



Homeless in America:

Responding to the challenge of
homelessness among veterans

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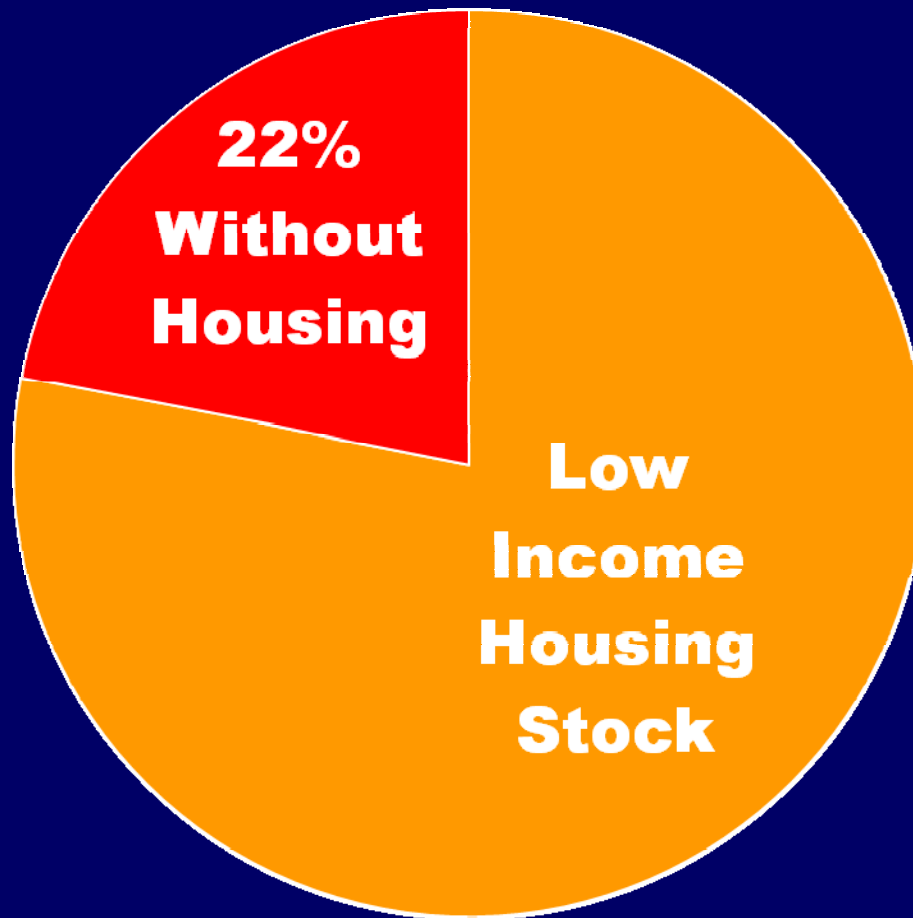
5 Distinct Periods of Homelessness in America

1. Colonial Times
2. Pre-Industrial Period
3. Post-Civil War
4. Great Depression
5. **Contemporary Period (1980 to present)**

Current Period of Homelessness (80's+)

- Poor economy in 70's and early 80's (compounded by our current crisis)
- Shift from manufacturing to service
- Loss of affordable housing
- Significant unemployment

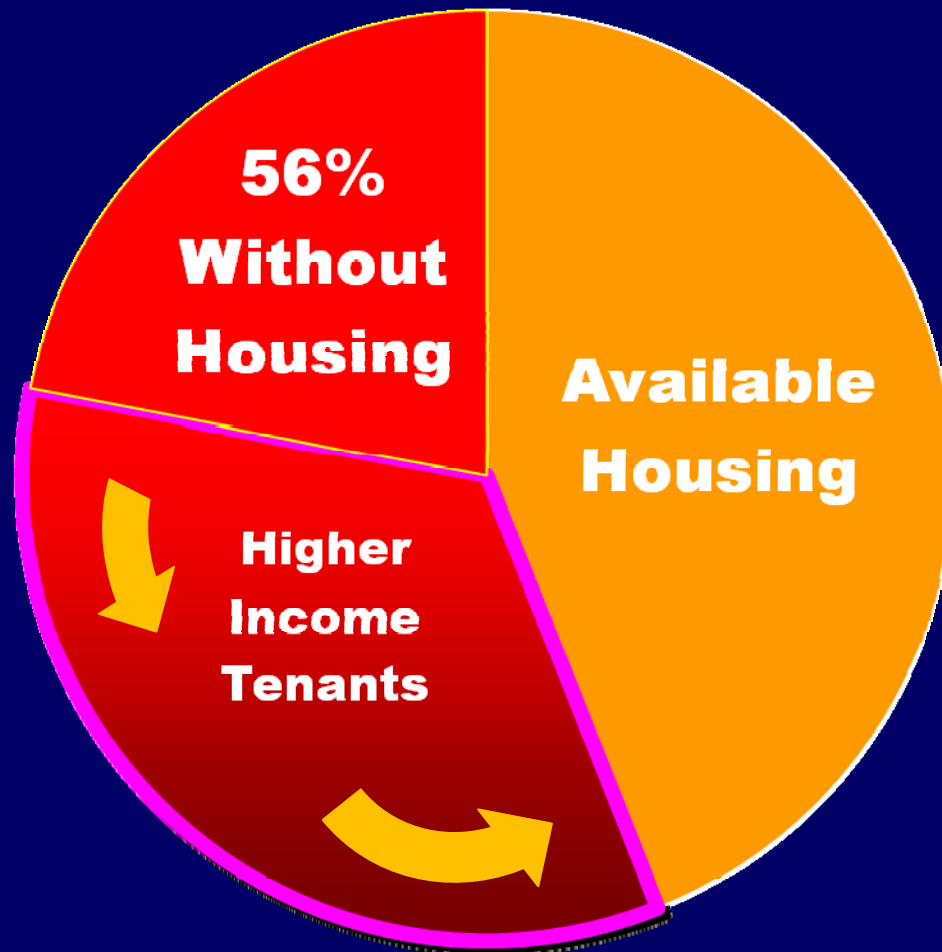
Limited Low Income Housing



■ **78 Units for every 100 in Need**

■ **22% Without Housing**

Even Fewer Units Available



■ **44% Units available because...**

■ **34% Used by Higher Income Tenants**

■ **56% Without Housing**

Homeless Veterans

- 107,000 Homeless Veterans in America
- 10 - 20% of Homeless are Veterans
 - Veterans make up 11% of US population
 - Only 2% of the Veterans are Homeless
- 4.5 % of Homeless Vets are from households with children

Why Veterans

- Prolonged Separation from Supports
- Highly Stressful Training and Service
- Some Skills Don't Translate Directly
- Difficulty Adjusting Back Home

Mental Health Needs of Homeless Veterans

- 66% Drug or Alcohol Abuse
- 54% Serious Psychiatric Illness
- 39% Dual Diagnosis
- 58% Health / Physical Problems

Legal and Credit Problems

- Mounting debt during homelessness
 - Unpaid Student Loans
 - Back Taxes
 - Unpaid Child Support while Unemployed
- Unresolved Legal Issues
 - Warrants and Suspended License
- Garnishments drive veterans into the underground economy - “off the books.”

VA Five Year Plan to Eliminate Homelessness Among Veterans

1. Outreach / Education
2. Prevention
3. Treatment
4. Housing / Supportive Service
5. Income / Employment / Benefits
6. Community Partnerships

To Be Covered Today

- Traditional Strengths of the VA
- Bold New Initiatives
- Role of Psychology in the Future of VA
efforts to end homelessness among vets

Traditional Strengths of VA

- State of the Art Treatments
 - Training, Research and Development
 - Empirically Supported Tx and Best Practices
- Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Compensated Work Therapy (CWT / ITP)
 - Supportive Employment
- Supportive Housing
 - CWT - Transitional Housing
 - Grant & Per Diem Transitional Housing

Bold New Initiatives

- Outreach and Education
 - Getting the word out
 - Meeting them where they are
- Prevention Programs (up stream)
 - Primary and secondary prevention
- Permanent Housing (down stream)
 - HUD-VASH \cong “Section 8 with Case Management”
- Community Partnerships (in every direction)

Outreach and Education

● Taking it to the Streets

- Shelters
- Soup Kitchens
- Stand Downs
- Street Outreach

● Getting the Word Out

- Media campaign regarding services
- VA National Homeless Call Center

Role of Psychologists in Outreach and Education

● Articulate Spokespersons

- Highly developed conceptual skills - to frame the issues clearly and succinctly
- Well-honed communication skills - in writing and public speaking

● Bring Credibility and Respect

- “Doctorate” communicates expertise
- Media outlets, public hearings, zoning boards

New Prevention Initiatives

- HUD-VA Prevention Pilot
 - Multi-site, three-year pilot project
 - Providing early intervention to recently discharged veterans and their families
- Supportive Services for Vets and Families
 - Providing grants and technical assistance
 - To non-profit organizations for services
- Contract Emergency Housing

Criminal Justice Initiatives

- Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO)
 - Outreach and linkage services
 - Early stages of the justice system
 - Vet courts, drug courts, mental health courts
 - Education and training to Law Enforcement
- Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV)
 - In-reach to incarcerated veterans
 - Transitioning out of the prison system

Role of Psychology in Prevention Programs - APA Div 27

- Expand “helping” beyond traditional psychotherapy to promote wellness.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate programs.
- Build collaborative relationships with groups and organizations to solve social problems.
- Consult with organizations and provide tools to build capacity to address social problems.
- Reduce social inequalities and empower marginalized people.

Restoring Our Capacity

- Preparing for Returning OEF/OIF Vets
- Uniform Mental Health Services
- Mental Health Enhancement Initiatives, e.g.
 - Adding Psychologists to Residential Care
 - Including Specialists (Addiction Psychologists)

Role of Psychology in Treatment of Homelessness

- Full range of psychological problems
 - Anxiety, Depression, PTSD
 - Substance Abuse
 - Serious Mental Illness
- Unique contributions of Psychologists
 - Differential Diagnosis of Serious Mental Illness
 - Neuropsychological Evaluations (TBI, etc)

Management of Information

- National Homeless Registry

- Database to track and monitor homeless vets
- A data warehouse for utilization and outcome

- Management Information System

- “Dashboard” of program-specific metrics
- Structural, process and outcome measures
- Available monthly and quarterly

Role of Psychology in Research & Data Management

- Research Design
- Data Storage and Analysis
- Developing our knowledge of the causes, contributing factors, and effective interventions to end homelessness

Psychology Leadership

- Developing New Interventions
- Designing New Programs
- Training and Supervising Staff
- Administering Programs and Coordinating
Complex Service Delivery Systems