NHIP
NATIONAL HOMELESS
INFORMATION PROJECT

NHIP BRIEF REPORT:

Analysis of VASH Vouchers and Change in Veteran Homelessness
Time Period: 2011 to 2015

Overview:

A total of 79,943 VASH vouchers have been allocated to housing authorities across the country since the HUD-VASH program began in 2008. The goal of the program is to provide homeless veterans, especially chronically homeless veterans, with permanent subsidies in order to end their homelessness, thereby reducing the nation's overall total of homeless veterans. This NHIP brief report compares the number of housing vouchers allocated to each state with the change in the reported level of one-day homelessness to determine if a correlation exists between the influx of new housing subsidies and the reduction of homelessness. While many factors impact veteran homelessness, this simple comparison can offer both evidence of effectiveness and barriers in stemming the tide of veteran homelessness.

Data and Limitations:

This analysis specifically compares the number of VASH vouchers issued from 2011 to 2015 for each state with the change in reported veteran homelessness as reported by each Continuum and totaled by State from 2011 to 2015. The first year of the time period is 2011, since it represents the first year that Continuums reported estimates on veteran homelessness. Veteran homelessness includes both veterans residing in emergency or transitional shelters and veterans living unsheltered. An analysis by Continuums is not possible since VASH vouchers are allocated to housing authorities which may serve more than one Continuum. No data exists currently to provide a breakdown of VASH deployment by Continuum.

It must be remembered that estimates of homelessness represent one-day point-in-time estimates and do not reflect the total number of veterans experiencing homelessness during the year. Researchers have estimated that annual homelessness is typically two times the one-day rate, with some communities experiencing higher or lower levels during the year. If a community has a one-day homeless veteran count of 10,000 and receives 10,000 vouchers, all thing equal, even effective use of vouchers would not reduce the count to zero.

The analysis assumes that communities have deployed all vouchers after the 2011 count and prior to the 2015 count. Since this analysis remains an exploratory analysis, methodology concerns of timing are not critical. It is known that many communities did not utilize vouchers received in 2010 prior to the 2011 count. It is also known that estimates of veteran homelessness remain problematic since these estimates are drawn from community enumerations that are susceptible to many types of non-systematic and systematic error.

Analysis:

A total of 49,803 VASH vouchers were issued during the five year period from 2011 to 2015. The national estimate of one-day veteran homelessness fell from 65,445 to 47,725 during this same period, for a total drop of 17,720. The ratio of voucher deployment to change of veteran homelessness is calculated at -0.36 (-17,720 divided by 49,803), meaning that for each one voucher deployed, veteran homelessness decreased by slightly more than one-third of a veteran. More simply put, deployment of three (3) vouchers is associated with a reduction of approximately one homeless veteran.

Table 1 displays the counts and ratios for each of the U.S. States and the District of Columbia as well as the territories of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands. The list is sorted by the voucher correlation from highest to lowest. Negative numbers are considered "high" since they represent decreases (positive movement) in the change of homelessness.

Ratios ranged from a high of -1.35 (New York) to a low of 0.76 (South Dakota). Overall, a total of 19 states and territories reported increases in veteran homelessness during the period, thus producing a positive ratio, while the remaining 35 states and territories reported negative ratios associated with decreases in homelessness. Pearson's correlation between the number of vouchers and the change in homelessness produced a modest r=0.45 statistic.

Discussion:

Due to the many methodological limitations of this analysis, any conclusions are far from declaratory and may only be suggestive. The analysis was performed as an exploratory analysis that can provide a foundation for more complex analysis when data improves on the estimation of veteran homelessness as well as VASH utilization. Since most national homeless data are univariate in nature, the data also provides a simple bivariate of two key variables to increase knowledge and understanding. Limitations of the data aside, findings from the analysis could suggest the following:

1) States with high negative ratios (New York, Colorado) appear more effective at targeting chronically homeless veterans and/or leveraging voucher resources to reduce veteran homelessness.
2) States with high negative ratios (New York, Colorado) may represent states that had inflated veteran estimates in 2011 which were later corrected by the 2015 count. The impact of vouchers was thus overstated in these states.
3) States with high negative ratios (New York, Colorado) may have lower rates of new veterans entering the homeless rolls or have high levels of chronically homeless veterans. Both of these characteristics would produce a lower ratio of annual homelessness to point-in-time count homelessness. Similarly, states with high positive voucher ratios (Hawaii, South Dakota) voucher ratios may possess the opposite characteristics.

Since human services programs often experience problems in reaching the target population with a newly funded initiative, it is important to note that increased voucher deployment did correlate with a modest decrease in homelessness in the nation. The fact that 19 states and territories reported increases in veteran homelessness during the five-year period is evidence both that these states may need additional assistance and that VASH deployment in these states may need review to ensure targeting and distribution of vouchers to homeless veterans proceeded appropriately.

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VASH Analysis by State 2011-2015
Sorted by Ratio of Vouchers Allocated to Change in Veteran Homelessness from 2011 to 2015

State	Total Vouchers FY2008 to FY2015	Vouchers FY2011 to FY2015	Homeless Veterans 2011	Homeless Veterans 2015	Change in Veteran Homelessness 2011 to 2015	Voucher Change Ratio
NY	5,017	**2,500**	5,765	2,399	**-3,366**	-1.35
CO	1,641	**895**	2,074	950	**-1,124**	-1.26
GU	41	**11**	33	23	**-10**	-0.91
TX	5,396	**3,316**	4,891	2,393	**-2,498**	-0.75
AK	247	**152**	288	180	**-108**	-0.71
LA	1,266	**836**	950	392	**-558**	-0.67
CA	15,191	**10,411**	16,783	11,311	**-5,472**	-0.53
GA	2,504	**1,429**	2,243	1,548	**-695**	-0.49
FL	6,659	**3,844**	5,644	3,926	**-1,718**	-0.45
MO	1,046	**701**	852	540	**-312**	-0.45
VA	1,278	**760**	931	604	**-327**	-0.43
MN	636	**386**	449	297	**-152**	-0.39
CT	755	**425**	443	282	**-161**	-0.38
NV	1,723	**1,138**	1,240	860	**-380**	-0.33
IA	390	**190**	267	207	**-60**	-0.32
NM	501	**286**	364	278	**-86**	-0.30
AL	1,123	**658**	649	474	**-175**	-0.27
AZ	2,014	**1,334**	1,528	1,220	**-308**	-0.23
NE	456	**286**	310	247	**-63**	-0.22
KS	643	**333**	384	311	**-73**	-0.22
DC	1,034	**515**	515	408	**-107**	-0.21
NJ	1,208	**658**	811	696	**-115**	-0.17
RI	211	**96**	123	107	**-16**	-0.17
WA	2,477	**1,372**	1,478	1,293	**-185**	-0.13
NC	1,790	**1,195**	1,248	1,092	**-156**	-0.13
WI	867	**582**	607	534	**-73**	-0.13
MA	2,233	**1,281**	1,268	1,133	**-135**	-0.11
KY	935	**580**	636	591	**-45**	-0.08
OH	2,219	**1,469**	1,279	1,183	**-96**	-0.07
UT	464	**289**	345	337	**-8**	-0.03
TN	1,513	**908**	965	945	**-20**	-0.02
PA	2,327	**1,272**	1,392	1,375	**-17**	-0.01
OK	559	**404**	356	351	**-5**	-0.01
OR	1,718	**1,125**	1,474	1,464	**-10**	-0.01
ID	271	**181**	250	249	**-1**	-0.01
MS	579	**399**	205	206	**1**	0.00
WV	385	**170**	302	305	**3**	0.02
MD	1,279	**859**	696	714	**18**	0.02
NH	310	**175**	126	138	**12**	0.07
MT	438	**343**	251	277	**26**	0.08
IL	2,262	**1,632**	1,081	1,226	**145**	0.09
MI	1,877	**1,182**	959	1,067	**108**	0.09
SC	935	**615**	612	681	**69**	0.11
IN	1,057	**677**	714	790	**76**	0.11
VI	17	**17**	32	34	**2**	0.12
ND	190	**95**	124	137	**13**	0.14
AR	521	**311**	411	456	**45**	0.14
DE	186	**126**	55	79	**24**	0.19
ME	196	**101**	127	151	**24**	0.24
WY	192	**97**	83	112	**29**	0.30
VT	192	**112**	81	119	**38**	0.34
PR	152	**72**	137	164	**27**	0.38
HI	563	**418**	505	692	**187**	0.45
SD	259	**89**	109	177	**68**	0.76
TOTAL	**79,943**	**49,308**	**65,445**	**47,725**	**-17,720**	**-0.36**

Source: HUD Exchange 2015
Data compiled by the National Homeless Information Project