



Oregon

Governor Kate Brown

Housing and Community Services
www.ohcs.oregon.gov

Department of Veteran Affairs
www.odva.oregon.gov

Joint Report on Veterans Housing Programs

December 2021

[House Bill 2530 \(2019\)](#) directed the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) and Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) to jointly submit an annual report on veterans' housing programs to the House Interim Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management related to veterans that includes:

1. Expenditures relating to veterans' housing programs, including how moneys were expended and the source of the moneys.
2. Programs or initiatives to enroll veterans in or inform veterans of existing housing programs.
3. Implementation of programs and training for identification of veterans who are or may become homeless.
4. Training of and coordination with state and local agencies on veterans' housing programs, including "Operation Welcome Home."

Background

More than 300,000 veterans are living in Oregon today. Oregon's veterans are a rich and diverse community, spanning four generations with service in five major wars. Oregon veterans are men and women, young and old, urban and rural, gay, straight and transgender, and reflect a diverse range of ethnicities and religious beliefs.

No person who has served our nation should experience housing instability, but research indicates that veterans are more likely than non-veterans to experience homelessness, although the disparity is decreasing. California, Hawaii, and Oregon had the highest rates of homelessness among all veterans, far exceeding the national rate of 21 of every 10,000 veterans. The highest rate was in California, where 77 of every 10,000 veterans experience homelessness, followed by Hawaii and Oregon (54 and 50 of every 10,000 veterans)¹. It is estimated that in Oregon, there are more than 1,300 veterans experiencing homelessness on any given night, and 51% of these veterans are unsheltered. Veteran homelessness is not isolated to the state's urban centers; in fact, the rate of veteran homelessness in rural Oregon is quickly outpacing rates in metropolitan areas. OHCS and ODVA—with many other partners—work closely to address these critical issues that impact Oregon's veterans.

Ending veteran homelessness and supporting housed veterans requires collaboration between veteran service agencies and providers, quality data, and a commitment to addressing the crisis. Below you will find information on programs and expenditures to support veteran housing

¹ <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

programs, data collection improvements, and continued convening and peer sharing opportunities.

State Investments in Veterans Housing

OHCS works to serve veterans across the housing stability spectrum. Three OHCS programs receive funding from the Document Recording Fee (DRF): the General Housing Assistance Program (GHAP), the Emergency Housing Account (EHA), and the Homeownership Assistance Program (HOAP). Of these funds, 25% are earmarked in each program to serve Oregon veterans. In fiscal year 2020-21, we received \$56,823,156 from the Document Recording Fee, and 25% of this is dedicated to veterans, or \$14,205,789. DRF and other federal and state funds support veterans housing investments across the state.

Homeless Services Programs

In 2020, homeless services programs combined served approximately 812 veterans. Of those 812 veterans, approximately 713 were in households consisting of adults with no minor children, and 99 were in households of adults with minor children.

Emergency Solutions Grant – Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act

On March 27, 2020, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). The Act identified additional funding for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program to be utilized to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus among individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or receiving homelessness assistance, and to support additional homelessness assistance and homeless prevention activities to mitigate the impact created by coronavirus.

ESG CARES Act funds were released in two phases. In the first phase, OHCS received \$6.7 million. These funds were rapidly deployed to Community Action Agencies (CAAs) through an amendment to the existing Master Grant Agreement. In the second phase, OHCS received \$49.4 million dollars. This necessitated a new funding approach to meet the unprecedented need during the COVID-19 pandemic and provided OHCS an opportunity to add seats to the homeless services table to tackle new challenges. With this in mind, OHCS sought and received flexibility in [HB 4304 \(2020\)](#) in allocating CARES Act Emergency Solution Grants (ESG). During this competitive process, two Veteran housing proposals received the award for funding.

Operation Rebuild Hope

Operation Rebuild Hope serves veterans by providing fast-tracked housing solutions and support services to those in need. Their mission is for veterans in Southwest Oregon to have a safe and stable environment and feel engaged with and supported by the community. Operation Rebuild Hope utilizes ESG-CV funding to support a three-step housing program, and veteran community outreach focusing on homeless prevention on the South Coast in and around Coos County. Operation Rebuild Hope received a \$1,121,635 award to provide critical services for veterans facing homelessness and housing instability.

Do Good Multnomah

Do Good Multnomah supports veteran-centered communities that inspire dignity, sustainability, and purpose. While they are committed to providing veterans with a safe, warm place to stay for the night, they are equally interested in forging meaningful relationships with them. Those bonds allow their staff to serve as facilitators between veterans and the variety of veteran service organizations in the Portland-metro area. Do Good will assist and oversee five sub-grantees in accomplishing their individual missions ranging from outreach to rapid rehousing while focusing on serving a diverse population. Do Good Multnomah received a \$702,965.43 award to provide these critical services supporting veterans experiencing homelessness.

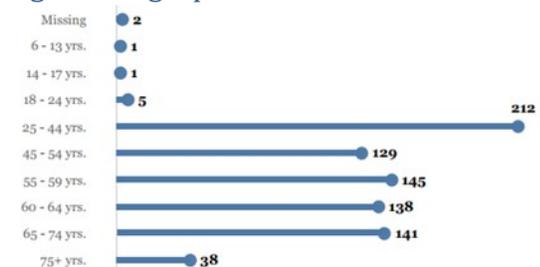
Emergency Housing Assistance

The Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHA) assists low or very low-income persons who are homeless or unstably housed and at risk of becoming homeless. OHCS makes funds available through Community Action Agencies across the state. To be eligible for this funding, an applicant must have served active duty or received a ribbon or medal for service and discharged or released under honorable conditions, or received a non-service-connected pension for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Emergency Housing Assistance program also provides the ability to purchase and acquire buildings to support people experiencing homelessness with shelter and transitional housing. In June 2021, [OHCS supported Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency's ARCHES Project with the acquisition of the Tanner Project](#), a 36-bed transitional housing complex for veterans. \$800,000 went toward the acquisition through a combination of state and federal funds. The Tanner Project is the only available veteran-specific project between Portland and Eugene to offer beds for female veterans. It is also a low-barrier project that allows veterans to receive support and services, allowing them to thrive and recover despite their barriers to housing. Flexible, on-demand services are the key to ensuring that programs can meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community.

In Fiscal Year 2020, OHCS and our partners served 583 people. As detailed below, the largest group of veterans accessing services is those age 25 – 44, potentially veterans of the conflicts in the Middle East. While that is the largest individual group, there are many older veterans who connect with OHCS-funded services during fiscal year (FY) 2019, with 317 ages 60 and older. Veterans connecting with services funded by these programs during FY-2020 were predominately male. There were also 83 female veterans who received assistance, one person identifying as trans/non-binary, and several veterans who did not provide gender information.

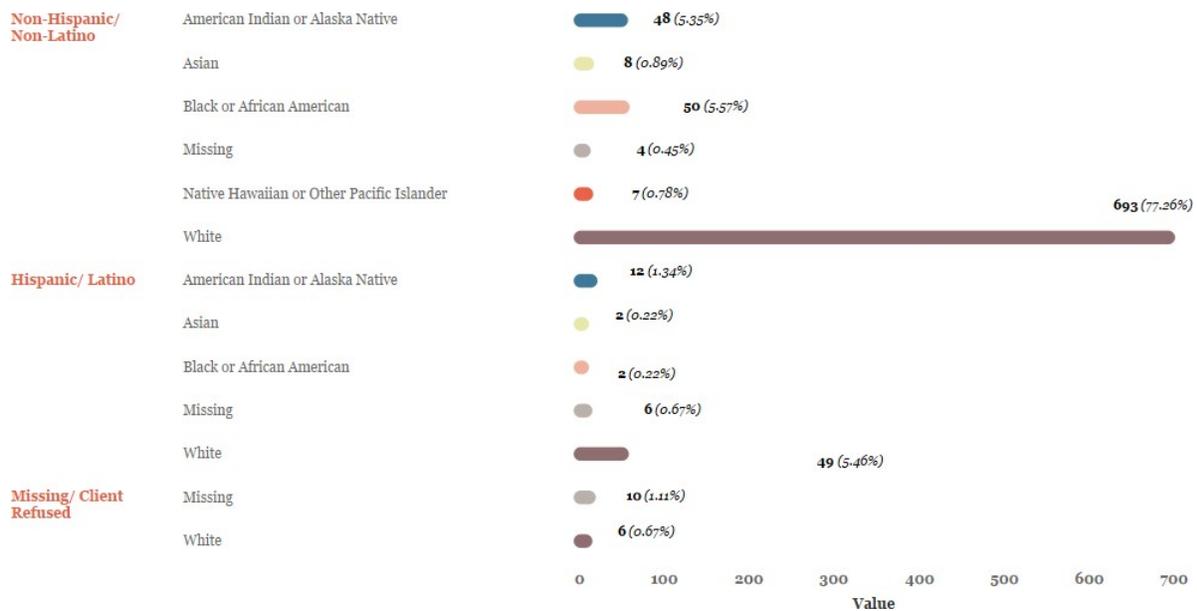
Age Demographic Data of Veterans Served by EHA



Racial Equity Outcomes for Oregon's Veterans in EHA

As part of OHCS' commitment to racial equity, the agency tracks race and ethnicity of those who served to ensure equitable reach of program resources. The largest group connecting with services were those in the category of Non-Hispanic/Latino - White. We also see some diversity across the group, with 71 veterans indicating Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, 52 identifying as Black or African American, 60 reporting as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 7 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

Veterans Served by Race and Ethnicity



Oregon's Veteran Population by Race and Ethnicity

All Veterans	White, alone	Black or African American, alone	American Indian and Alaska Native, alone	Asian, alone	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, alone	Some other race, alone	Two or more races	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	White alone, Not Hispanic or Latino
306134	279635	4724	4428	4667	985	1549	10147	12672	270824
	91.3%	1.5%	1.4%	1.5%	0.3%	0.5%	3.3%	4.1%	88.5%

Next Steps: Improving Data to Improve Outcomes

Veterans experiencing homelessness in the state of Oregon have access to many available local and federal funding streams. These funding sources service the entire homeless service system. OHCS understands that funding for veteran's services encompasses much more than just what OHCS provides. Without providing accurate and relevant data across all veteran funding, it becomes difficult to analyze and plan for solutions that are long overdue.

Thus, HUD and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are pleased to announce that they have jointly identified a solution for VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) to provide client-level HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) data from HOMES, VA's data collection and reporting system, to local Continuum of Care (CoC's) for importing into the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

OHCS has been working directly with CoC's and the VA to launch this new and unique data transfer. While the systems don't perfectly align, the providers are committed to refining and aligning data collection requirements in both HMIS and HOMES to improve this process. OHCS has recently agreed to a process with veterans getting a VASH voucher in the Marion County area. Instead of a local agency inputting that veteran into an HMIS, many times asking the veteran triggering or uncomfortable questions again, that information will be transferred from the VA HOMES system to our local HMIS system. This is a more trauma-informed process for the veteran, providers better accuracy of data, and a better process and flow for on-the-ground workers. Once this method is fully implemented, OHCS can provide the same assistance to all CoC's in Oregon, ensuring a complete and more accurate picture of veterans' homelessness in Oregon moving forward.

Energy Services Program

OHCS Energy Services Section administers programs to provide services to support housing stability for people who are currently housed, such as assistance with energy expenses and weatherization of their homes. These resources—while not explicitly targeted to veterans—provide critical support and resources to Oregon veterans. In FY 2020, the Energy Assistance programs provided bill payment assistance to 4,805 veteran households, and weatherization programs provided energy efficiency and home health improvements to 108 veteran households.

Veteran Affordable Rental Housing

The 2021 Veterans Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) allocated \$11.6 million in the form of grant funding from the General Housing Account Program (GHAP). GHAP provides 25% of account funds to developments that benefit veterans; this NOFA makes this set-aside available through a streamlined process for Veteran housing developers. OHCS has supported the development of affordable rental housing specifically for veterans in Oregon. OHCS fully funded three projects from the 2021 NOFA cycle. All together, these projects will create 49 new, affordable rentals in communities across the state targeted to housing veterans and provide 12 new OHCS funded Permanent Supportive Housing homes. The project awards total \$9,390,000.

Project Name	County	Total Homes	PSH Homes	Sponsor
Evergreen	Marion	18	9	Dev NW
Blackberry Hill Apts	Lincoln	11	3	NW Coastal Housing
Burns Veterans Village	Harney	20		Harney Co Senior & Community Services Center

Northwest Coastal Housing was provided funding to build **Blackberry Hill Apartments**, an 11-apartment new construction development in Toledo serving veteran households. Three homes in the project will be supported through OHCS Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) rental assistance and services funding and house homeless veterans earning at or below 30% area median income (AMI) (as determined by HUD). PSH is a nationally recognized strategy to help those experiencing chronic homelessness remain stably housed. The other homes will serve veterans earning at or below 80% AMI.

The **Burns Veterans Village** is a 20-home development of one-bedroom apartments for Eastern Oregon veterans earning 0-60% of AMI. The development will serve low and very-low-income veterans in Harney County through reduced rents, amenities, and resident services. The development is a response to the unique needs of low-income veterans as identified by the project sponsor, the Harney County Senior and Community Services Center (HCSC). Trauma-informed design principles contributed to the planned development, with exterior entrances (no corridors) and many homes with multiple entry/exit options. A large, central courtyard will provide a gathering place for residents to spend time outside and promote community. A separate community building offers indoor space for residents and service providers to meet individually or as a group.

DevNW’s **Evergreen** development converts an existing structure formerly used as a church into 18 affordable homes. The project includes 9 PSH homes for veterans experiencing chronic homelessness, and all residents will have access to full wraparound support services. The project consists of three 1-bedroom apartments, fifteen studios, and a community meeting space. The design is responsive to the needs of veterans and veterans with service-related disabilities, incorporating “safe perimeter” principles such as clear sightlines, sound attenuation, and enhanced cooling systems to enable closed windows even in extreme heat.

In addition to developments funded through the competitive NOFA process, the **Salem YMCA Veterans’ Housing Project** will house veterans. The development is a planned 34-apartment site to provide permanent housing and access to supportive services for veterans from the Salem area. YMCA is partnering with OHCS and ODVA to develop and construct this housing. HB 5006 (2021) authorized through ODVA a \$6.1 million bond issuance for the Salem YMCA project, as well as \$499,184 in debt service dollars.

Veteran Homeownership Opportunities

Oregon Bond Residential Loan

The Oregon Bond Residential Loan program provides 100% financing for federal VA home loans for first-time veteran homebuyers. OHCS began offering the veteran loan in 2018 and has since funded 93 loans, totaling \$23.5 million in loaned funds. In 2021, 18 veterans and their families secured an Oregon Bond Residential Loan totaling \$4.77 million in loaned funds.

HOAP Down Payment Assistance

In 2020, OHCS' Home Ownership Assistance Program awarded \$1,522,800 to 13 organizations for down payment assistance with up to \$15,000 per veteran who are first-time homebuyers and met the income qualification of earning below 100% area median income. Currently, 20 veterans have accessed down payment assistance totaling \$283,329.

Outreach to Veterans

OHCS has seen an unprecedented need for housing stability in 2021. Outreach around available resources has been at the forefront of our engagement efforts. Maintaining strong relationships with partners to serve Oregon's veteran community is our priority and is met with intentionality. OHCS is driving program enhancement to further expand our current veteran down payment assistance program and communicating those improvements to all current lenders, our sister agencies and in public messaging including on social media platforms. OHCS has also participated in several trainings and convenings, such as local townhalls, the annual Veteran Service Officer training, and program webinars for technical assistance to providers.

Support for Homeless Veterans: Virtual Veteran Housing Providers Convening

The COVID-19 pandemic allowed OHCS to look at the [Veteran Housing Providers Convening](#) in a new way. Traditionally, OHCS has enjoyed the opportunity to gather together for the Veteran Convening, two-day session. In 2020, the decision was made to take the convening virtual with a kick-off and a number of in-focus workshops. These workshops included "[Long-term Solutions will outlast Short-term Setbacks](#)" and "[Understanding Veteran Documentation.](#)"

House Bill 2094

With the help of our veteran stakeholders, [House Bill 2094 \(2021\)](#) passed. This authorizes OHCS to define 'veteran' internally within Oregon Administrative Rule. This internal definition will allow the department to remove access barriers to our housing resources. OHCS was intentional with outreach and engagement that covered the entire veteran housing landscape in Oregon, specially addressing challenges experienced by women, BIPOC, and LBGTQ+ veterans. The Rules Advisory Committee consisted of eleven members, including Representative Paul Evans and Senator James Manning. Currently, OHCS has held a public comment period for the drafted veteran definition, which included two public hearings and a public comment survey that was circulated. Once all feedback is collected and addressed, the final definition change will be made effective in January 2022.

ODVA Houseless Veterans Coordinator

ODVA is pleased to announce the addition of our Houseless Veterans' Coordinator, Eddie Maestas. ODVA is committed to addressing and preventing veteran houselessness by working hand-in-hand with new and existing partners and developing more efficient means of directly serving some of Oregon's most vulnerable veterans. As a part of the Statewide Veteran Services Division, the Houseless Veteran Coordinator will work with a network of federal, state, county, tribal, national service organizations, non-profits, and other community partners to provide both direct and indirect assistance to veterans and their families in obtaining veterans benefits.

Additionally, the Statewide Veterans Services Division administers several grants, including the Veterans Services Grant, which funds veterans service organizations that provide critical services to Oregon veterans. ODVA is committed to enhancing partnerships, and coordinating with service providers to address the unique and urgent needs of houseless veterans.

Looking Ahead

OHCS and ODVA understand that 2022 will continue to bring unprecedented challenges. Much more needs to be done. Veteran housing instability is bigger than any one agency or organization, and ending it must continue to be a coordinated effort across Oregon at the state, federal, and local levels. We are committed and encouraged by the lessons learned through this work. We envision an Oregon where *no* veteran returns from service without somewhere to call home.