

Diane Dunn
Brigadier General
Commissioner
(207) 430-6000



David A. Richmond
Director
(207) 287-7020

Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management
Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services
117 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0117
Phone (207) 287-7020 Fax (207) 626-4471

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Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services (MBVS) Annual Report on the implementation of the strategic plan to end veterans' homelessness in Maine, in accordance with MRS, Title 30-A: §5047

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

The following report is submitted as the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services (MBVS) Annual Report on the implementation of the strategic plan to end veterans' homelessness in Maine, in accordance with 30-A MRS §5047 (Statewide Homeless Council reporting requirements).

About the Maine Plan to End and Prevent Veterans' Homelessness:

The Maine Plan to End and Prevent Veterans' Homelessness, established in 2017, focuses on a collaboration of partner organizations called the Homeless Veterans Action Committee (HVAC). Key objectives of HVAC include:

- A. **Defining a measurable baseline for veteran homelessness.**
- B. **Developing successful metrics.**
- C. **Improving interagency communication.**
- D. **Establishing a framework for progress evaluation.**

As a partner organization of the HVAC, MBVS follows the mandates outlined in Title 37-B: Chapter 7: §514 §513-A, focusing on:

- A. **Identifying Homeless Veterans in the State:** MBVS, in coordination with the HVAC, continues to prioritize the accurate identification of veterans experiencing homelessness across Maine. The primary tool for this effort is the By Name List (BNL), which serves as a near real-time, person-specific registry of homeless veterans and supports coordinated case management and housing prioritization.

Significant progress has been made in strengthening the BNL. In June 2025, HVAC voted to transition veteran data entry from the Veterans Outreach Entry Data Assessment (EDA) to the Adult Coordinated Entry (CE) EDA, the formal access point for the broader housing system. This transition allows veterans to be assessed for a wider range of housing interventions, including permanent supportive housing (PSH), rapid rehousing (RRH), and other mainstream housing resources, and improves integration with non-veteran-specific services.

Although the BNL remains partially manual, the BNL Manager now produces consistent monthly counts. As of November 2025, there were 156 homeless veterans identified statewide, including 49 unsheltered and 107 sheltered veterans. Many sheltered veterans reside in Grant and Per Diem (GPD) transitional housing programs.

MBVS maintains the Intranet Quorum® (IQ) case management system, which records direct interactions with veterans and their families. Many veterans on the BNL are also tracked in IQ, allowing for cross-system verification, real-time coordination, and improved service delivery.

- B. Identifying and Securing Temporary or Permanent Living Space for Veterans:** MBVS works collaboratively with federal, state, and nonprofit partners to identify and secure both temporary and permanent housing options for veterans experiencing homelessness.

A substantial portion of sheltered veterans reside in Grant and Per Diem (GPD) transitional housing programs, located in Lewiston, Biddeford, and Saco, and operated by Veterans Inc. and Volunteers of America, Northern New England (VOA NNE). These programs provide time-limited transitional housing combined with intensive supportive services, including case management, life skills development, connections to physical and behavioral healthcare, employment assistance, and permanent housing placement support. The Bread of Life Ministries also operates two veteran-specific shelters in Augusta, offering similar services.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) remains a critical component of Maine's homelessness response system. Administered federally and delivered locally by Preble Street and Veterans Inc., SSVF provides short-term, community-based assistance to veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. Services include housing search assistance, temporary financial support for rent and utilities, case management, and connections to healthcare, benefits, and employment resources. SSVF plays a key role in both housing stabilization and homelessness prevention.

Despite these efforts, the homeless veteran population has remained relatively stable. Prevention strategies have helped reduce new inflows into homelessness; however, rising housing costs and limited availability of affordable units have constrained exits from homelessness. The remaining population increasingly requires long-term supportive housing rather than short-term or crisis-based interventions.

C. Providing Disbursements to Human Services-Based Volunteer Organizations

Providing Transitional Housing: MBVS supports and collaborates with human services-based volunteer organizations that provide transitional housing and supportive services to homeless veterans through coordinated partnerships and funding alignment.

Key partner organizations include Veterans Inc., Volunteers of America Northern New England, Bread of Life Ministries, and Preble Street. These organizations operate transitional housing, shelters, and supportive service programs that function as essential bridges between homelessness and permanent housing. Through collaborative agreements and alignment with federal resources such as GPD and SSVF, MBVS helps ensure veterans are connected to housing programs that promote stability and long-term self-sufficiency.

These partnerships are reinforced through regular participation HVAC meetings and case consultations, supporting accountability, data accuracy, and coordinated service delivery across providers.

In FY2025, MBVS disbursed \$87,029.06 through the Veteran Homeless Prevention Fund, which is used exclusively for homelessness prevention and funded at \$100,000 annually. These funds included payments of \$16,922.00 to Sisters in Arms, \$8,644.00 to Maine Veterans in Need, and \$61,643 to other community partners to secure housing. Through the Veterans Emergency Financial Assistance Program, an additional \$250,000 was dispersed to community partners for grants of up to \$2,250.00 per veteran, per year, for veterans facing a financial emergency--including some housing emergencies.

D. Conducting Annual Outreach Events Targeted to Veterans in Need: MBVS conducted multiple outreach initiatives in 2025 to reach veterans experiencing homelessness or housing instability, with a focus on engaging unsheltered veterans.

Unsheltered Homeless Veteran Surges: In 2025, MBVS participated in Unsheltered Homeless Veteran Surges in Cumberland, York, Kennebec, and Penobscot Counties. These surges, which are a VA Homeless Programs Office effort, are time-limited, highly coordinated efforts designed to reduce unsheltered veteran homelessness by intensifying outreach and rapidly connecting veterans to temporary and permanent housing options. During these surge efforts, providers successfully engaged 22 unsheltered veterans, linking them to housing and supportive services.

Stand Down Events: MBVS hosted four regional Stand Down events in Bangor, Lewiston, Portland, and Augusta in partnership with the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Togus VA Medical Center and Regional Office, Vet Centers, veterans service organizations, housing and service providers. These events served 89 veterans, of whom 82 were experiencing homelessness. Enhanced outreach to unsheltered veterans significantly increased participation, and this approach will be replicated in future years.

Data, Coordination, and System Improvements

MBVS continues to play an active role on the Statewide Homeless Council (SHC), including participation in the inaugural State Commissioners Summit held in September. As an executive member, MBVS helps ensure that veteran-specific needs inform statewide homelessness policy, resource alignment, and legislative decision-making.

Effective January 1, 2026, the Institute for Community Alliances (ICA) will assume responsibility as Maine's HMIS Lead Agency, transitioning these duties from MaineHousing. ICA's experience supporting HMIS systems across multiple states is expected to strengthen data quality, reporting, and system-wide planning for veteran homelessness.

Counts:

The numbers reported monthly through the BNL and internally through the MBVS Intranet Quorum® (IQ), system show consistency. Expanded financial assistance, legal support, and coordinated prevention efforts have ensured that the homeless veteran population remained level. Prevention efforts are helping to mitigate new entries into homelessness. Short-term assistance is outpaced by affordability pressures, and some veterans find it difficult to secure housing.

Over the past decade, Maine has experienced notable fluctuations in veteran homelessness, as measured by the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count—a federally mandated snapshot conducted each January. It's essential to note that the PIT count is a minimum estimate and is known to underrepresent certain groups, particularly those who are unsheltered or rural veterans. Additionally, because it captures data from only one night in January, it may miss seasonal or episodic instances of homelessness. Despite these limitations, the PIT remains a vital tool for identifying trends, allocating resources, and shaping the state's homelessness response. In 2025, the PIT identified 127 veterans experiencing homelessness across the state. Since 2015, the average number of homeless veterans has been approximately 95. The graph below depicts the past 10-year count of certain demographics, including veterans.

Chronically Homeless, Veterans & Survivors of Domestic Violence

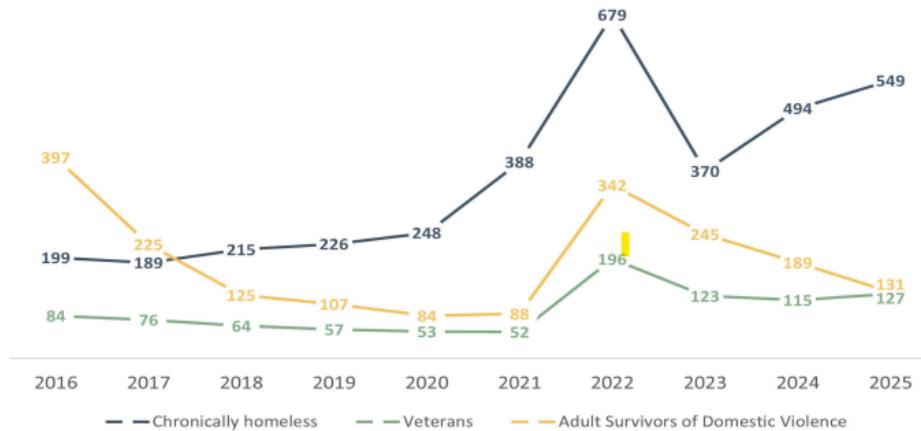
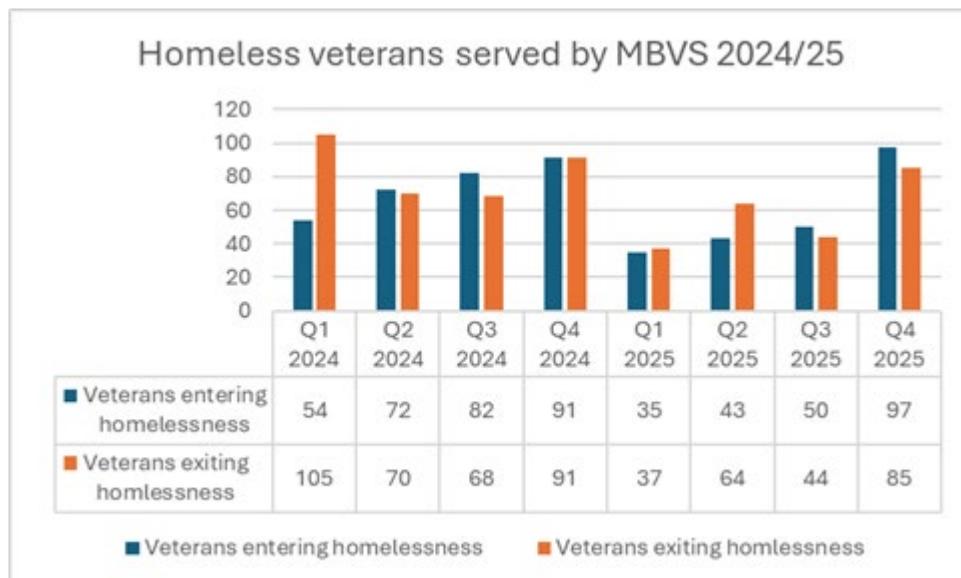
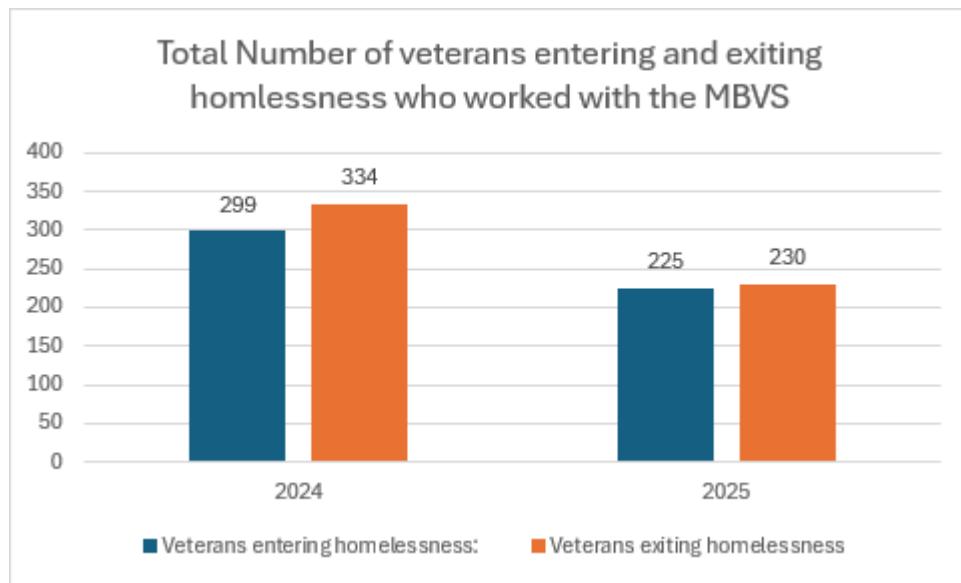


Figure 7: Homeless Trends for the Chronically Unhoused, Veterans, and Survivors of Domestic Violence. The count of homeless survivors of domestic violence decreased by more than 30% in 2025. However, the chronically homeless count increased by more than 11% and the count of homeless veterans increased by about 10% during the same period.

Source: https://www.mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/research-reports/homeless-reports/2025-point-in-time-report.pdf?sfvrsn=9bab9c15_6

The graph below illustrates the number of homeless veterans entering and exiting homelessness that worked with MBVS in FY 24 and 25. It highlights fluctuations in service openings while showing an overall higher outflow than inflow. The data suggests that we are close to reaching functional zero and underscores the MBVS's extensive outreach within this population. Changes with how functional zero is calculated are forthcoming. Currently veterans housed at GPD Programs are included in the overall number, making it difficult to reach functional zero. With this change and improvements to the BNL, we are likely very close to functional zero.





Outlook and Conclusion

Since the Maine Plan to End and Prevent Veterans' Homelessness was introduced to the Legislature in 2017, HVAC partners have maintained consistent quarterly coordination, supplemented by twice-weekly case consultation meetings among frontline providers. These structures ensure that every veteran on the BNL has an assigned organization actively managing their case.

While Maine has managed veteran homelessness through strong prevention and coordination efforts, achieving functional zero—defined as housing placements meeting or exceeding new entries into homelessness—will require sustained investment in permanent housing solutions and long-term supportive services. Recent federal policy shifts emphasizing short-term or conditional interventions may present challenges to this goal.

The Homeless Veteran Coordination Team continues to evaluate and enhance key data points to support effective service delivery. The BNL Manager has played a key role in strengthening data quality, including ensuring that monthly counts of homeless veterans are now consistently available to track trends and outcomes over time. The transition from HMIS to ICA is expected to further improve data quality and consistency. To further support these efforts, a data committee has been established to confirm that appropriate and accurate data points are being captured. Collectively, these actions support informed decision-making and ensure services are delivered effectively and appropriately.

Over the next year, MBVS plans to complete the rulemaking process to align per-veteran housing funding limits with the VA's daily GPD rates. Currently, veterans are eligible for \$50 per night for up to 30 days, or up to \$2,250 for 45 days with an approved waiver. In comparison, the VA GPD daily rate for 2026 is \$85.17 and is typically adjusted upward on an annual basis. The proposed rulemaking would ensure MBVS funding limits remain aligned with these annual rate increases, promoting consistency and adequacy of housing support.

Outreach efforts continue to be a vital component of our work. In 2026, a top priority will be better aligning unsheltered outreach surges with stand down events to maximize impact. In 2025, combining these efforts led to increased participation at two stand down events, demonstrating the effectiveness of a more coordinated approach.

In conclusion, MBVS remains committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under 37-B MRS §513-A through accurate identification of homeless veterans, effective housing placement, support of transitional housing providers, and targeted outreach. Maine has built a coordinated, data-informed system that addresses veteran homelessness and positioned the state close to achieving functional zero. Key successes include the continued use and strengthening of the By Name List as a near real-time tracking and coordination tool, improved interagency collaboration through regular HVAC meetings and case consultations, and enhanced data quality with consistent monthly veteran homelessness counts.

Strategic transitions—such as integrating veterans into the broader Coordinated Entry system and transferring HMIS leadership to the Institute for Community Alliances—have improved access to housing resources and system-wide planning. Robust partnerships with federal, state, and nonprofit providers have expanded access to transitional housing, permanent housing pathways, and prevention services, while emergency financial assistance has helped hundreds of veterans avoid or exit homelessness. Targeted outreach efforts, including unsheltered veteran surges and combined Stand Down events, have increased engagement with the most vulnerable veterans. Together, these coordinated efforts have kept inflow and outflow nearly balanced, demonstrating meaningful progress toward functional zero despite ongoing housing market challenges.

Respectfully submitted,



David Richmond, Director
Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services

