



New York City Reduces Veteran Homelessness By 64 Percent

Being without a home is a serious situation for anyone, but when homelessness affects those who have risked their lives for their country, we have a special obligation to help. The City's Veterans Task Force, which includes HRA and many other government agencies, service providers and community groups, has worked diligently to find homes for all homeless veterans. Over the course of three years, the City has reduced the homeless veteran population by 64%. That's 3,032 NYC veterans that now have stable supportive housing.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) recently honored New York City as one of only two cities nationwide that has cut their homeless veteran population by more than half over the past three years. This unprecedented decrease is the result of the City's commitment to ending veteran homelessness, and has been accomplished through collaboration, communication, and cooperation among government and non-government agencies.

Craig Retchless, Director of HRA's Customized Assistance Services' Placement, Assessment and Client Tracking unit, represents HRA on the Task Force. He and the other Task Force members were recently honored at an NAEH's *Never Another Homeless Veteran Awards Ceremony* in Washington DC.

"The homeless veterans who need our help inspire me to work harder to find them permanent housing," said Mr. Retchless. "Knowing their story and the sacrifices they made for our country really motivates me and my colleagues to continue our efforts to end veteran homelessness in NYC. I was never in the military, but I feel an important sense of purpose by assisting those who have served."

The New York City Veterans Task Force includes HRA, the Department of Homeless Services, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, NYC Housing Authority and a number of community-based organizations that serve veterans. The Task Force is dedicated to solving many of the systemic issues facing homeless veterans, breaking down the barriers to housing placement through communication and coordination, and conducting case conferences to match the most vulnerable individuals with a supportive housing provider that has the right level of support. The Task Force also works to connect veterans to other needed services like food assistance and financial assistance with the apartment security deposit.

"The Task Force started by prioritizing the chronically homeless, and I'm happy to say there are now very few chronically homeless veterans in New York City," said Mr. Retchless. "Going forward, we want to ensure shelter providers know all of the services and housing options available. We'll continue doing everything we can to improve the system of housing placement, but we also want to empower the supportive housing and service providers to take action to end homelessness."

"It's an accomplishment every time we successfully house a veteran. It takes **many** people to make it happen. The team of people I have the pleasure to work with at HRA and my colleagues at DHS, HPD,

NYCHA and the VA recognize how our decisions impact each individual and strive to find the best and fastest way to resolve their homeless situation.”