



**2021-22**

## California Veterans Community Report

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

California Association of Veteran Service Agencies (CAVSA) and our members see a future when no veteran is without a home, no veteran commits suicide, and no veteran dies from addiction. Therefore, to assist CAVSA in advocating for legislation that will help California veterans, we need data. While some data pertinent to the needs of veterans remains hard to obtain, we have seen improvement over the past three years of producing our annual report. What follows are significant data points that show the situation for veterans in our state. By reporting the rates of homelessness, suicide deaths, and opioid deaths among veterans, we highlight devastating realities that too many veterans and their families face. Further, this data is the foundation to tell the story of our efforts in 2021 – 2022.

This executive summary is designed to provide you an overview of important issues, target needed action, and highlight the great work of our members serving veterans. As an electronic document, it also provides you an entry point from which to explore items by diving into the full sections of the report.

## Homelessness

Nationally, on a single night in January 2020, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness was nearly half the number it was when the data first began being collected in 2009 (see [Veterans Health Administration Homeless Programs Office](#)). In California, reduction is also significant. As shown in Figure 1, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness in 2020 is 63% the number it was in 2009.

## VHHP: Successes Shared and a Call for New Funding.

Veterans Housing and Homelessness Program (VHHP) has produced over 88 affordable housing developments, producing roughly 5,665 units since 2014 – 3,058 for veterans and 2,607 for non-veterans. However, VHHP funds will soon be exhausted.

New funding via a Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Bond Act is needed. **We are advocating for new funding to be included in a new VHHP bill during the 2023-24 legislative session;** we expect it to extend VHHP with new general obligation bonds.

Number of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness in California

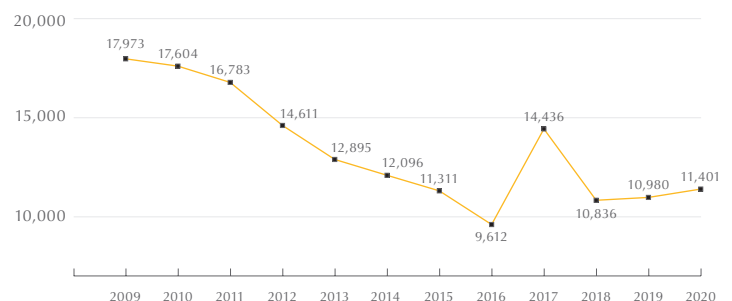


Figure 1 sources: Annual Point in Time Count Estimates, Department of Housing and Urban Development, US Census Bureau

***“Veterans have bravely fought for our safety, and it is only fair that we now fight for theirs and provide them with the services and benefits that are owed to them.”***

— Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin

## HUD-VASH: A reason to cheer and a call for support.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development–Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program targets the neediest, most vulnerable homeless veterans and their immediate families, pairing a HUD rental subsidy with case management and clinical services provided by the VA. From 2008 to 2021, the federal government released at least 106,989 [HUD-VASH vouchers](#), marking a major contribution to the reduction in total homeless veterans.



### Improving HUD-VASH

Contracting with community organizations for case management services would house more veterans.

**CAVSA members are looking to make the program even more effective.** We estimate only 65% of the vouchers issued to the state are being used. The annual average value of each HUD Voucher is about \$15,000, meaning that California is leaving roughly \$130 million federal dollars unused that could be applied to housing veterans. If all vouchers were used, 8,300 veterans could be housed. Read the full story in Part II of this report.

## Serving Aging Veterans

47% of veterans in California are age sixty-five or older. Increasingly they are in need of additional medical care and help with daily living. **More is needed! CAVSA member Swords to Plowshares is advising CalVet to design a pilot program – Veterans Support to Self-Reliance (VSSR) – to serve more aging veterans in our state.**



*Mr. Bobbie came to Nation's Finest while looking for a place to rent that would accept his housing voucher. With assistance Mr. Bobbie finally has a place he can call home!*

## Onward Past the Pandemic toward 2023

The pandemic wrought havoc on the world and neither veterans nor the organizations that serve them were spared. We surveyed our members in 2020 assessing how agencies were responding and what pressures they felt. View our in-depth summaries for details. This year our board members stressed the need to focus on retaining and hiring qualified workers. CAVSA agencies found that telehealth and mobile outreach continue to help in serving veterans where they are. **Please read on and learn more about CAVSA, our work, and our beneficiaries.**

## Advocacy Action

CAVSA member agencies and our advocacy team worked tirelessly to elevate veteran and veteran family well-being and mental health to a priority position at the state and federal level. Through their diligent work and the support of the Legislature, Governor's Office, and CalVet considerable progress has been made in 2021-2022 on CAVSA's advocacy objectives.

CAVSA and our Strategies 360 (S360) lobbying team consistently engaged on issues and legislation that directly, and indirectly, impact California veterans and CAVSA member agencies. **This year, the legislature provided bridge funding of \$50 million for the Veterans Housing and Homelessness Prevention Program (VHHP) and allocated \$50 million in one-time funding for the Veterans Health Initiative to provide a comprehensive approach to veteran suicide prevention.**

**Additionally, three of our priority bills were signed into law by Governor Newsom.**

- AB 305 (Maienschein) strengthens information sharing and notice requirements.
- AB 325 (Irwin) establish the Veteran's Military Discharge Upgrade Grant.
- AB 738 (Nguyen) ensures veteran representation on local mental health boards.