



Guide for Governments: How to Help Homeless Veterans

On any night across the country, more than 500,000 people experience unsheltered homelessness—about 37,000 of them are military Veterans. Veterans face a unique set of challenges that put them at significantly greater risk of becoming homeless than the general population (Loza, 2020).

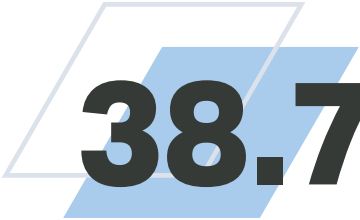
Substantial research has helped identify how more frequent instances of substance use, mental health issues, and lack of income, among other factors, increase Veterans' odds of experiencing homelessness compared to nonveterans (Montgomery, 2021).

To help Veterans get off the streets, it's important to understand who our Veterans are, and what services and housing solutions they can use to stabilize.

What Veterans are Most At-Risk for Unsheltered Homelessness?

2019 point-in-time data revealed 38.7 percent of homeless Veterans were living unsheltered (Batko, 2022).

Men between the ages of 45 and 54 made up 41 percent of homeless Veterans and had the highest risk of becoming homeless. Among women, the particular challenges they face reentering civilian life put the youngest groups, ages 18-29, at highest risk (Loza, 2020).

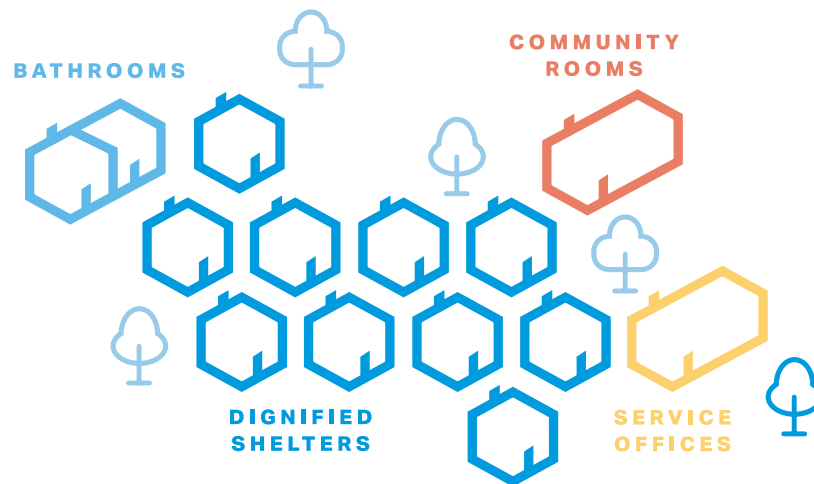


38.7% of all homeless Veterans were living unsheltered in 2019

Research suggests unsheltered homeless Veterans are often chronically homeless, lack employment, and have little education. They also likely suffer from serious mental illnesses, substance use disorders, and lack access to adequate health care. Unsheltered homeless Veterans are also more likely to need intensive supportive assistance to secure and keep permanent housing (Loza, 2020).

Services are Essential for Homeless Veterans

Caring for homeless Veterans requires many interdisciplinary resources and services to prevent long-term homelessness (Moranda, 2020). Adding to the urgency, unsheltered Veterans are at the highest risk for chronic homelessness (Montgomery, 2021), yet are often least likely to actively seek assistance through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) (Loza, 2020).



Many services are free to Veterans through the VA, including:

- **Essential health care**
- **Treatment for PTSD and substance abuse disorder**
- **Housing navigation**

Easy access to services is crucial to get Veterans on the path to permanent housing. Without addressing the root causes of homelessness, people stay on the streets.

Transitional housing – such as Pallet shelter villages – provides stability and proximity to essential services; Veterans can connect with them more effortlessly to get back on track.



How Transitional Housing Helps

Transitional housing is a short-term solution, designed to bridge the gap between living on the streets and affordable permanent housing. “Tiny homes” are a well-known example. Some tiny homes—such as those made of wood—take weeks to build, while other shelter models can be set up in a matter of hours.

People experiencing homelessness stay in transitional housing communities on an individual timeframe, with the end goal of moving on to permanent housing.

At Pallet, we create villages to serve homeless Veterans. We build shelters, community rooms, bathrooms, and more to foster a dignified, safe community. Part of the Pallet model requires every shelter village to provide access to services on-site.

For example, a [Pallet shelter village for Veterans](#) is located at the VA West Los Angeles campus. The shelters are part of the Care, Treatment and Rehabilitation Services (CTRS) initiative that expands unsheltered Veterans’ access to the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. Through this initiative, Veterans have regular access to medical care, behavioral health services, and housing services.



[VA West Los Angeles Case Study:](#)

Learn how Pallet built 110+ shelters for unsheltered Veterans



A Way Forward: Rapid-Build Shelter

Complex overlapping risk factors faced by Veterans experiencing homelessness make it crucial to first provide a physically and emotionally safe place to live. Many will benefit greatly from case management and easy access to essential services. A community of peers with shared experience and understanding helps forge a network of continued support on the path to stability and permanent housing (Moranda, 2020).



To quickly get Veterans on the path to permanent housing, they need an opportunity to stabilize. Transitional housing allows that. By living in a Pallet shelter village, Veterans can:

- **Access nearby or on-site services**
- **Build community and camaraderie**
- **Regularly eat and shower**
- **Report or look for work**
- **Feel safe with a locking door**
- **Connect with a housing navigator**

Pallet shelters are built fast, at scale. Unlike traditional wooden tiny homes, which can take weeks to build with volunteers, one 64 square foot Pallet shelter can be built in under an hour. An entire village can be assembled in a matter of days.

To start building a Pallet shelter village, service providers can work with the VA or local community. A village can be funded a variety of ways, including through private donations, federal funds, and [more](#).

To learn how to build transitional housing with Pallet, [contact our community development team](#).

References

Batko, S., Oneto, A. D., & Shroyer, A. 2020. *Unsheltered homelessness: Trends, Characteristics, and Homeless Histories*. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103301/unsheltered-homelessness.pdf>

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