council towards fulfilling our commitment to the veterans who have sacrificed so much for our behalf.”

“No veteran should be homeless. I’m proud that the Upper West Side is doing its part with the newly announced housing for homeless veterans on 95th street, which will be permanently affordable and offer supportive services. I am grateful to Mayor Bill de Blasio for his leadership on this essential issue,” said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

“This is a huge accomplishment. Support for our homeless veterans is essential. Today we can say that those who struggled to find permanent housing have found stability and access to quality resources. Thank you Mayor de Blasio for your continued support for New York City veterans,” said **Council Member Andrew Cohen, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health.**

“The certification by HUD that NYC has ended chronic veteran homelessness is an important recognition particularly in light of the broader climate for homelessness in the city. We should celebrate this success but recognize that this is only one step in the long road to ending veteran homelessness and also know that once achieved we must be ever vigilant in the fight to maintain this status. We also hope that the Federal and State governments will take note that the resources they have provided to New York in this effort have been well utilized and that their support will continue as the city invests towards this broader goal,” said **Todd Haskins, Chairman, City of New York Veterans' Advisory Board.**

“The difficult, long talked about goal of ending Veterans homelessness is finally moving along the path to resolution. Many administrations have stood up to it. Thank you Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Sutton for your execution and management of a plan to end it,” said **Vince McGowan, Founding President, United War Veterans Council.**

“The Mission Home initiative improved the overall coordination of resources among government and private sector entities to increase the ease of access to housing for homeless veterans. It has also pointed the way for New Yorkers to achieve our common goal to end veteran homelessness. Volunteers of America believes this successful public-private partnership is an example of what can be achieved through open collaboration and will be an example to other municipalities addressing this crucial issue,” said **Tere Pettitt, President and Chief Executive Officer, Volunteers of America, Greater New York.**

“Samaritan Village congratulates Mayor de Blasio and the City on this significant achievement. We are proud to partner with the City to help end Chronic Veteran Homelessness by providing homelessness prevention, specialized treatment and permanent housing placement to aid our nation’s deserving veterans and their families,” said **Tino Hernandez, President and CEO, Samaritan Village.**

“This extraordinary achievement demonstrates what is possible when there are both resources and political will. The collaboration among city, state and federal partners with mission driven nonprofits provides a template for addressing chronic homelessness broadly. We look forward to the mayor and governor negotiating a new York/New York agreement that actually ENDS chronic homelessness among the most vulnerable once and for all,” said **Laura Mascuch, Executive Director, Supportive Housing Network of New York.**

“Through an extraordinary collaboration among city agencies, the US Department of Veterans Affairs and the not-for-profit provider community, we have achieved the historic milestone of ending chronic homelessness among veterans in New York City. This is a cause for celebration for the homeless veterans who are now living in permanent housing but it also demonstrates that chronic homelessness is not an intractable problem. As a community, we need to learn from this success and apply those lessons to end the homelessness of families and single adults in the shelter system and on the streets. The good news is that the city’s accomplishment of this goal for chronically homeless veterans provides a proof of concept in how to move forward,” said **George Nashak, Executive Vice President, Help USA.**

“Congratulations to everyone in making this Herculean task a promising reality. BVSJ looks forward to the day when Homelessness, especially amongst Veterans is removed from our vocabulary.....Remember: Forward Ever, Backward Never!” said **Wendy McClinton, CEO, Black Veterans for Social Justice.**

“Our veterans, who have sacrificed so much, should never have to face homelessness. The end of Chronic Veteran homelessness in NYC is truly an historical event. The hard work and dedication that it took to achieve

this will continue to ensure no veteran is left behind,” said **Kim Elvin, Director of Veterans Services, Easter Seals New York/Fedcap.**

“I am a proud NYC Army Veteran and I want to congratulate the City of New York in reaching one of the toughest milestones in its efforts to ending chronic veteran homelessness. It is certainly a terrific accomplishment for the mayor and city!” said **Jennifer Rivera, Director of Human Resources & Veteran's Affairs, Fountain House, Inc.**

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