



Yesenia Mata  
COMMISSIONER

Glenda Villareal  
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

## **Testimony Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Veterans**

### **Preliminary Budget Hearing: Veterans**

**Submitted by:  
Yesenia Mata  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Veterans' Services**

**March 20, 2026**

Good morning, Chair and members of the Veterans Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Yesenia Mata, and I serve as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans' Services.

I also serve as a Captain in the U.S. Army Reserves and as a military spouse, I understand that when one person serves, the whole family serves.

DVS exists because New York City's Veterans wanted a place that understands their needs, helps them access services in a culturally competent way, and supports them and their families through complex systems.

New York City is home to about 131,000 veterans. Our role is to help them navigate these complex systems by turning options into clear, workable plans. When a veteran is at risk of losing housing, we step in early, connecting them with the right city partners and veteran-specific resources to stabilize the situation.

When someone feels overwhelmed by a federal claims process, we help organize their documents, track deadlines, and keep the claim moving forward. And when a veteran isn't sure where to turn for work, food support, or mental health services, we connect them to the right partners and stay involved to make sure that the connection works.

In FY25, DVS directly served 1,509 Veterans, including 393 women Veterans, across housing stabilization, employment pathways, VA claims navigation, entrepreneurship support, and care coordination. These are documented service interactions tied to next steps, not just passive referrals.

With that as the baseline, I want to speak briefly about what the FY27 Preliminary Budget supports.



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Under the January Plan, DVS's budget changes from \$7.7 million in FY26 to \$6.6 million in FY27. I want to add an important clarification for the record. The FY27 figure for the January Plan is not the full picture of the resources we expect to have available by the start of the fiscal year. As we move from the Preliminary Budget to the Adopted Budget, we anticipate updates that will affect the FY27 total, including:

- The rollover of State Dwyer grant funds from FY26 into FY27; and
- any discretionary funding the City Council may provide in FY27

So, while we take the January Plan seriously and are operating within those means, we also expect the FY27 budget picture to evolve as these items become finalized.

During this budget hearing, it is also important to be clear about DVS' role.

The VA is the one that provides health care and federal benefits. DVS does not duplicate that. Our role is to help Veterans access what they earned by translating the process into a manageable plan, supporting Veterans through the steps, and connecting them to City and community resources that fill gaps in real life. We also serve Veterans who are not connected to the VA at all, including those who do not self-identify until they need help. We cannot solve every federal issue, but we can help make sure Veterans do not fall between systems.

What matters most is how we manage the plan in front of us. During this budget period under the January Plan, we are focused on maintaining consistent service delivery, keeping partners aligned, and ensuring we have disciplined internal operations, so Veterans continue to receive timely, effective support. Looking ahead to FY27, we will have 50 authorized positions and anticipate further budget updates

Veterans answered the call to serve us. Our responsibility is to be there when they need us.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.



Community Healthcare Network Testimony  
For Committee on Veterans

March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Erin Verrier and I serve as Director of Government and External Affairs for Community Healthcare Network, otherwise known as CHN. CHN is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) with 14 sites citywide that provide critical primary care and social services for patients in underserved communities. Reaching close to 65,000 individuals annually, CHN welcomes patients of all ages, regardless of their ability to pay.

While our services are many, I would like to highlight the work we do for Veterans, particularly for Veterans mental health. CHN's Military Family Wellness Program connects active and former service members to health and social services. Each participant is screened and assessed for mental health needs, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, by a licensed clinical social worker and can receive referrals for services like individual and family counseling, psychiatry, and medication management, as well as medical care, dental services, and other social services, including legal support services provided by our program partner, the Veterans Advocacy Project.

With the Veterans Advocacy Project, our program participants can receive assistance for public benefits, VA claims, discharge upgrade applications, housing support, and other civil legal issues. The Veterans Advocacy Project works closely with CHN staff to ensure continuity of care and provides CHN staff training on cultural competency when working with Veterans and understanding their legal needs.

To speak to our program's impact, in one example, a 44-year-old Army veteran was referred to our program to address his mental health concerns and housing instability. A CHN social worker provided a mental health assessment, identified the need for a higher level of care, and helped him schedule an initial intake appointment with VA health care for treatment. The social worker also referred the patient to the Veterans Advocacy Project for assistance with rental arrears. The patient is now attending regular talk therapy and psychiatric appointments with VA health care, while receiving legal representation for his housing concerns.

In another example, a 33-year-old U.S. Navy veteran and single mother of two was referred to our program given her childcare and employment concerns. With CHN, she learned how to apply for a childcare voucher, and how to contact the Veteran Center for employment assistance. The patient is now approved for childcare vouchers and is working closely with the Veteran Center to attend career events and build relations with future employers.

CHN is proud and honored to work with our Veteran community and greatly appreciates City Council's support for our program. We are committed to its continuation. Thank you.

**GallopNYC — NYC Council Testimony**  
**Committee on Veterans | Preliminary Budget Hearing | FY2027**  
**Jennie Bucove, Executive Director**

Good morning, Council Member Morano and members of the Committee.

I'm Jennie Bucove, Executive Director of GallopNYC — New York City's largest therapeutic equine-assisted nonprofit, based in Queens.

Each week, we serve over 400 New Yorkers — including approximately 40 veterans and their family members — through riding and unmounted programs. Everyone that comes to us receives a subsidy; no one is turned away for cost.

Our veterans programs provide hands-on equine care, riding instruction, and opportunities to build connection and community in a setting that feels comfortable and non-clinical. We partner directly with the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System, serving veterans from both the St. Albans and Brooklyn campuses each month, and we are expanding this work through a Veterans Family Program that brings veterans and their children together to rebuild connection and strengthen family relationships.

As one participant shared:

“As a veteran with no prior horse experience, GallopNYC restored a sense of camaraderie that was missing from civilian life. The relationships with the horses and instructors have been a powerful source of healing for my anxiety, depression, and trauma-related challenges.”

We request your support in three areas:

\$150,000 in DVS funding to sustain and expand our veterans programs, which are provided for free to participants. Demand continues to grow, particularly through our VA partnerships.

Second, capital funding for an indoor arena, including \$250,000 from the Council as part of a broader \$3.25 million public funding request. This project is already partially funded and will allow us to operate year-round—eliminating cancellations and ensuring the consistency that veterans and families rely on.

Third, \$200,000 for autism programming, supporting the one-third of our participants on the spectrum who depend on structured, consistent programming. These riders in particular benefit from routine and predictability, which the indoor arena will help ensure.

GallopNYC is a cost-effective, high-impact model that improves mental health, strengthens families, and expands access to care outside traditional clinical settings.

Thank you for your support and the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions.



Thank you for holding today's hearing. My name is Charlotte Martin, and I am the director of access initiatives at the Intrepid Museum. I have the privilege of overseeing the Museum's Veterans' Access Initiative. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the generous support of the City Council. Our programs would not be possible without this support. Thank you to Chair Morano and the Committee members and staff for your efforts to connect veterans with one another and with cultural resources like the Intrepid Museum.

The mission of the Intrepid Museum is to advance the understanding of the intersection of history and innovation in order to honor our heroes, educate the public and inspire future generations. As part of this mission, the Museum serves as New York's cultural home for veterans and military families, welcoming more than 14,000 veterans each year through free admission and programs that foster connection, purpose, and community. Now in its 11th year, the Veterans Access Initiative has grown into a comprehensive, veteran informed model of engagement that supports reintegration through cultural participation, peer connection, and sustained civic involvement. The initiative reflects consistent growth, measurable impact, and trusted relationships across New York's veteran community.

At our cornerstone veterans-only program, Intrepid After Hours, veterans of all branches, service eras and backgrounds explore the Museum, get a behind-the-scenes experience or workshop, and then connect over a catered dinner. For the past year we have had a veteran representative of the local VA system available during dinner, and we have renewed our relationship with the NYC Department of Veterans Services to also have a veteran DVS representative at upcoming programs, available to answer questions and share resources. We have heard from veterans how meaningful it has been to learn about resources and opportunities from other veterans in a non-clinical setting. Several have even gone on to become volunteers at the Intrepid Museum and other organizations. Veteran volunteers consistently describe Intrepid as the place where they regain purpose while contributing to civic life.

This connection also extends to families. Active military families have an opportunity to explore the city and recently returned veterans have a way to spend time and reconnect with loved ones. The Museum's exhibitions and tours give families an entry point to talk about their veteran's service. Military and veteran families also receive free and priority admission to Museum festivals, family days and public programs, with access to smaller sub-events, like lounges or astronaut meet and greets, where they can connect without the stress of crowds. We have an ongoing partnership with Exit12 Dance Company to host therapeutic workshops for veterans and family members, culminating in a public performance on *Intrepid*, this year, on May 29. This work is informed by our wonderful Council of Veteran Advisors.

Increased funding for the Veterans Community Development Initiative will help us sustain and extend our impact. We aim to expand our offsite and virtual programming at VA hospitals, veterans homes and memory care centers serving isolated veterans. These funds will also help ensure that our programs are accessible to veterans with disabilities with captioning, assistive listening systems, and after-hours programs. We will also be able to continue to strengthen our engagement with student veterans, women veterans, veterans of color and other historically underrepresented veteran communities through expanded partnerships. This investment ensures the Veterans Access Initiative continues to operate as a citywide resource meeting growing demand and expanding access, rather than limiting participation due to capacity constraints. Thank you.

**TESTIMONY OF MJHS HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE**

**PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027**

**SUBMITTED TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON VETERANS**

**CHAIR FRANK MORANO PRESIDING**

**MARCH 20, 2026**

Chair Morano and members of the New York City Council Committee on Veterans, thank you for holding this public preliminary budget hearing. My name is Ashton Stewart. I am a Navy Veteran who served in the Gulf War and currently serving as Veterans Program Manager for MJHS Health System.

MJHS is a not-for-profit health system that was founded in 1907. Our hospice and palliative care program has proudly provided end-of-life care for New Yorkers with serious and advanced illnesses for over 40 years, since 1980. In fact, we were part of New York State's original hospice demonstration project. Recognizing that Veterans have unique needs at the end of life, MJHS Hospice created a clinical care program grounded in compassionate listening, trauma-informed care, respectful inquiry and acknowledgment of military service. We strive to connect Veterans with supportive services from each of the three tiers of the VA: the Veterans Benefits Administration, the National Cemetery Administration, and the Veterans Health Administration. Many of the Veterans we serve are unaware of the services available to them, services that can foster a more peaceful end of life, and MJHS Hospice helps their families receive the support they need. As an accredited Veteran Service Officer, I work with Veterans and their families to evaluate eligibility and secure approval for critical supportive benefits.

In 2019, and every year since then, a national *We Honor Veterans* (WHV) initiative created by an organization that's now known as the National Alliance for Care at Home (The Alliance) has awarded us Level 5 status (the highest category possible) for our compassionate care of Veterans and mentorship of other Veteran programs. In 2023 we were awarded the prestigious *We Honor Veterans National Outstanding Program Award*. Now that The Alliance is expanding the WHV program beyond hospice care, they have turned to MJHS as a content-leading expert to provide training to their members nationwide who are implementing or building upon existing WHV programs. This recognition is a testament to the impact of our Veteran program and its potential to help others better assist Veterans and their families.



MJHS Hospice offers a focused approach to the Veterans we serve, many of whom are terminally ill due to service-related injuries they may not even realize are connected to their military experience. In 2025, MJHS Hospice assisted 323 Veteran households and provided 167 total referrals, addressing a wide range of aging Veteran and survivor needs. These referrals included assistance with DD214 retrieval, burial and military honors planning, non-service-connected pensions, New York State indigent burial reimbursement, Veterans nursing home counseling, and Medical Nexus letters to support VA disability claims. MJHS Hospice supported families in obtaining their Dependency and Indemnity Compensation approvals, resulting in significant financial stability for surviving spouses and children, including monthly tax-free benefits of \$1,653 and retroactive lump-sum payments exceeding \$10,000 in some cases. These benefits enabled families to remain housed and manage funeral and medical expenses.

Health literacy is getting more difficult for Veterans and their families. The introduction of the Mission Act in 2018, designed to expand health care for Veterans enrolled in the VA to community providers, has significantly improved health care options. Navigating the expanded health care landscape is another story. Education is critical, and MJHS is a leader in providing forums and resources to better equip Veterans, clinicians and advocates with the knowledge needed to navigate available support. Through our MJHS Veteran Resource Guide, our quarterly Vet-to-Vet Café, and Veteran-themed Continuing Medical Education courses, we have helped bridge this gap for aging Veterans and their families as well as other providers working with the Veteran population. The need for continued clinician education is significant. A 2018 RAND Corporation Study, *Assessing the Capacity of New York State Health Care Providers to Meet the Needs of Veterans*, found that “only 2.3 percent of health care providers in New York State meet all criteria for effectively serving the Veteran population.”

To address this critical gap among non-VA providers, MJHS Health System collaborated with the New York State Department of Veterans’ Services and designed the Veterans Support Playbook, a step-by-step pocket guide for clinicians to improve their ability to identify Veterans, by asking “did you serve in the U.S. military?” The second scripted question, “Is it okay if I talk to you about your military experience?” builds trust and opens the door to meaningful conversation. From there, clinicians can easily guide Veterans to securing a copy of a DD214 or enrolling in the VA for health care, and screen for military sexual trauma and PTSD. The pocket card can be given to the Veteran at the end of the visit so they can access the six provided QR codes to appropriate resources. This valuable resource was launched last November by the MJHS Institute for Innovation through a 90-minute continuing medical education webinar attended by 400 clinicians and Veteran advocates. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, receiving bipartisan support from elected officials and Veteran advocacy organizations, with webinar attendees describing it as “highly informative”, “relevant”, and “among the best Veteran-focused trainings” they had attended. In less than three months, nearly 4,000 pocket cards have been distributed to major health systems and Veteran groups in and beyond New York State. Our hope is that this resource will be used throughout the City and State to help



clinicians more quickly identify and treat service-connected conditions and improve outcomes for Veterans.

MJHS Hospice continues to grow as a leader in the Veteran space. Earlier this month MJHS was invited to take part in a roundtable discussion with Commissioner Yesenia Mata, her team at the New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS), and several other veteran advocates. MJHS presented at the most recent DVS Mental Health Coalition webinar and we continue to collaborate constructively to meet the needs of Veterans we connect within the community. I am actively serving as secretary of the New York City Veteran Advisory Board and State Veterans Nursing Home at St. Albans, where I am able to share trends we see with Veterans receiving Hospice services. MJHS Hospice is turning to the Committee on Veterans seeking crucial monetary support as the population of aging Veterans is surging.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, by 2036, the population of Americans over 65 will increase by 34 percent, while the number of Americans who are 75 and older will increase by 55 percent.<sup>1</sup> Many of these individuals are Veterans, or married to a Veteran, and many reside here in New York City. In 2020, it was reported that over 70 percent of New York City Veterans are over the age of 65, highlighting the urgency of our work.<sup>2</sup>

MJHS Hospice is respectfully requesting \$50,000 from the FY2027 Veteran Services Initiatives, under the Veterans Community Development line, to hire a part-time Veteran liaison to support our Veterans program. This additional staffing will allow MJHS Hospice to expand our work with a two-pronged strategy: conducting additional boots-on-the-ground outreach and increasing connections with Veteran-service-organization command posts. This part-time Veteran liaison will host in-person celebrations of service pinning ceremonies, one of the most effective ways to connect with Veterans and their families. Pinning ceremonies serve many purposes: to honor Veterans for their service, empower them with Veteran benefits information, listen to heroic and sometimes poignant stories of sacrifice and patriotism, and provide a sense of comfort. As the visibility of our program grows, we need additional support with facilitating these ceremonies. Additionally, this funding will help us have more time to conduct initial outreach to Veterans admitted into our program. When a Veteran is at the end-of-life, time is of the essence in connecting with them and their families to ensure they are receiving, or at least made aware of, benefits they are entitled to. We anticipate that the additional staffing will help us increase our capacity for this case support by 25% per year, allowing us to keep pace with the growing number of aging Veterans in our care each year.

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<sup>1</sup> Zucker, Howard, M. D. "Where Have all the Doctors Gone?" *AARP Bulletin*, Jan/Feb 2025, Vol 65 No 1

<sup>2</sup> Murphy, Jarrett. "A Statistical Snapshot of NYC's Veterans." *City Limits*, 11, Nov. 2020, <https://citylimits.org/2020/11/11/a-statistical-snapshot-of-nycs-Veterans/>.



This increased capacity will also allow us to host additional collaborative educational events that enable us to better equip clinicians with resources like the Veterans Support Playbook. MJHS Hospice humbly requests the Committee on Veterans assistance in sharing this resource with City Agencies and Veteran Advocates. The Veteran Support Playbook pocket card for clinicians was designed by MJHS in collaboration with the New York State Department of Veterans' Services. They are helping distribute the card across the State. We would be honored to collaborate with the City DVS at the local level and to cohost a continuing medical education webinar this fall to further promote this essential resource. We meet far too many Veterans who have been admitted into the MJHS Hospice program who have slipped through the cracks. For many, their failing health is often due to military service, yet they are frequently unaware of the benefits available to them. The number of missed opportunities for early clinical intervention is unknown, but the 2018 RAND study, showing that only 2 percent of public and private providers in New York State are effectively serving the Veteran population, suggests the magnitude of the problem. The urgency is further underscored by data shared in the VA annual Veteran suicide prevention report, released in February 2026, which shows that Veteran suicide in New York State surged to its highest rate in 20 years from 19.8 to 24.9<sup>3</sup>.

Supporting Veterans requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. Sharing the Veteran Support Playbook with more clinicians in New York City will be an important step. We respectfully ask the Committee on Veterans to consider supporting this resource and the MJHS Hospice We Honor Veterans program.

Thank you for considering our request to include MJHS Hospice in the FY2027 Veterans Service Initiative, and thank you for all you do to support Veterans and their families.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashton Stewart  
Veteran Program Manager  
MJHS Health System

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<sup>3</sup> <https://news.va.gov/145131/va-Veteran-suicide-prevention-report-2023-data/>

**TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH BELLO  
NY METROVETS**

**BEFORE**

**THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
VETERANS COMMITTEE**

**PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING – VETERANS**

**March 20, 2026**

Chair Morano, members of the Veterans Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Preliminary Budget for the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS).

It's often said that the City's budget is more than a financial plan, it's a statement of values. It reflects what we prioritize, what we invest in, and ultimately what we choose to support.

In his testimony, NYC Comptroller Mark Levine warned that recurring City expenses are increasingly outpacing recurring revenues, creating structural imbalances that threaten long-term fiscal stability. His office also projected widening budget gaps in the coming years, underscoring the need for responsible fiscal planning and clear prioritization.

According to the Council's budget analysis and the City's financial plan, the FY26 budget for DVS totals approximately \$7.6 million, supporting roughly 49 full-time positions. While that figure may suggest modest growth, the broader financial picture tells a different story.

The City's financial plan shows that this level of funding is not sustained. In FY27, the DVS budget drops by approximately \$1 million to \$6.6 million, largely due to the expiration of discretionary funding and the failure to baseline prior investments. What appears to be an increase is, in reality, a temporary bump followed by contraction.

More concerning is where these reductions occur. The decline is driven primarily by cuts to "Other Than Personal Services (OTPS)," which fund programs, contracts and direct services. This category decreases by nearly \$1 million, signaling that while staffing levels remain relatively stable, the resources available to actually deliver services to veterans are shrinking.

At the same time, the administration is proposing across-the-board reductions, requiring agencies to cut 1.5 percent this fiscal year and 2.5 percent in the next. For an agency as small as DVS, these reductions have an outsized impact.

DVS is one of the smallest agencies in City government, and even its current staffing levels do not fully reflect its authorized capacity. With a vacancy rate of 12 percent, a small workforce is being asked to carry out an ever-expanding mandate with fewer operational resources. This places significant strain on staff while limiting the agency's ability to effectively serve veterans across the five boroughs.

For several years, my concerns have remained consistent: staff taking on responsibilities beyond their original roles, a small agency expected to deliver citywide impact and ongoing challenges with communication and transparency.

These concerns are not just anecdotal; they are reflected in the Council's own analysis of agency performance.

Key service indicators show significant inconsistencies. Utilization of the VetConnect platform has declined in the current fiscal year compared to the same period last year. In other areas, performance targets appear to be set well below actual outcomes, raising questions about how

success is defined and measured. These fluctuations make it difficult to assess whether programs are truly effective or simply being reported in a way that obscures performance.

The Council's budget report suggests that DVS is making progress with limited resources. However, the Comptroller's audit raises more fundamental concerns – whether the data underlying that progress is reliable, whether services are being delivered consistently and whether the Department is meeting even its basic operational responsibilities.

As the administration is reducing DVS' funding, it must also be honest about what the agency can realistically accomplish under its current mandate and resource constraints.

Additionally, transparency concerns are also particularly troubling when it comes to compliance with Local Laws.

More than two years ago, the Council passed Local Law 38, the mental health roadmap, which required sustained outreach across multiple media platforms on veteran mental health resources in coordination with the Office of Community Mental Health. To date, there has been little to no public evidence of the comprehensive outreach envisioned by that legislation.

Similarly, as discussed at the last hearing, Local Law 37 required the DVS to collect and report data on veterans accessing services across City agencies. That initial report was due in December 2024.

These laws were intended to improve coordination, accountability and transparency. When reporting deadlines pass without explanation, it undermines not only the legislation, but also the trust of the veteran community.

Recent findings from the Comptroller's Office further reinforce these concerns.

A December 2025 audit examining DVS's coordination of housing assistance found that more than 27 percent of housing assistance requests were not responded to within the agency's own five-business-day target. The audit also identified serious weaknesses in internal controls, including deficiencies in recordkeeping, staff training and oversight, as well as instances where service data was overstated (see MMR).

These failures are not merely administrative; they directly impact whether veterans are able to access timely housing assistance and other critical services. When intake and response systems break down, the entire service delivery model is compromised.

Finally, the audit found that DVS failed to submit several legally required reports to the City Council and the Mayor, only doing so after auditors intervened. This reflects a pattern of reactive, rather than proactive, compliance with oversight requirements.

At a time when the City is being asked to make difficult financial decisions, these findings raise fundamental questions about whether existing resources are being effectively managed and

whether additional investments would translate into improved outcomes without stronger accountability.

This brings me to the issue of funding priorities.

Over the past two fiscal years, the Council allocated more than \$540,000 to the Paul Vallone Initiative. This funding embedded a legacy veteran service organization at every Council office. Yet no Request for Proposals was issued, and a significant portion of those funds were redirected elsewhere without any publicly available data demonstrating impact. Paul was a dear friend to me, and I believe he would be disappointed by how this funding has been managed.

If DVS intends to continue handling disability claims, the agency should provide data demonstrating its effectiveness. To date, the Department has not publicly reported any claims success rates since 2020. The city is effectively funding initiatives with taxpayer dollars without publicly available data demonstrating outcomes or impact.

Meanwhile, the Council's Veterans Initiative, which supports critical services such as homelessness prevention, job placement, legal assistance, mental health services and community development, has not seen a meaningful increase in years and remains insufficiently funded despite growing need.

I urge Speaker Menin and the Chair to consider renaming the Council's Veterans Initiative after Paul Vallone and redirecting FY27 funding toward strengthening the Council's initiative and supporting nonprofit organizations doing vital work on the ground.

For many years, DVS has highlighted its accomplishments. Yet the veteran community continues to experience the same underlying challenges: limited transparency, inconsistent communication and a lack of clear outcomes across key programs.

As the Council enters Fiscal Year 27 budget negotiations, fiscal constraints cannot be used as an excuse to neglect veterans and their families. Nor is the solution simply to increase funding or even maintain the status quo. The real challenge is ensuring that resources are aligned with outcomes, oversight is strengthened and every dollar is deployed effectively to serve those who served.

Without that alignment, we risk continuing the cycle of underperformance, limited transparency and missed opportunities to support veterans and their families.

Thank you, Councilmembers, for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.

**Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Veterans regarding:  
Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027**

**March 20, 2026**

Chair Morano, Council Members, and staff, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027. My name is Ryan Foley, and I am the Project Director and Supervising Attorney of the Veterans Practice at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). The New York Legal Assistance Group uses the power of law to help New Yorkers in need combat economic, racial, and social injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves military Veterans, seniors, the homebound, immigrants, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence survivors, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, members of the LGBTQ+ community, Holocaust survivors, and others in need of free civil legal services.

NYLAG's Veterans Practice is a community-based Veteran program, funded by the City Council's Legal Services for Veterans Initiative and Department of Veterans Services Discharge Upgrade Legal Assistance Services grant. The Veterans Practice provides comprehensive assistance to Veterans and their families, regardless of discharge status, with the aim of increasing eligibility and access to the numerous federal and state benefits available to the Veteran community. Veterans face all the same legal concerns as the civilian population but

also experience issues unique to their military service and Veteran status. NYLAG's Veterans Practice focused on those specialized issues, while simultaneously utilizing the expertise of NYLAG's 400+ attorneys, paralegals, and financial counselors to address any other civil legal needs presented. NYLAG's goal is to provide critical assistance and resources to Veterans and their families when they are dealing with challenges and crises that require experienced and knowledgeable legal experts.

One of the specialized issues that NYLAG prioritizes is assistance with discharge upgrade applications. More than 15% of Veterans will leave the military with a less-than-Honorable discharge.<sup>1</sup> This status means that a former servicemember will not be entitled to the full range of benefits that their military service would otherwise grant them. Veterans who receive a General discharge will not be entitled to educational benefits, which are crucial for servicemembers transitioning back to civilian life. A conservative lifetime valuation of a discharge upgrade for a Veteran with a General discharge is between \$75,000 and \$150,000, but for Veterans who maximize the federal and state housing, tax, and employment benefits, it could be worth \$500,000 or more.<sup>2</sup> Veterans who receive an Other Than Honorable or Bad Conduct discharge often find they have a complete bar to all VA benefits including disability benefits and VA healthcare. For these Veterans a discharge upgrade is even more valuable with a conservative lifetime estimate being between \$150,000 and \$250,000, but for Veterans who need disability benefits and utilize the VA for healthcare, it can easily exceed \$1 million.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mariah Brennan and Emily Graham. Serving Those Who Served: Renegotiating Support and Benefits for U.S. Military Veterans with Less Than Honorable Discharges. November 21, 2023. <https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1231&context=lerner>.

<sup>2</sup> Estimate is based on Educational, Housing, Tax, and Employment benefit access. *See* Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) Rates. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. <https://www.va.gov/education/benefit-rates/post-9-11-gi-bill-rates/>.

<sup>3</sup> Estimate is based on Healthcare, Disability, Educational, housing, Tax, and Employment benefit access. *See* Is the Veteran's Community Care Program really that expensive? The Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity. <https://freopp.org/oppblog/is-the-veterans-community-care-program-really-that-expensive/>.

The misconduct that leads to a less-than-Honorable discharge can be the result of undiagnosed and untreated mental health conditions, discrimination, and/or retaliation. Studies have found a direct correlation between mental health issues and less-than-Honorable discharges, which makes the barriers to disability benefits and healthcare for this segment of the Veteran population even more dire. Veterans with a PTSD diagnosis are eleven times more likely to have a less-than-Honorable discharge<sup>4</sup> and Veterans who reported sexual trauma are more likely to have a less-than-Honorable discharge as a result of retaliation.<sup>5</sup> There are significant racial disparities in the military justice system, as minority veterans across the different branches of service are substantially more likely to face disciplinary actions, which often lead to less-than-Honorable discharges. Sadly, the reality of Veteran clients seen by NYLAG would suggest the rates of mental health and disparities among minority Veterans are even worse than the statistics suggest. 68% of Veterans who sought assistance with a discharge upgrade from NYLAG stated they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, while 80% of NYLAG's discharge upgrade clients identified as non-white. A less-than-Honorable discharge and the critical benefits it cuts off leave Veterans in a situation in which they are seven times more likely to deal with housing insecurity<sup>6</sup>, 50% more likely to face incarceration<sup>7</sup>, and experience triple the risk of suicide.<sup>8</sup>

A discharge upgrade can have a transformative impact on a Veteran. It opens the door to countless benefits, it serves as an acknowledgement of injustice from the military, and it can

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<sup>4</sup> Robyn Highfill-McRoy et al., Psychiatric diagnoses and punishment for misconduct: The effects of PTSD in combat-deployed Marine., 10 BMC Psychiatry 1 (2010).

<sup>5</sup> Booted: Lack of Recourse for Wrongfully Discharged US Military Rape Survivors. Human Rights Watch (2016). <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/05/19/booted/lack-recourse-wrongfully-discharged-us-military-rape-survivors>

<sup>6</sup> Gundlapalli AV, Fargo JD, Metraux S, et al. Military Misconduct and Homelessness Among US Veterans Separated From Active Duty, 2001-2012. JAMA. 2015;314(8):832–834. doi:10.1001/jama.2015.8207.

<sup>7</sup> Jennifer Bronson and E. Ann Carson. Prisoners in 2017. (2019). <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p17.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Barr et al., How Does Discharge Status Impact Suicide Risk in Military Veterans?17 Social Work in Mental Health 48 (2019).

remove a major stigma for the Veteran. However, the process to get a discharge upgrade is difficult, slow, and near impossible to navigate without a legal advocate. Successful applications require extensive record collection and analysis, which has increased in difficulty as a result of massive backlogs and shifts in procedures about where records are held. Veterans dealing with serious mental health conditions may need to obtain detailed medical opinions explaining how their conduct in-service was a consequence of the mental health condition. This may involve finding consistent and culturally competent healthcare options for the Veteran to feel able to open up about their issues. Applications also require detailed legal arguments explaining the errors or injustices that may have occurred during the servicemember's military service and discharge. Once a discharge upgrade application is submitted, the veteran must then wait for a decision, which depending on their branch of the service, dates of service, and whether they requested a hearing, may take several years.

NYLAG's discharge upgrade work for Veteran clients is critical, but it is only one piece of our advocacy. It is rare for Veteran clients to present with only one issue, or to work with NYLAG for years on a discharge upgrade without needing assistance with other benefit, housing, healthcare, or planning issues. Advocacy with a complex issue like discharge upgrades requires a client to have enough stability and security in their life to meaningfully focus on the issue. Our clients benefit knowing there are experts behind them who understand the challenges of the process they are undertaking as well as the resources that are available to help them see it through. One example of our advocacy is:

DP, a 35-year old U.S. Navy Veteran. Mr. P served in the Navy for three years and during his time in the military went through severe hazing, racial discrimination, and multiple near death experiences. Throughout bootcamp, Mr. P was frequently awoken

to fellow servicemembers beating him with pillows filled with books and other hard objects. When he attempted to report the situation to his command he was met with apathy and retaliation. Mr. P was frequently harassed for his accent and called racial slurs, all of which were tolerated by his command. Despite these challenges, Mr. P persevered and made it to his ship assignment. One night on the ship during an intense storm, Mr. P slipped and nearly fell into the cold dark water. As he held on for his life, Mr. P screamed until someone finally was able to grab him and pull him back up. After his deployment, Mr. P sought mental health support. He was haunted by nightmares of the near death experience and the fear that his command and fellow servicemembers would not care if he died. His attempts to seek help went unanswered as he was told by mental health only to return if it was an emergency and shamed about skipping important duties to talk about his issues. Mr. P began self-medicating with alcohol, which eventually escalated to marijuana. With his health declining he admitted to marijuana usage and was discharged with an Other Than Honorable discharge, making him unable to seek help at the VA. DP was referred to NYLAG from the Queens Vet Center as his previous pro se application was rejected. NYLAG spent the time working with him on his application, securing medical opinions, and developing legal arguments, all of which were presented at a Discharge Board Hearing. The result was successful, as Mr. P received a discharge upgrade, which now provides him full access to VA healthcare and has resulted in service-connection for his PTSD and depression.

Results like this one only happen thanks to strong investment in Veteran specific legal services like the Legal Services for Veterans Initiative and Department of Veterans Service Discharge Upgrade Legal Assistance Services funding. NYLAG is extremely grateful to the City

of New York for its investment in legal services for Veterans, which has allowed us to work with thousands of Veterans on discharge upgrades, Veteran's benefits, public benefits, housing, consumer protection, advance planning, and much more. In times of uncertainty and economic concern, it is increasingly important to support programs that uplift New York City Veterans. We must find new ways to affirm our commitment to the Veteran community and strive to ensure that no Veteran faces their crises alone. New York must continue to focus on wrap-around resources for Veterans such as mental health treatment, housing support, and free legal services.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today. We look forward to engaging in further discussions about serving New York City's Veterans.

Respectfully submitted,

New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)

**Testimony**

**New York City Council Committee on Veterans**

**FY 27 Preliminary Hearing**

**March 20<sup>th</sup> 2026**

Good afternoon, Chair Morano, and members of the New York City Council. My name is Bill Gross, and I serve as the Chief Services Officer at SAGE, the nation's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older adults.

Since our founding in 1978, SAGE has worked tirelessly to advocate for policies and programs that empower LGBTQ+ elders, ensuring they can age with dignity, security, and support. From leading national advocacy efforts to providing direct services, we have remained at the forefront of combating social isolation, housing insecurity, and healthcare disparities among LGBTQ+ older adults.

New York City has long failed to prioritize the programs and services that help older adults, including veterans, remain in their communities as they age. We are optimistic that our new Mayor will begin to address some of these challenges, especially at a time when older adults already make up 1 in 5 New Yorkers, a number projected to grow to 25% by 2040. Over the past few decades, the city has underfunded and undervalued older adult programs, making it nearly impossible for providers to meet the growing need. Without further investment, we risk center closures and the reduction in core services at a time when demand continues to rise.

More and more older New Yorkers—including LGBTQ+ elders, who already face disproportionate risk—are being forced to navigate the growing gaps in an increasingly fragile safety net. Now more than ever, SAGE continues to remain a steadfast source of support, connection, and security for LGBTQ+ older adults in these challenging times.

With an actively anti-LGBTQ+ administration in Washington stoking a hostile political climate, including targeting trans people serving in the military, many LGBTQ+ older adults face heightened fear and uncertainty about their rights, healthcare, and overall well-being. For thousands, SAGE is a lifeline to critical services, advocacy, and a supportive community, ensuring they do not face these challenges alone. In light of the needs and the climate, SAGE is seeking increased support to serve this important population of queer elders, including veterans.

LGBTQ+ elders are more likely to be disconnected from essential services and to experience severe social isolation, often without the support of traditional biological family networks. They are far more likely to live

alone and less likely to rely on adult children or other family members for informal caregiving. In fact, 25% of SAGE’s constituents have reported not having anyone else to call during an emergency. Because of these thin support networks, LGBTQ+ older people need to rely more heavily on community service providers for care as they age. Yet, they’re often distrustful of mainstream providers – including the VA - based on historical and ongoing discrimination and mistreatment. The services, community, and support system provided by SAGE are designed to address these gaps and serve as a lifeline for LGBTQ+ elders in New York City.

Furthermore, for LGBTQ+ older veterans, the military’s long history of enforcing anti-gay and anti-trans policies followed by the discriminatory “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” law, has created many barriers between them and their Federal VA benefits. This has contributed to LGBTQ+ veterans facing significantly higher levels of economic and housing instability compared to non-LGBTQ+ veterans.<sup>1</sup> For instance, rates of homelessness for transgender veterans are three times higher than rates for cisgender veterans.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, LGBTQ+ veterans are four times more likely to report finding it difficult to get by financially and more than twice as likely to report being unable to pay some bills over the past month compared to non-LGBTQ+ veterans. <sup>3</sup> Through our SAGEVets program, we help LGBTQ+ older veterans navigate the VA to get the benefits they deserve and provide support with discharge upgrades for those who were discharged due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Our SAGE Center network serves as a safety net for LGBTQ+ elders, including veterans. We provide programming that reduces isolation and improves access to services, by offering benefits counseling, legal and financial planning, educational workshops, health and wellness programs, support groups, and nutritious meals.

These vital services are made possible from our partnership with the New York City Council and they have been funded by the LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough Initiative (formerly the LGBTQ+ Senior Services in Every Borough Initiative) since its creation in FY15.

In FY27, SAGE requests the restoration of our New York City Council funding at FY26 levels, along with additional support to sustain and enhance our vital services. City Council funding enables SAGE to serve residents of Stonewall House and Crotona Pride House and their surrounding communities, maintain our citywide network of SAGE Centers and their extensive virtual programming, provide comprehensive case management, reinforce services for LGBTQ+ older veterans, and support mental health services for homebound LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected elders.

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<sup>1</sup> Mahowald, Lindsey. “LGBTQ+ Military Members and Veterans Face Economic, Housing, and Health Insecurities”. *Center for American Progress*. April 28, 2022. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/lgbtq-military-members-and-veterans-face-economic-housing-and-health-insecurities>

<sup>2</sup> Carter, Sarah P et al. “Housing Instability Characteristics Among Transgender Veterans Cared for in the Veterans Health Administration, 2013-2016.” *American journal of public health* vol. 109,10 (2019): 1413-1418. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2019.305219

<sup>3</sup> Federal Reserve Board. (last accessed January 2026). "Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking". [https://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerscommunities/shed\\_data.htm](https://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerscommunities/shed_data.htm).

Specifically, SAGE requests:

- Renewal with an enhancement of **\$1,255,000** in Council Initiative LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough to fund programs and services at our network of SAGE Centers—LGBTQ+-affirming older adult centers—reaching over 5,000 LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV with 100 virtual and 200 in-person programs each week. This year, SAGE is requesting an enhancement to implement Know Your Rights initiatives and comprehensive training programs for both older adults and staff, ensuring they are equipped to navigate their rights and access critical resources.
- Renewal of **\$250,000** from the LGBTQIA+ Caucus to provide holistic, LGBTQIA+-affirming, and HIV-competent care management for those 60+ (50+ if transgender, a veteran, or living with HIV). Services include benefits enrollment, crisis intervention, caregiving, counseling, friendly visits, legal aid, and mental health referrals. With evolving federal policies, ensuring access to these essential services is more crucial than ever.
- Renewal of **\$275,000** from the Trans Equity Programs Initiative to expand our SAGETrans Support Group and Services Program, which offers culturally responsive, trauma-informed support for transgender and gender nonbinary (TGNB) older adults (50+) across New York City. This funding will also support the SAGETrans Emergency Fund, which provides direct financial relief to TGNB elders experiencing housing insecurity, food scarcity, community workshops, legal guidance or crisis health-related needs.
- Renewal of **\$100,000** under the Older Adults Mental Health Initiative to support crucial mental health services for LGBTQ+ elders and older adults living with HIV who are frail and homebound, including comprehensive screening for mental health and substance abuse issues, home visits, support groups, and referrals to partner health care and substance abuse programs.
- Renewal of **\$100,000** from the Citywide Initiative of Legal Services for Veterans to fund SAGEVets, New York City’s only program designed to address the unique needs of older LGBTQ+ military service veterans. SAGEVets helps older LGBTQ+ veterans access Veterans Administration (VA) benefits, supports their overall health and wellness, and provides referrals for discharge status upgrades.
- Renewal of **\$36,868** through the Senior Centers, Program, and Enhancement Initiative to support care management services offered at SAGE Centers, including crisis intervention, care assistance, caregiving services, individual and group counseling, friendly visiting for homebound elders, legal services, and mental health referrals.

SAGE is committed to fighting alongside the New York City Council to ensure that no vital community programs are cut, and our top priority is maintaining our funding. We urge the City Council and the Administration to commit to a robust increase in funding for older adult services and fully address the decades of neglect that have brought us to this point. The investments we have outlined represent an opportunity for truly transformative change, ensuring that older New Yorkers, and especially LGBTQ+ veterans, can continue to call this city home. By doing so, we can show that New York City values leadership that takes bold action, invests in its most at risks populations, and sets a standard for aging with dignity and independence.

# **VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT**

**Committee on Veterans**  
Hon. Frank Morano, *Chair*

**New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings**

**Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027,  
Preliminary Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2027-2030,  
and Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report**

**Testimony by Coco Culhane**  
**Veteran Advocacy Project**

March 20, 2026

PAGE 2  
MISSING

# VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT

This year, New York City's VHA locations (in the Bronx Healthcare System and New York Harbor Healthcare System) were already feeling the impact from the hundreds of staff who are gone<sup>7</sup> when the administration announced another 14,000 layoffs.<sup>8</sup> The National Nurses Organizing Committee/National Nurses United (NNOC/NNU) unions protested the administration's cuts in January, with another 383 positions planned for elimination in the City's VA hospitals and clinics.<sup>9</sup> This leaves veterans to seek private care because wait times and lack of services will force the appointments.

Hundreds of contracts were canceled; after public outcry the number went from a list of over 800 down to 585,<sup>10</sup> but cuts left veterans stranded mid-treatment in experimental trials, cut off sterilization measures in hospitals, and pulled technical support for the new electronic health records system, which was rolled out one week after an Inspector General report detailing all of its problems.<sup>11</sup>

New York City receives over \$100 billion in federal funding.<sup>12</sup> As the administration throws out threats and withholds billions of dollars for transportation and safety (from the Department of Homeland Security) while also launching wars abroad and noting that " sleeper cells " are a concern, there is even more to worry about. Social services are also in peril: funds for education, housing, SNAP, and health care are all poised to take huge hits, though much of the attempts to punish New York have been halted by the judiciary.<sup>13</sup> In the coming months, as agencies budgets, infrastructure, and grants are reduced or, like USICH, critical to the reduction of veteran

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<sup>7</sup> Barry, et al., "Trump and DOGE Propel V.A. Mental Health System Into Turmoil," NY Times, March 22, 2025 (available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/22/us/politics/veterans-affairs-mental-health-doge.html>).

<sup>8</sup> Vernal Coleman, Tophers Sanders, Joel Jacobs and Eric Umansky, photography by Benjamin Rasmussen, "Veterans Who Depend on Mental Health Care Keep Losing Their Therapists Under Trump," ProPublica, March 12, 2026 (available at: <https://www.propublica.org/article/veterans-affairs-mental-health-therapists-quit-trump>).

<sup>9</sup> Eliminated; see also, National Nurses Organizing Committee/National Nurses United (NNOC/NNU) press release, Jan. 6, 2026 (available at: <https://www.nationalnursesunited.org/press/nurses-and-veterans-to-rally-against-trump-plan-to-eliminate-hundreds-of-va-jobs-in-nyc>).

<sup>10</sup> Gretchen Mogensen, Larua Strickler, "DOGE plans to cut VA contracts may harm veterans' care, employees say," NBC News, March 6, 2025 (available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/doge/doge-plans-cut-va-contracts-may-harm-veterans-care-employees-say-rcna191448>).

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General, *Fiscal Year 2025 Inspector General's Report on VA's Major Management and Performance Challenges*, at 9 (2025) (available at: <https://www.vaog.gov/sites/default/files/document/2026-01/2025.pdf>).

<sup>12</sup> Brad Landers, "NYC's Federal Funding: Outlook Under Trump," December 10, 2024 (available at: <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nycs-federal-funding-outlook-under-trump/#federal-funding-beyond-the-citys-budget>).

<sup>13</sup> "Trump administration can't block child care money for 5 Democratic-led states for now, judge says," AP News, Jan. 9, 2026 (available at: <https://apnews.com/article/social-service-child-care-5-states-trump-c4af28914687e6b95a3122a225676a8c>). See also, "Judge Extends Block on Trump Officials Slashing Funds to Democratic States," NY Times, Feb. 6, 2026 (available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/06/us/politics/blue-states-trump-funding-lawsuit.html>).

Good morning Chairman Morano and NYC Council Members of the Committee on Veterans,

My name is Timothy Pena. I am a U.S. Navy veteran and the founder of the Veterans Justice Project and The Forgotten Veteran.

I am here today because what is happening to honorably discharged veterans in New York City is not a failure of resources—it is a failure of oversight and accountability.

In 2024, the New York City Department of Investigation issued a report identifying serious deficiencies within the Department of Homeless Services. That report should have triggered immediate, aggressive oversight—especially for veterans placed in this system. Instead, it was acknowledged and largely set aside.

Today, veterans are being placed in secluded, violent MICA shelters under the justification of “mental health stabilization.” In reality, many of these environments are retraumatizing. Veterans are isolated, exposed to unsafe conditions, and denied access to veteran-specific services and pathways to housing.

Even more concerning, non-veteran caseworkers are withholding transitional services under what they call “tough love.” Let me be clear—this is not care. This is punishment. Veterans are being sanctioned for symptoms of trauma and homelessness, while the very resources that would help them exit the system are intentionally delayed or denied.

There is no real alternative pathway for homeless veterans to access Veterans Affairs transitional services outside of DHS. Veterans are forced into this system, and then told they must remain in it to “stabilize.” That is not a pathway—that is a trap.

And now, even Manhattan Veterans Affairs has become complicit. Women veterans and veterans without a formal mental health diagnosis are being excluded from transitional programs they are eligible for. Veterans are effectively being told: accept a diagnosis or be denied help.

Meanwhile, contractors continue to be paid based on how long veterans stay—not how successfully they transition.

And yet, this Committee continues to focus on why veterans are not self-identifying. Veterans are not self-identifying because there is no benefit—and real risk—in doing so.

If identification does not lead to protection, housing, or care, then it is not a solution—it is exposure.

I am asking this Committee to act.

Hold hearings specifically on veteran placements in MICA shelters.

Investigate the denial of transitional services.

Examine the role of DHS, its contractors, and VA coordination.

And most importantly—create real pathways out of homelessness for veterans.

Veterans upheld their oath.

Now it is time for this City to uphold its responsibility.

Thank you.

**BETTER BEGINS HERE**

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY LIVING  
40TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

MAY 20, 2026 | 6 – 9 PM

THE PIERRE NY  
2 EAST 61 STREET

# GALA

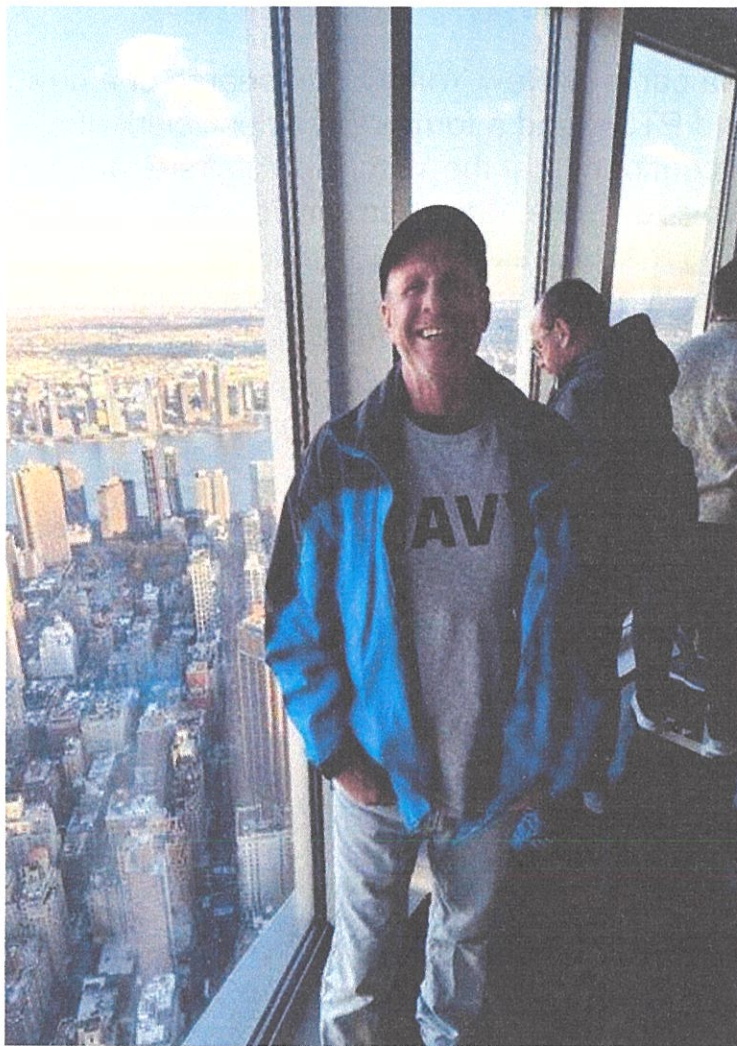
JOIN US FOR AN INSPIRING AND ENTERTAINING EVENING CELEBRATING OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS WHO HELP ICL PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING, HEALTHCARE AND RECOVERY SERVICES TO MORE THAN 10,000 NEW YORKERS EACH YEAR.

**WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THE GALA AND TOAST  
40 YEARS OF PEOPLE GETTING BETTER WITH US!**

**PURCHASE TABLES AND TICKETS**

**BETTER  
BEGINS  
HERE**





# A Tale of Two Transitional Programs

For veterans experiencing homelessness, Veterans Affairs and Congress enacted the Grant & Per Diem Transitional Program to provide transitional housing and supportive services for VA-eligible veterans to access resources for sustainable housing, financial stability, and medical and mental health wellness.

The following is a comparison of two GPD transitional programs:

- **Catholic Charities AZ MANA House / Phoenix AZ, and,**
- **NYC Dept. of Homeless Services Borden Avenue Veterans' Residence / New York City.**



**Timothy Pena**

[The Forgotten Veteran](#)  
[Veterans Justice Project](#)

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# A Tale of Two Transitional Programs

In July 2022, Navy Veteran Timothy Pena came to New York City in search of a new start. As a veteran with service-connected PTSD and a former front desk clerk of a transitional program in Phoenix, he was confident that the Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Transitional Program would provide a safe, drug-free environment with access to supportive services and housing resources to assist him in receiving the care he needed for a successful transition. What he encountered was a violent, drug-infested NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) city shelter with inedible food, a housing director who blames veterans for being homeless, no community engagement, and security sleeping in the halls. NYPD is a regular visitor for assaults, overdoses, even deaths.

In January 2024, the [NYC Department of Investigation \(DOI\)](#) revealed troubling issues in the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and its management of the shelter system, costing the city an estimated \$10.6 billion over three years. These risks vary in their severity, and include, among other things:

- Conflicts of interest affecting City money..
- Poor City-wide controls over how City money is used for executive compensation. DOI identified multiple shelter executives who received more than \$500,000 per year, and in some cases, more than \$700,000 per year.
- Numerous examples of nepotism
- Shelter providers failing to follow competitive bidding rules when procuring goods and services with public money.

The veterans within the Borden Ave are being abused and threatened by NYC Department of Homeless Services and the NYC Institute of Community Living while Director of Homeless Services Karen Fuller has failed to address violations of criteria as described by [Public Law 109-461](#). She has refused to file complaints with Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General and has allowed VA-eligible veterans to suffer insurmountable hardship in a violent, drug-infested city shelter with Level 2 and 3 sex offenders, gang members, and drug trafficking. Many veterans have died in the VA program, yet no investigation has been conducted going so far as to terminate the membership of Timothy Pena from the NYC Veterans Task Force after he raised questions on the treatment he and other veterans received while in a Federally-funded transitional program. Another report released by the [Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General](#) backs up these claims of misconduct reporting that 1 in 5 veterans are 'disappearing' from VA transitional programs, then unlawfully documented as a successful discharge.

The following is a series of photos, FOIA responses, and articles from other journalists that compare what the GPD program as sanctioned and funded by the VA and Congress and that of what Pena experienced in NYC at the GPD program, Borden Avenue Veterans' Residence during five months he spent there while his apartment sat empty waiting for him. As investigations are launched into corruption and a new administration takes control, it is imperative that veterans finally receive the supportive services and access to resources we've earned.



# The Veterans Affairs Grant & Per Diem Transitional Program

The GPD Program is Veterans Affairs' largest transitional housing program for Veterans experiencing homelessness and is permanently authorized under Public Law 109-461. Since 1994, the GPD Program has awarded grants to community-based organizations to provide transitional housing with wraparound supportive services to assist vulnerable Veterans move into permanent housing.

## *Title 38 Chapter I § 61.2 Supportive Services – General*

Transitional programs which receive grants must design supportive services. Such services must provide appropriate assistance, or aid participants in obtaining appropriate assistance, to address the needs of homeless veterans.

The following are examples of supportive services:

- Outreach activities;
- Providing food, nutritional advice, counseling, health care, mental health treatment, alcohol and other substance abuse services, case management services;
- Establishing and operating child care services for dependents of homeless veterans;
- Providing supervision and security arrangements necessary for the protection of residents of supportive housing and for homeless veterans using supportive housing or services;
- Assistance in obtaining permanent housing;
- Education, employment counseling and assistance, and job training;
- Assistance in obtaining other Federal, State and local assistance available for such residents including mental health benefits, employment counseling and assistance, veterans' benefits, medical assistance, and income support assistance; and
- Providing housing assistance, legal assistance, advocacy, transportation, and other services essential for achieving and maintaining independent living.

## US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Grant & Per Diem (GPD) Program

### Background

The GPD Program is VA's largest transitional housing program for Veterans experiencing homelessness and is permanently authorized under Public Law 109-461.

Since 1994, the GPD Program has awarded grants to community-based organizations to provide transitional housing with wraparound supportive services to assist vulnerable Veterans move into permanent housing. The grants are designed to meet Veterans at various stages as they move to stable housing. Community-based organizations receiving GPD grants offer focused transitional housing services through a variety of housing models targeted to different populations and needs of Veterans. The GPD program plays a vital role in the continuum of homeless services by providing supportive services to those Veterans who would otherwise be among the unsheltered homeless population. The result of GPD programs is that Veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and/or income, and obtain greater self-determination.

### Types of GPD Grants

- Transitional housing grants:
  - **Per Diem Only** grants provide funding in the form of per diem payments to reimburse grantees for the cost of care provided to Veterans in transitional supportive housing
    - **Special Need** grants target housing and services to specific populations of Veterans (e.g., women, Veterans with chronic mental illness, frail elderly Veterans, Veterans caring for minor dependents, terminally ill Veterans)
    - **Transition-In-Place (TIP)** grants offer Veteran residents housing in which supportive services transition out of the residence over time, rather than the resident. Upon completion of the TIP services, the resident retains the unit as their permanent housing with no requirement to move
- Other types of grants:
  - **Case Management** grants support Veterans who were previously experiencing homelessness or who are at risk for homelessness so that they may obtain or retain permanent housing
  - **Capital grants** support the costs of acquiring, renovating, or constructing facilities and are only offered intermittently to improve existing facilities or to develop new transitional housing depending on the needs of the Department and funding availability

### Transitional Housing Models

- **Bridge Housing:** Intended to be used for short-term stays in transitional housing by Veterans with pre-identified permanent housing destinations (e.g., HUD-VASH, SSVF, community options)
- **Clinical Treatment:** Designed for Veterans experiencing homelessness who have a specific diagnosis related to a substance-use disorder and/or mental-health diagnosis
  - Veterans actively choose to engage in clinical services
  - GPD grantees provide clinically focused treatment and services to help Veterans secure permanent housing and increase income through benefits and/or employment
- **Low Demand:** Uses a high engagement/harm reduction model to better accommodate Veterans experiencing chronic homelessness and Veterans who were unsuccessful in traditional treatment settings
  - Programming does not require sobriety or compliance with mental health treatment as a condition of admission or continued stay
  - Overall demands are kept to a minimum; however, services are made widely available and are actively promoted by program staff
  - The goal is to establish permanent housing while providing for the safety of staff and residents
- **Hospital to Housing:** Addresses the housing and recuperative care needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness who have been hospitalized
- **Service-Intensive:** Provides transitional housing and robust services that facilitate individual stabilization, increased income, and movement to permanent housing as rapidly as clinically appropriate
- **Transition In Place:** Offers Veteran residents housing in which supportive services transition out of the residence over time, rather than the resident. Upon completion of the TIP services, the resident retains the unit as their permanent housing with no requirement to move

### Veteran Populations Served

Under GPD grants, the needs of many populations of Veterans experiencing homelessness are addressed, including but not limited to:

- Women Veterans
- Veterans with a chronic mental illness
- Frail elderly Veterans
- Veterans who have care of minor dependents
- Terminally ill Veterans

# Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Fact Sheet p. 3

## How to Apply for Funding

- Eligible applicants include:
  - 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) nonprofit organizations,
  - State or local government agencies, and/or
  - Recognized Indian Tribal governments.
- Not all grant types are available annually; when available, notices of funding opportunity (NOFOs) can be found at the following locations:
  - [www.GRANTS.gov](http://www.GRANTS.gov)
  - <https://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp>
- Application instructions are provided in each NOFO
- Each NOFO will clarify specific application criteria, funding limitations and other requirements

## NOFOs & Additional Resources

Current announcements, open NOFOs (if available), and lists of current GPD awards are available on the GPD website: <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD.asp>

Past NOFOs from prior fiscal years are available on the GPD provider website:

[https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD\\_ProviderWebsite.asp](https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD_ProviderWebsite.asp). Other resources on the GPD provider website include:

- GPD grant recipient guides
- GPD general terms and conditions of award

Regulations applicable to GPD and Federal grants are also accessible through the electronic Code of Federal Regulations:

- GPD regulations: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-38/chapter-I/part-61>
- Federal-wide grants regulations: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>

# Grant and Per Diem Supportive Services and Criteria

## Grant and Per Diem Transitional Program

Veterans Affairs funds an estimated 600 agencies that provide over 14,500 beds for eligible Veterans. Grantees work closely with an assigned liaison from the local VAMC. The VA GPD liaison monitors the services the grantees offer to Veterans and provides direct assistance to them. Grantees also collaborate with community-based organizations to connect Veterans with employment, housing and additional social services to promote housing stability. The maximum stay in this housing is up to 24 months, with the goal of moving Veterans into permanent housing.

### *Title 38 Chapter I § 61.2 Supportive Services—General*

Transitional programs which receive grants must design supportive services. Such services must provide appropriate assistance, or aid participants in obtaining appropriate assistance, to address the needs of homeless veterans.

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- Assistance in obtaining permanent housing;
- Education, employment counseling and assistance, and job training;
- Assistance in obtaining other Federal, State and local assistance available for such residents including mental health benefits, employment counseling and assistance, veterans' benefits, medical assistance, and income support assistance; and
- Providing housing assistance, legal assistance, advocacy, transportation, and other services essential for achieving and maintaining independent living.

# Grant and Per Diem Supportive Services and Criteria

## Grant and Per Diem Criteria

State, local and tribal governments and nonprofits receive capital grants and per diem payments to develop and operate transitional housing—including short-stay bridge housing—and/or service centers for Veterans who are homeless. And although the GPD program does not specifically require the veterans to maintain sobriety, applicants are awarded points based on a rating system using certain criteria.

To be eligible for a capital grant, an applicant must receive at least 750 points (out of a possible 1000) and must receive points under each of the following:

**300 points:** The measurable objectives to determine success of the supportive services:

- How the success of the program will be evaluated on an ongoing basis.
- How the nutritional needs of veterans will be met.
- How the agency will ensure a clean and sober environment.
- How participants will be assisted in assimilating into the community through access to neighborhood facilities, activities, and services.

**100 points:** Outreach to persons on streets and in shelters:

- The agency's outreach plan to serve homeless veterans living in places not ordinarily meant for human habitation (e.g., streets, parks, abandoned buildings, automobiles, under bridges, in transportation facilities) and those who reside in emergency shelters.

**200 points:** The ability of an applicant to develop and operate a project that includes training and experience of staff and providing supportive services such as those indicated above.

**150 points:** Need. VA will award up to 150 points based on the extent to which the applicant demonstrates:

- Substantial unmet needs, particularly among the target population living in places not ordinarily meant for human habitation, and
- An understanding of the homeless population to be served and its unmet housing and supportive service needs.

**50 points:** Completion confidence. Based on the VA review panel's confidence that the applicant has effectively demonstrated the supportive housing or service center project will be completed as described in the application.

**200 points:** Coordination with other programs. VA will award up to 200 points based on the extent to which applicants demonstrate that they have coordinated with Federal, state, local, private and other entities serving homeless persons in the planning and operation of the project.

# Catholic Charities MANA House Website Homepage

**There were more than 700 veterans with no place to call home last year.**

**Click to watch our video**

**Find out how MANA House works to change that!**



Welcome to Catholic Charities MANA House

Welcome to Catholic Charities MANA House



**What Veterans Say About MANA House**

[Click Here](#)



**Become a Monthly Donor**



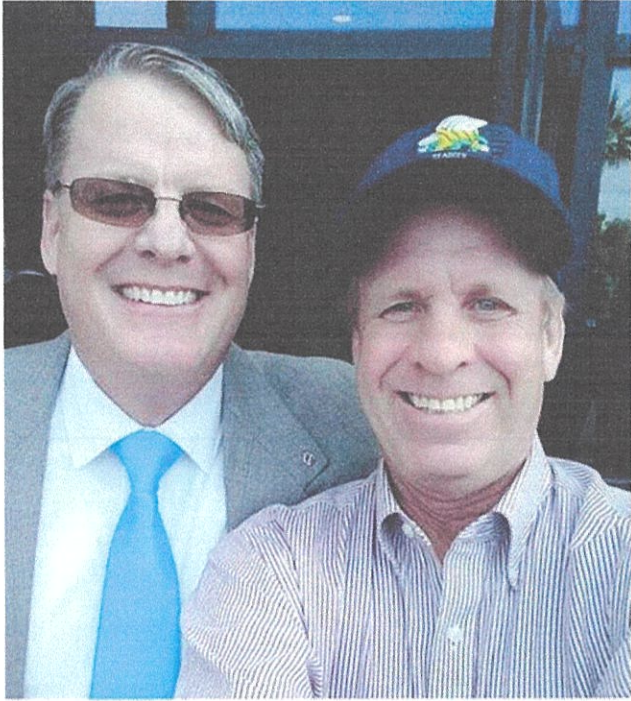
**CONTACT US**

**Latest News**

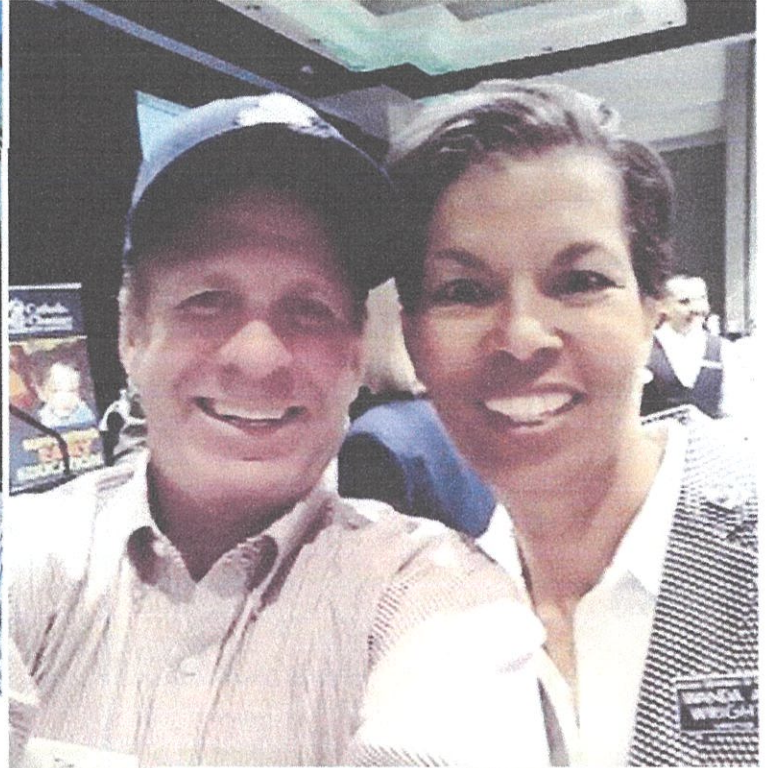
**Newsletter**

**© 2024 MANA House**

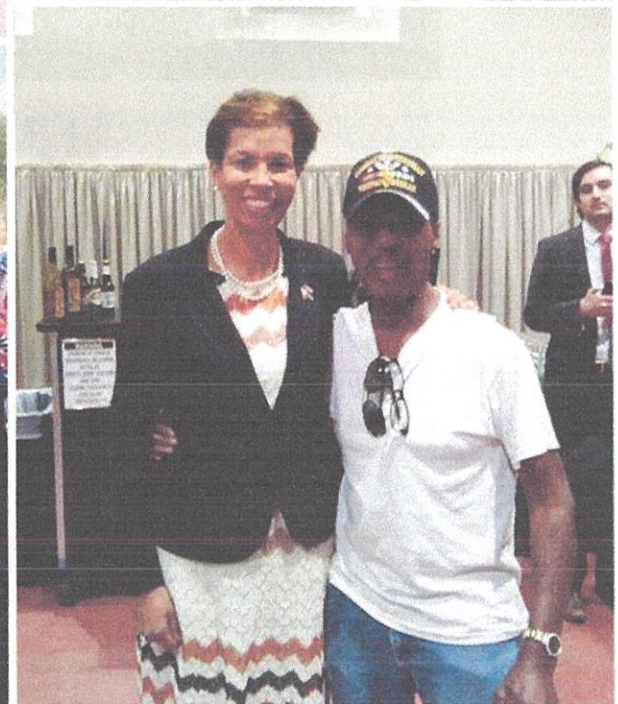
## Top Veterans Officials Make Themselves Available to the Veterans including Senator John McCain



*MANA House front desk 'Ninja' Tim Pena takes a selfie with Catholic Charities CEO and Navy Veteran Paul Mulligan outside an event to honor local charitable*



*Former MANA House founder and Vietnam veteran Terry Araman was invited to visit the White House to speak about veteran homelessness.*



*Vietnam Veteran and former Catholic Charities MANA House resident William Hawkings with Arizona Department of Veterans Services Director, USAF Colonel Wanda Wright at, 'A Sunset Tribute in Honor of Our Veterans' at the Heard Museum.*

## Events Such as Veterans Day, Stand Downs, and Baseball Games are a Cornerstone of Transitioning



MANA House residents Tim Pena and Tommie Carter with Catholic Charities Wendy Owens and Heather Mayes at Salt River Flats for Diamondbacks Spring Training game



Catholic Charities MANA House Assistant Manager Pete Fleckenstein works with volunteers at 2017 AZCEH Stand Down event which served over 2,100 veterans



*Catholic Charities MANA House staff, current and former residents gather for a group photo before the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade on November 11, 2016*



## Donations are Plentiful From an Appreciative Community Which Bless Veterans With Blankets, Clothing, and Money

Donations come into MANA House in all forms: Clothes donated from orgs from all over Phoenix are delivered to reception where they are sorted and organized. Women's clothing is then sent to local women's program. The front desk receives donations in the form of checks, hygiene items, and gift bags for residents and outreach veterans from the shelters and those living on the street and in cars and camps.



*Former resident and founder Ernie Martinez stops by to say hello to the gang.*



Ole M., Billy N., Eric G., Rick G., Organizer John Battoe, and Odis F., pose with the huge donation from The Knights at St. Elizabeth Seton made to MANA House on October 3.



Air Force Flight Nurse Veteran Lee from Jewish War Veterans Post 194 stops by to drop off donations and chat up our veterans. Seen here with MANA House resident Vietnam Veteran William Hawkins



MANA House Support and Outreach Coordinator Herbie Davison dresses up for Halloween 2016



MANA House residents Ricky Keys, Ole Myck, Dale Anderson & James Greenwood pick up 183 cases of water from Casa del Sol Resort East in Glendale. A result of a water drive by their residents. Thank you!



Outreach Veterans show off hand-crafted 'gift bags' donated by Irene Ramirez & friends

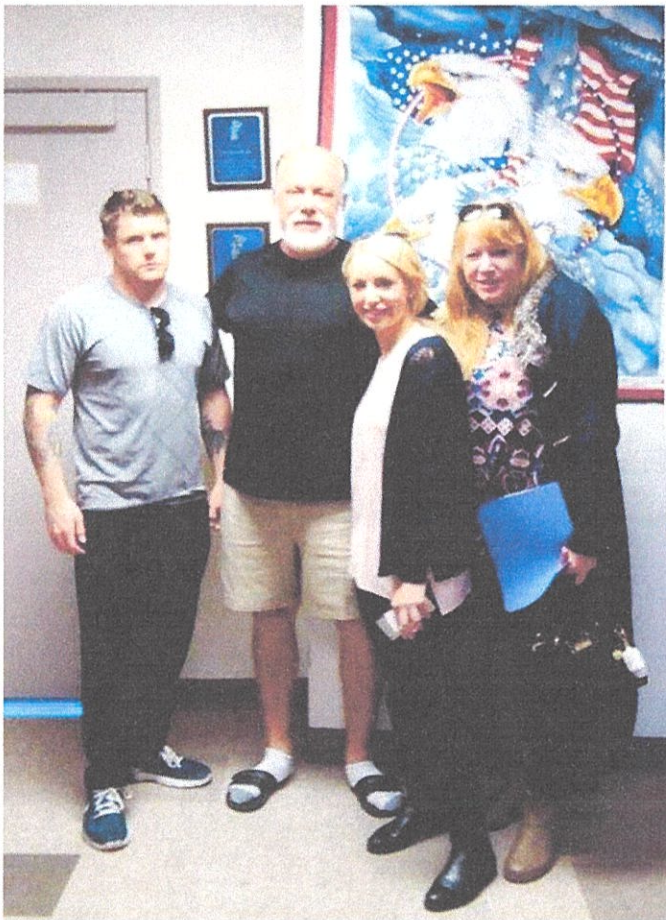
**Staff for MANA House Consisted of Director Walter Sanders, Assistant House Manager Peter Fleckenstein and Front Desk Clerk and House Photojournalist Timothy Pena**



*Catholic Charities MANA House staff, current and former residents gather for group photo before Phoenix Veterans Day Parade 2016*



*Walter Sanders with Wendy Owens at the new MANA House - May 2018*



*Paradise Valley Community Collge Veteran Services members stop by Catholic Charities MANA House to drop off a donation and get a tour by Assistant House Manager Peter Fleckenstein.*



## Meals and Food Donations / MANA House

Nutritional meals are a vital part of the transitional program. Veterans that are not getting fed tend to drink more alcohol which fills them up and provides a buzz at the same time. Donations and meals from church groups, veteran's organizations, and leftovers from concerts are all accepted and made available in the community refrigerator. Each team also has a refrigerator for personal food items and the cupboards are always full of canned goods. An on-site chef prepares nutritious meals daily.



*Hungry Veterans bring their appetites for Thanksgiving Day dinner hosted by Operation Big Serve.*



An ever appreciative crew

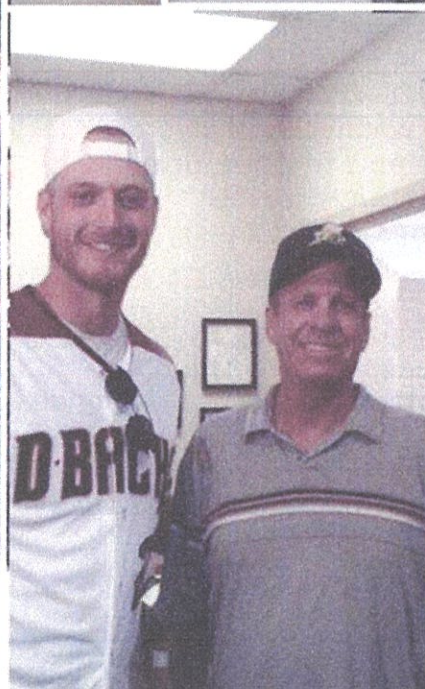
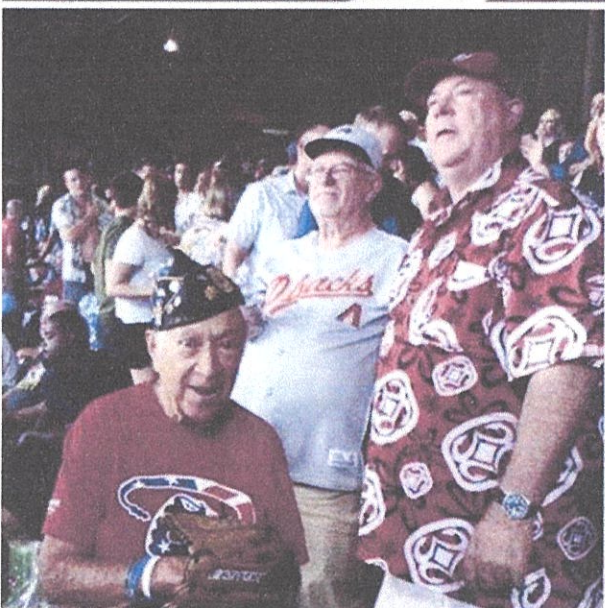
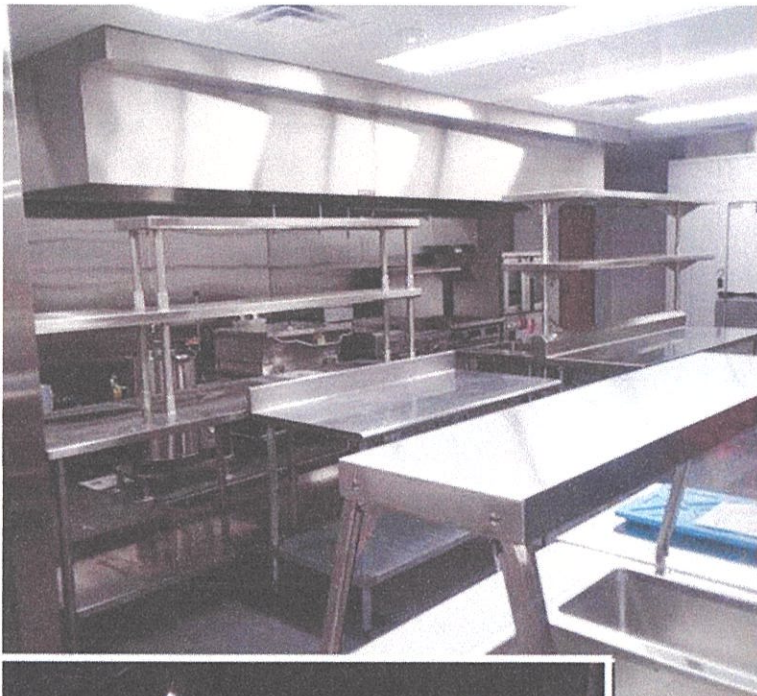
Catholic Charities MANA House resident Dante Maxwell dishes up an amazing Sunday brunch to Mick Shapiro.



*Hands On volunteers Liza Robles, Magi Flores, Amy Bunt & Sherry Roueche pose for a photo before serving Sunday Brunch to the veterans of Catholic Charities MANA House.*

## Community Engagement and MANA House

Community groups are a vital part of the transitional program for veterans and the Arizona Diamondbacks have been great partners not only with the many tickets to baseball games, visits to MANA House with pizza and souvenirs, but also in the form of a \$100,000 donation for the new kitchen in 2018. While the D-backs have been great partners, it is the community that shows up on Saturday nights, Sunday mornings, and special occasions with meals and love which are the true heart of MANA House.



Transitioning from one stage of life to another is much easier when surrounded by other veterans especially at a baseball game with complimentary tickets

## Veterans at MANA House are Responsible for Their Own Laundry Whereas Borden Ave Uses Prison-like Services

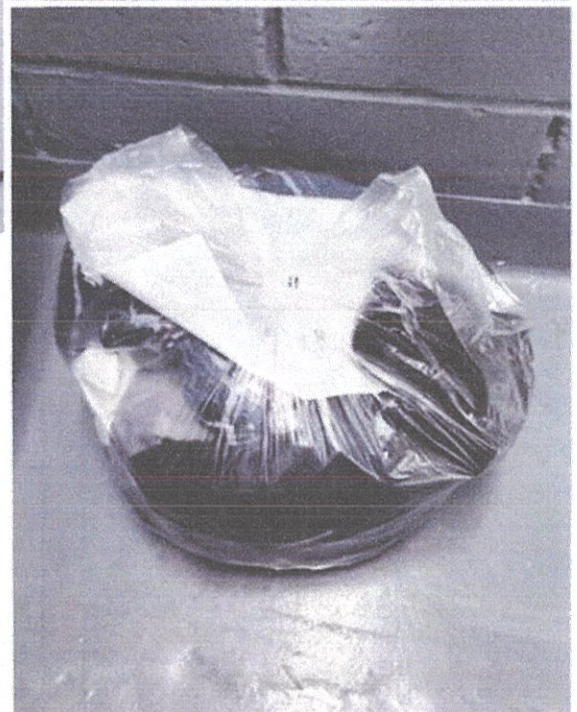
### Prison-like Laundry Services

Clean clothes are a mainstay of a successful transition. Watching a veteran come into the Phoenix transitional program, MANA House, just beat up and then seeing them a week later with clean clothes instills that military pride necessary for a successful transition.



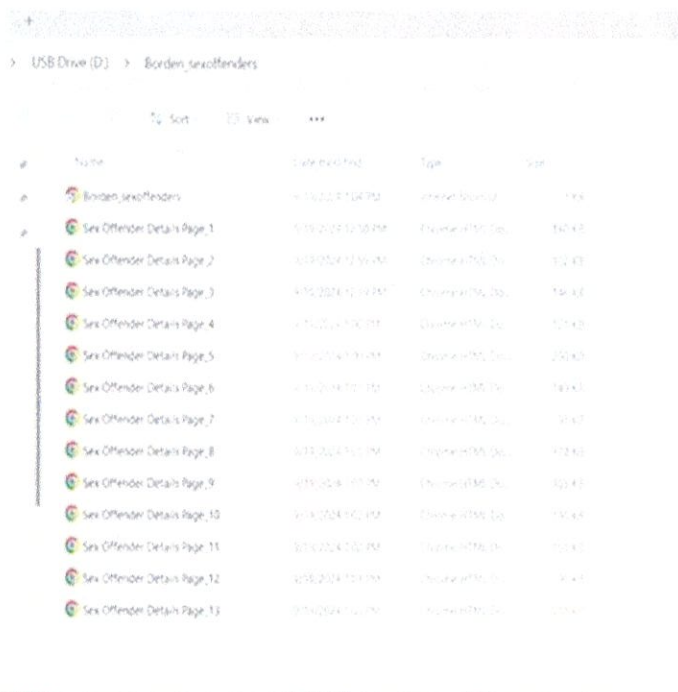
MANA House provides washers and dryers for residents. Veterans are able to wash, dry, and iron their clothes (with starch) for job interviews, church, general cleanliness, and pride in their appearance.

Borden Ave uses in-house laundry services. Clothes are washed and dried in commercial washers/dryers and then given back in a ball of wrinkled clothing impossible to iron. Starch is forbidden because, "it clogs the filters."

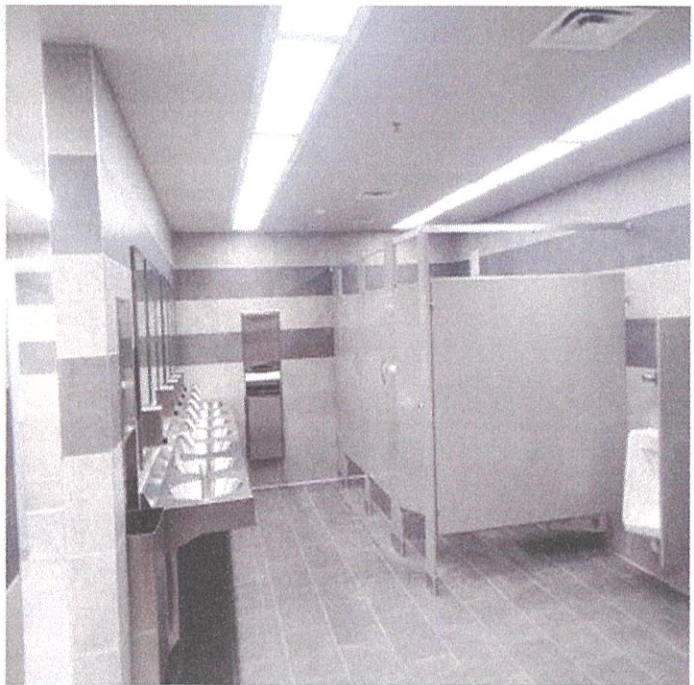


# Living Conditions at Borden Avenue are Dangerous with Open Shower Rooms While Housing Violent Sex Offenders

One of the most important aspects of a safe environment for which to transition is the ability to shower in private. Borden Avenue showers are open gym-style without any personal privacy while violent sex offenders are allowed unfettered access. It is not uncommon to walk into a bathroom to find broken sinks, clogged toilets, and residents getting high in the stalls. The lack of security cameras provide a secluded place for assaults.



Name	Created	Type	Size
Borden,sexoffenders	11/10/2018 10:47 AM	Folder (NTFS, Sys)	1 KB
Sex Offender Details Page 1	11/10/2018 10:47 AM	Folder (NTFS, Sys)	1 KB
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Sex Offender Details Page 3	11/10/2018 10:47 AM	Folder (NTFS, Sys)	1 KB
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Sex Offender Details Page 13	11/10/2018 10:47 AM	Folder (NTFS, Sys)	1 KB



## Meals and Food Donations / Borden Ave

Community groups are not allowed in Borden Avenue, so food donations are dropped off in front of the building. There also are no cooks on staff and it has been said they can't cook because of insurance. According to the DHS budgets from 2020 - 2024, \$0 is allocated for the kitchen which instead is used to host a culinary school. For this Thanksgiving donation in 2021, it would have been impossible for those turkeys to be cooked and most likely went home with staff members.



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES  
ANNUAL REVIEW - BUDGET SUMMARY FORM**  
**Agency/Provider: Institute For Community Living, Inc.**  
**Contract No: 20201411371**  
**Program/Facility: Borden Avenue Veterans' Residence**  
**Fiscal Year: FY'24**

**PERSONNEL SERVICES (PS) - ORIGINAL BUDGET**

Administration	\$382,613
Counseling	\$644,821
Recreation	\$0
Direct Care	\$1,644,074
Security	\$0
Maintenance	\$515,155
Kitchen	\$0
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES</b>	<b>\$3,186,662</b>
<b>II - FRINGE BENEFITS</b>	<b>\$805,828</b>

The kitchen has no expenses with any food brought in on cold trays from other shelters with no cook on site. The kitchen is instead host to a local culinary school

**III - TOTAL PS** **\$3,992,490**

**IV - OTHER THAN PERSONNEL SERVICE**

Office Equipment	\$0
Client Supplies/Furniture	\$53,327
Client Transportation	\$32,379
Client Stipends	\$0
Utilities	\$41,516
Insurance	\$16,402
Office Expenses	\$394,284
Professional Costs	\$0
Maintenance/Repair	\$150,617
Mechanical System Contracts	\$0
Food	\$539,473
Contracted Security	\$1,088,422
Vehicle Expenses	\$16,844
<b>TOTAL OTPS</b>	<b>\$2,333,265</b>

**\$539,473/365/224  
= \$6.59 per veteran/day**

**VI - ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD** \$0  
**VII - RENT** \$0  
**VIII - TOTAL (without Debt Service) ( V + VI + VII )** **\$6,325,756**

IX - Allowance for Repairs	\$790,592	
X - Prevailing Wage Adjustment	\$541,135	
Mental Health Services Adjustment	\$1,580,156	
ALLOWANCE	\$0	\$9,703,731
<b>XI - GROSS AMOUNT ( VIII + IX + X )</b>	<b>\$9,237,639</b>	<b>\$18,941,370</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>\$9,237,639</b>	<b>\$18,941,370</b>

## Housing Specialists at MANA House Remain an Integral Part of Transitioning into Sustainable Housing

The Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Transitional Program places housing as its number one priority. Housing specialists at MANA House regularly appear at events such as Stand Downs, Veterans Day Parades, and other housing events. Other programs include move-in services including everything from furniture to pictures on the walls for a smooth move into an apartment.



Relationships are important to success. Vietnam Veteran William Hawkins cozies up to Action Plan Advisors Rev. Linda Watson, Toney Black and Selene Becerra-Romero at the 2016 Veterans Day Parade. Mr. Hawkins now lives in San Diego.





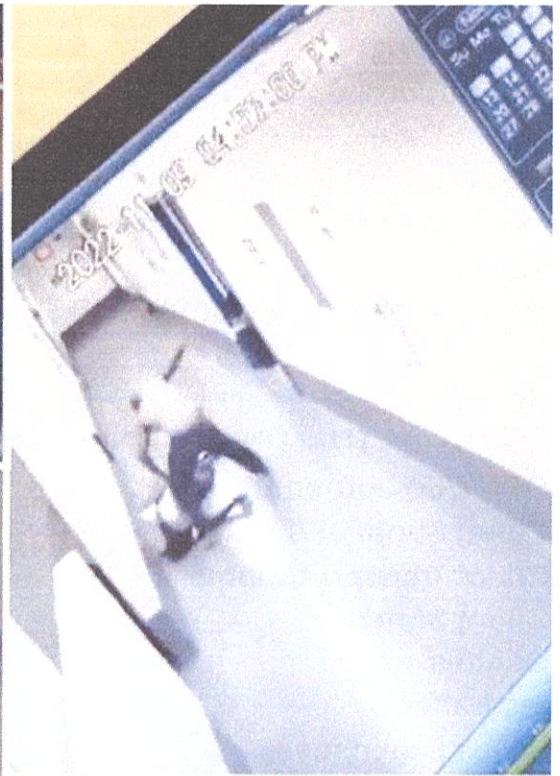
## Staff and Security Allow Crimes

On rare occasions that NYPD are called, security and staff will run interference to protect violent criminals from accountability of crimes committed and possible re-arrest. After testifying to NYS Assembly, Timothy Pena was threatened by staff. Timothy Pena attempted to bring in spray clothes starch, but it was denied due to it “clogging the air filters”



## Staff and Security Allow Crimes

Security is contracted at over \$1.088 Millions a year, yet can be found sleeping in the hallways, in the kitchen, and at the metal detector while veterans are being subjected to violent assaults, overdoses, and deaths. During one violent assault, security can be heard calling the victim a little 'bitch' while laughing.



*Veteran sleeps on the sidewalk because of violence*



*Veterans should die on the battlefield not on a shelter floor*

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES  
ANNUAL REVIEW - BUDGET SUMMARY FORM  
Agency/Provider: Institute For Community Living, Inc.  
Contract No: 20201411371  
Program/Facility: Borden Avenue Veterans' Residence  
Fiscal Year: FY'24**

**PERSONNEL SERVICES (PS) - ORIGINAL BUDGET**

Administration	\$382,613
Counseling	\$644,821
Recreation	\$0
Direct Care	\$1,644,074
Security	\$0
Maintenance	\$515,155
Kitchen	\$0

**TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES** \$3,186,662

**II - FRINGE BENEFITS** \$805,828

**III - TOTAL PS** \$3,992,490

**IV - OTHER THAN PERSONNEL SERVICE**

Office Equipment	\$0
Client Supplies/Furniture	\$53,327
Client Transportation	\$32,379
Client Stipends	\$0
Utilities	\$41,516
Insurance	\$16,402
Office Expenses	\$394,284
Professional Costs	\$0
Maintenance/Repair	\$150,617
Mechanical System Contracts	\$0

Food \$539,473

Contracted Security \$1,088,422

Vehicle Expenses \$16,844

**TOTAL OTPS** \$2,333,265

**VI - ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD** \$0

**VII - RENT** \$0

**VIII - TOTAL (without Debt Service) ( V + VI + VII )** \$6,325,756

**IX - Allowance for Repairs** \$790,592

**X - Prevailing Wage Adjustment** \$541,135

**Mental Health Services Adjustment** \$1,580,156

**ALLOWANCE** \$0 \$9,703,731

**XI - GROSS AMOUNT ( VIII + IX + X )** \$9,237,639 \$18,941,370

**TOTAL FUNDING** \$9,237,639 \$18,941,370

*Contracted security receives over \$1M / year to sleep in the hallways while veterans are being assaulted.*

Neither NYC Department of Homeless Services nor Institute for Community Living identify the Grant & Per Diem Transitional Program as an opportunity for Veterans Affairs eligibility veterans to receive services as seen from their website home pages.

 Charity Navigator

## Institute for Community Living Inc.

WWW.ICLINC.NET

125 BROAD STREET

New York NY 10004-2400

212-385-3030

New York NY | IRS ruling year: 1986 | EIN: 13-3306195

### Organization Mission

ICL'S MISSION IS TO ASSIST INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY OR AT RISK OF MENTAL ILLNESS OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES WITH INTEGRATED COMPREHENSIVE CARE DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THEIR WELLBEING, RECOVERY AND PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY LIVING.

### Total Revenue and Expenses - Data Available

This chart displays the trend of revenue and expenses over the past several years for this organization, as reported on their IRS Form 990.

FY	Revenue	Expenses
FY2021	135,785,521	133,463,489
FY2022	161,348,670	159,877,125
FY2023	188,614,121	186,196,613

### Salary of Key Persons - Data Available

Presented here are up to five of this organization's highest compensated employees. This compensation data includes salary, cash bonuses, and expense accounts and is displayed exactly how it is reported to the IRS. *The amounts do not include nontaxable benefits, deferred compensation, or other amounts not reported on Form W-2.* In some cases, these amounts may include compensation from related organizations. [Read the IRS policies for compensation reporting](#)

#### Jody Rudin, Ceo

\$416,490

#### Nikant Ohri, Cfo

\$377,606

#### Ellen Tabor, Associate Cmo

\$286,304

#### Edward Tabasky, Medical Director

\$229,736

#### Twiggy Rodriguez, Coo

\$228,227

Source: IRS Form 990 (page 7), filing year 2023

# NYC Dept of Homeless Services Borden Ave Homepage

Home About Prevention Shelter Permanency Outreach Careers Events

Families Single Adults Providers Additional Resources

Single Adults Applying for Temporary Housing

Single Adults: The Shelter System

Hospital Referral Process

Veterans Shelter

Facebook  
Twitter

## Veterans Shelter



### Housing Resources for Homeless Veterans

Homeless veterans in need of short-term housing can now find it in shelter and other options in the city. After they receive referral to consolidated housing, one of the ways to a specific location is the Borden Ave. Veterans Provider (BIVE), a 24-hour shelter in Times Square. It was an initial interim use for homeless veterans in an emergency shelter facility, which was later converted into a shelter to provide services to the homeless veteran population in the city. BIVE is a provider to provide services to the homeless veteran population and support their needs.

### Service Spotlight

Visit the video below for general information about Services for the Underserved, an organization offering housing, employment, and counseling, job training, and other support to New York's Veterans.



Audio Description: Upbeat music plays as a montage of people playing basketball, gardening, and running in a race plays.

Text on screen: Opportunity is all around us, in our communities, in our people. When we seize it, opportunity inspires us. Opportunity empowers us. Opportunity defines us. Because opportunity unearths the potential in us all. Service for developmental disabilities, behavioral health, HIV/AIDS, veterans, Service for the underserved, S.U.S. Opportunity for all. S.U.S.ORG

### Services for the Underserved

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program aims to improve very low-income veteran families' housing stability.

SSVF programs provide outreach and case management services and assist participants to obtain VA and other public benefits. SSVF services include:

- Housing counseling services
- Legal services
- Benefits advocacy
- Case management services
- Rental and utility assistance
- Personal financial planning services
- Transportation
- Moving costs

Directory of City Agencies  
Notify NYC  
NYC Mobile Apps

Contact NYC Government  
CityStore  
Maps

City Employees  
Stay Connected  
Resident Toolkit

NYC Search

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Privacy Policy Terms of Use



# Institute for Community Living Borden Ave Homepage

al-shelters/



[About Us](#) ▾

[How We Help](#) ▾

[Support Us](#) ▾

[Monthly Newsletters](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contact](#)

[Donate](#)

## Transitional Shelters

[Home](#) » [How We Help](#) » [Housing](#) » [Transitional Shelters](#)



Our multidisciplinary teams of staff offer case management services and on-site medical and mental health support to adults experiencing homelessness. Staff help residents address past traumas, rebuild their lives, focus on finding work and permanent housing, and reconnect with families and communities.

ICL was one of the first residences in the country to work with people who are homeless and have a serious mental illness and substance use issue; we operate the only New York City shelter exclusively for homeless veterans.

[Learn more about our shelters below.](#)

### Borden Avenue Veterans Residence

Borden Avenue Veterans Residence in Long Island City helps 254 veterans struggling with mental health issues and severe traumatic experiences. In addition to support services, holiday celebrations and special cultural events give the men a sense of normalcy and belonging.

### Tillary Street Shelter

Tillary Street Shelter in downtown Brooklyn helps women with mental illness, medical issues, and substance use disorders, many are veterans. Members of the local community are actively involved as volunteers to support the women on their path to recovery and wellness.

### Eldert Lane Shelter

Eldert Lane Shelter opened in East New York in 2018, ICL's second shelter for women providing the full range of case management, entitlements, housing and employment services.

To learn more about eligibility and referrals to ICL shelters:



Call 844-ICL-HOPE (844-425-4573)



Or email us at [iclhope@iclinc.org](mailto:iclhope@iclinc.org)

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES**  
**Contract Exhibit**  
**BUDGET SUMMARY FORM**

Agency/Provider	Institute for Community Living, Inc.	Contract No	20201411371
Program/Facility	██████████	Fiscal Year	FY'20
Term of Contract	1/1/2020 - 6/30/2024	Date	_____
Agency Representative	_____	Title	_____
Agency Telephone	_____	Agency E-mail	_____

I PERSONNEL SERVICES (PS)	<u>BUDGET</u>
Administration	\$196,586
Counseling	\$1,106,600
Child Care (Tier I's only)	\$0
Recreation	\$0
Direct Care	\$0
Security	\$0
Maintenance	\$265,129
MVO	\$0
Kitchen	\$0
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES</b>	<b>\$1,568,575</b>
II FRINGE BENEFITS	\$622,998
III TOTAL PS	\$2,191,573
IV OTHER THAN PERSONNEL SERVICE	
Office Equipment	\$51,301
Client Supplies/Furniture	\$4,369
Client Transportation	\$17,267
Client Stipends	\$0
Utilities	\$0
Insurance	\$57,136
Office Expenses	\$109,699
Professional Costs	\$30,662
Maintenance/Repair	\$98,976
Mechanical System Contracts	\$0
Food	\$270,290
Contracted Security	\$399,230
Vehicle Expenses	\$23,391
<b>TOTAL OTPS</b>	<b>\$962,658</b>
V TOTAL PS & OTPS (III + IV)	\$3,154,213
VI ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD	\$0
VII RENT	\$0
VIII TOTAL (without Debt Service) (V + VI + VII)	\$3,154,213
IX Allowance for Repairs	\$315,421
X CV02 AMENDMENT	\$255,811
XI GROSS AMOUNT (VIII + IX + X)	\$3,725,445
XII ACCRUALS ( Max 5% of Net Funding - DHS Funding )	\$0
XIII REVENUE	\$0
XIV DHS FUNDING ( XI - XII - XIII )	\$3,725,445
<b>FUNDING TYPE</b>	
DHS DIRECT	\$3,725,445
ESG	\$0
MoHMH	\$0
CITY COUNCIL	\$0
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>\$3,725,445</b>

Note: If the Budget Summary Form is not returned with all original signatures within ten (10) days of receipt, DHS will assume your approval of the Annual Review.

**APPROVALS:**

_____	DHS Program Representative	_____	Date
_____	DHS Budget	_____	Date
_____	Provider	_____	Date

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES  
ANNUAL REVIEW  
BUDGET SUMMARY FORM**

<b>Agency/Provider</b>	Institute For Community Living, Inc.	<b>Contract No</b>	20201411371
<b>Program/Facility</b>	Shelter	<b>Fiscal Year</b>	FY21
<b>Term of Contract</b>	1/1/2020 - 6/30/2024	<b>Date</b>	
<b>Agency Representative</b>		<b>Title</b>	
<b>Agency Telephone</b>		<b>Agency E-mail</b>	

I PERSONNEL SERVICES (PS)	ORIGINAL BUDGET
Administration	\$382,613
Counseling	\$644,821
Child Care (Tier IIs only)	\$0
Recreation	\$0
Direct Care	\$1,644,074
Security	\$0
Maintenance	\$515,155
MVO	\$0
Kitchen	\$0
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES</b>	<b>\$3,186,662</b>
II FRINGE BENEFITS	\$805,829
III TOTAL PS	\$3,992,491
IV OTHER THAN PERSONNEL SERVICE	
Office Equipment	\$0
Client Supplies/Furniture	\$53,327
Client Transportation	\$32,379
Client Stipends	\$0
Utilities	\$41,516
Insurance	\$16,402
Office Expenses	\$394,284
Professional Costs	\$0
Maintenance/Repair	\$150,817
Mechanical System Contracts	\$0
Food	\$539,473
Contracted Security	\$1,088,422
Vehicle Expenses	\$16,844
<b>TOTAL OTPS</b>	<b>\$2,333,265</b>
V TOTAL PS & OTPS ( III + IV )	\$6,325,757
VI ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD	\$0
VII RENT	\$0
VIII TOTAL (without Debt Service) ( V + VI + VII )	\$6,325,757
IX CV02 AMENDMENT	\$869,282
X Allowance for Repairs	\$632,576
XI GROSS AMOUNT ( VIII + IX + X )	\$7,827,614
XII ACCRUALS ( Max 5% of Net Funding - DHS Funding )	\$0
XIII REVENUE	\$0
XIV DHS FUNDING ( XI - XII - XIII )	\$7,827,614
<b>FUNDING TYPE</b>	
DHS DIRECT	\$7,827,614
ESG	\$0
MoHMH	\$0
CITY COUNCIL	\$0
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>\$7,827,614</b>

Note: If the Budget Summary Form is not returned with all original signatures within ten (10) days of receipt, DHS will assume your approval of the Annual Review.

**APPROVALS:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
DHS Program Representative Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
DHS Budget Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Provider Date

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES  
ANNUAL REVIEW  
BUDGET SUMMARY FORM**

<b>Agency/Provider</b>	Institute For Community Living, Inc.	<b>Contract No</b>	20201411371
<b>Program/Facility</b>	Shelter	<b>Fiscal Year</b>	FY'22
<b>Term of Contract</b>	1/1/2020 - 6/30/2024	<b>Date</b>	
<b>Agency Representative</b>		<b>Title</b>	
<b>Agency Telephone</b>		<b>Agency E-mail</b>	

	<u>ORIGINAL BUDGET</u>	
<b>I PERSONNEL SERVICES (PS)</b>		
Administration	\$382,613	
Counseling	\$644,821	
Child Care (Tier II only)	\$0	
Recreation	\$0	
Direct Care	\$1,844,074	
Security	\$0	
Maintenance	\$515,156	
MVO	\$0	
Kitchen	\$0	
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES</b>	<b>\$3,186,662</b>	
<b>II FRINGE BENEFITS</b>	<b>\$885,828</b>	
<b>III TOTAL PS</b>	<b>\$3,992,491</b>	
<b>IV OTHER THAN PERSONNEL SERVICE</b>		
Office Equipment	\$0	
Client Supplies/Furniture	\$53,327	
Client Transportation	\$32,379	
Client Stipends	\$0	
Utilities	\$41,516	
Insurance	\$18,402	
Office Expenses	\$304,284	
Professional Costs	\$0	
Maintenance/Repair	\$160,617	
Mechanical System Contracts	\$0	
Food	\$630,473	
Contracted Security	\$1,088,422	
Vehicle Expenses	\$16,844	
<b>TOTAL OTPS</b>	<b>\$2,333,265</b>	
<b>V TOTAL PS &amp; OTPS ( III + IV )</b>	<b>\$6,326,757</b>	
<b>VI ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD</b>	<b>\$0</b>	
<b>VII RENT</b>	<b>\$0</b>	
<b>VIII TOTAL (without Debt Service) ( V + VI + VII )</b>	<b>\$6,326,757</b>	
<b>IX Allowance for Repairs</b>	<b>\$632,578</b>	
<b>X CVO2 Amendment</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$438,213</b>
<b>XI GROSS AMOUNT ( VIII + IX + X )</b>	<b>\$6,958,332</b>	<b>\$7,396,545</b>
<b>XII ACCRUALS ( Max 5% of Net Funding - DHS Funding )</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>XIII REVENUE</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>XIV DHS FUNDING ( XI - XII - XIII )</b>	<b>\$6,958,332</b>	<b>\$7,396,545</b>
<b>FUNDING TYPE</b>		
DHS DIRECT	\$6,958,332	\$7,396,545
ESG	\$0	\$0
MohIMH	\$0	\$0
CITY COUNCIL	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>\$6,958,332</b>	<b>\$7,396,545</b>

Note: If the Budget Summary Form is not returned with all original signatures within ten (10) days of receipt, DHS will assume your approval of the Annual Review.

**APPROVALS:**

_____	_____
DHS Program Representative	Date
_____	_____
DHS Budget	Date
_____	_____
Provider	Date

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES  
ANNUAL REVIEW  
BUDGET SUMMARY FORM**

<b>Agency/Provider</b>	Institute For Community Living, Inc.	<b>Contract No</b>	20201411371
<b>Program/Facility</b>	Shelter	<b>Fiscal Year</b>	FY23
<b>Term of Contract</b>	1/1/2020 - 6/30/2024	<b>Date</b>	
<b>Agency Representative</b>		<b>Title</b>	
<b>Agency Telephone</b>		<b>Agency E-mail</b>	

	<u>ORIGINAL BUDGET</u>
<b>I PERSONNEL SERVICES (PS)</b>	
Administration	\$382,613
Counseling	\$044,821
Child Care (Tier IIs only)	\$0
Recreation	\$0
Direct Care	\$1,644,074
Security	\$0
Maintenance	\$515,155
MVO	\$0
Kitchen	\$0
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES</b>	<b>\$3,186,662</b>
<b>II FRINGE BENEFITS</b>	<b>\$805,829</b>
<b>III TOTAL PS</b>	<b>\$3,992,491</b>
<b>IV OTHER THAN PERSONNEL SERVICE</b>	
Office Equipment	\$0
Client Supplies/Furniture	\$53,327
Client Transportation	\$32,379
Client Stipends	\$0
Utilities	\$41,516
Insurance	\$16,402
Office Expenses	\$394,284
Professional Costs	\$0
Maintenance/Repair	\$150,617
Mechanical System Contracts	\$0
Food	\$539,473
Contracted Security	\$1,086,422
Vehicle Expenses	\$16,844
<b>TOTAL OTPS</b>	<b>\$2,333,265</b>
<b>V TOTAL PS &amp; OTPS ( III + IV )</b>	<b>\$6,325,757</b>
<b>VI ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>VII RENT</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>VIII TOTAL (without Debt Service) ( V + VI + VII )</b>	<b>\$6,325,757</b>
<b>IX START UP</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>X Allowance for Repairs</b>	<b>\$632,578</b>
<b>XI GROSS AMOUNT ( VIII + IX + X )</b>	<b>\$6,958,332</b>
<b>XII ACCRUALS ( Max 5% of Net Funding - DHS Funding )</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>XIII REVENUE</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>XIV DHS FUNDING ( XI - XII - XIII )</b>	<b>\$6,958,332</b>
<b>FUNDING TYPE</b>	
DHS DIRECT	\$6,958,332
ESG	\$0
MoHMH	\$0
CITY COUNCIL	\$0
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>\$6,958,332</b>

Note: If the Budget Summary Form is not returned with all original signatures within ten (10) days of receipt, DHS will assume your approval of the Annual Review.

**APPROVALS:**

_____	_____
DHS Program Representative	Date
_____	_____
DHS Budget	Date
_____	_____
Provider	Date

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES  
ANNUAL REVIEW  
BUDGET SUMMARY FORM**

<b>Agency/Provider</b>	Institute For Community Living, Inc.	<b>Contract No</b>	20201411371
<b>Program/Facility</b>	Shelter	<b>Fiscal Year</b>	FY'24
<b>Term of Contract</b>	1/1/2020 - 6/30/2024	<b>Date</b>	
<b>Agency Representative</b>		<b>Title</b>	
<b>Agency Telephone</b>		<b>Agency E-mail</b>	

<b>I PERSONNEL SERVICES (PS)</b>	<b>ORIGINAL BUDGET</b>
Administration	\$382,813
Counseling	\$644,821
Child Care (Tier I/a only)	\$0
Recreation	\$0
Direct Care	\$1,844,074
Security	\$0
Maintenance	\$515,155
MVO	\$0
Kitchen	\$0
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES</b>	<b>\$3,186,862</b>
<b>II FRINGE BENEFITS</b>	<b>\$805,829</b>
<b>III TOTAL PS</b>	<b>\$3,992,491</b>
<b>IV OTHER THAN PERSONNEL SERVICE</b>	
Office Equipment	\$0
Client Supplies/Furniture	\$53,327
Client Transportation	\$32,379
Client Stipends	\$0
Utilities	\$41,518
Insurance	\$16,402
Office Expenses	\$304,284
Professional Costs	\$0
Maintenance/Repair	\$150,817
Mechanical System Contracts	\$0
Food	\$639,473
Contracted Security	\$1,088,422
Vehicle Expenses	\$18,844
<b>TOTAL OTPS</b>	<b>\$2,333,265</b>
<b>V TOTAL PS &amp; OTPS ( III + IV )</b>	<b>\$6,325,757</b>
<b>VI ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>VII RENT</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>VIII TOTAL (without Debt Service) ( V + VI + VII )</b>	<b>\$6,325,757</b>
<b>IX START UP</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>X Allowance for Repairs</b>	<b>\$632,576</b>
<b>XI GROSS AMOUNT ( VIII + IX + X )</b>	<b>\$6,958,332</b>
<b>XII ACCRUALS ( Max 5% of Net Funding - DHS Funding )</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>XIII REVENUE</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>XIV DHS FUNDING ( XI - XII - XIII )</b>	<b>\$6,958,332</b>
<b>FUNDING TYPE</b>	
DHS DIRECT	\$6,958,332
ESG	\$0
MoMMH	\$0
CITY COUNCIL	\$0
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>\$6,958,332</b>

Note: If the Budget Summary Form is not returned with all original signatures within ten (10) days of receipt, DHS will assume your approval of the Annual Review.

**APPROVALS:**

_____	_____
DHS Program Representative	Date
_____	_____
DHS Budget	Date
_____	_____
Provider	Date

## NYC Department of Homeless Services is Awarded the GPD Grant to Provide Supportive Services and Housing Opportunities to 154 Veterans

The Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Transitional Program awards grants of about \$70 / day to provide 154 veterans a number of supportive services to VA-eligible veterans to obtain sustainable housing, financial stability and mental and physical wellness.

While Borden Ave is receiving nearly \$4 Million / year to provide these services, VA-eligible veterans seeking access to resources are red-flagged and sent to violent shelters while NYC Dept of Homeless Services continues to receive the grant funding while housing violent sex offenders and non-veterans.

VISN	VA Medical Center	Organization	Project Number (FAIN)	Type of GPD Grant	Veteran Beds
2	528A7 - Syracuse, NY	Volunteers of America of Western New York, Inc.	VOAU713-3846-528A7-PD-24	Housing	5
2	528A8 - Albany, NY	Albany Housing Coalition, Inc.	AHCI606-4709-528A8-PD-24	Housing	28
2	528A8 - Albany, NY	Veterans & Community Housing Coalition Inc	VCHC839-3557-528A8-PD-24	Housing	13
2	561 - New Jersey HCS, NJ	Community Hope, Inc.	CHOP038-4472-561-PD-24	Housing	95
2	561 - New Jersey HCS, NJ	County of Bergen, Human Services Dept.	BCDH426-4043-561-PD-24	Housing	8
2	561 - New Jersey HCS, NJ	NJ Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, Veterans Haven	NJDM928-5276-561-PD-24	Housing	75
2	561 - New Jersey HCS, NJ	VOICES OF OUR SISTERS INC	VOOS838-4662-561-PD-24	Housing	20
2	630 - New York Harbor HCS, NY	City of New York, Department of Homeless Services	CONY434-3674-630-PD-24	Housing	154
2	632 - Northport, NY	United Veterans Beacon House, Inc.	UVBH402-4125-632-PD-24	Housing	80
4	460 - Wilmington, DE	Home of the Brave	HOTB521-5125-460-PD-24	Housing	20
4	460 - Wilmington, DE	Warriors Helping Warriors Inc.	WHWS705-3996-460-PD-24	Housing	12
4	503 - Altoona, PA	Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania, Inc	VLPP643-5052-503-PD-24	Housing	12
4	529 - Butler, PA	Robin's Home, Inc.	ROBN989-5175-529-PD-24	Housing	6
4	529 - Butler, PA	The Housing Authority of the County of Butler	HACB448-4757-529-PD-24	Housing	10
4	529 - Butler, PA	Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania, Inc.	VLPP643-5057-529-PD-24	Housing	15

# NYC DHS is Awarded Grants for 154 Veterans Yet Falls Short for Veterans in the GPD Program



Veterans Health Administration  
VHA FOIA Office (10DH03A)  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

In Reply Refer To: FOIA Request 24-16958-F

September 10, 2024

Timothy Pena  
Veterans Justice Project  
257 W 29th St #13c  
New York, NY, 10001

Dear Timothy Pena:

This letter is the acknowledgment and initial agency decision to your August 28, 2024, request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Central Office FOIA Office requesting the following records:

**Clarified Request:** The requester would like to know how many GPD-eligible Veterans are enrolled at the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System (NYHHCS), as of June 1, July 1, and August 1, 2024.

## Request Procedural History

The VHA Central Office FOIA Office received your request on September 5, 2024 and assigned it the FOIA tracking number of 24-16958-F. Please include the tracking number in all future communications concerning this FOIA request.

As expressly authorized under the FOIA, the VA processes requests using multitrack processing which allows us to process requests on a first-in, first-out basis in either a simple or complex processing track. This allows us to respond to relatively simple requests more quickly than requests involving complex and/or voluminous records. Your request was placed in the Simple processing category.

## Response

The VA Homeless Program Office conducted a search for data responsive to your modified request. The search was conducted by utilizing the search criteria described above. At the conclusion of the search, the following was determined to be responsive to your request. The number of Veterans that were enrolled in the GPD grant at the NYHHCS with the City of New York, Department of Homeless Services on the dates specified below.

- June 1, 2024: 124 Veterans
- July 1, 2024: 118 Veterans
- August 1, 2024: 107 Veterans

Please note that these dates reflect a snapshot in time, as the numbers can fluctuate daily.

All information is provided in its entirety. No portions of the requested records have been withheld either in whole or in part. This concludes VHA's response to your FOIA request.

# Where's The Money?

Veterans Affairs funds an estimated 600 agencies that provide over 14,500 beds for eligible Veterans. Grantees work closely with an assigned liaison from the local VAMC. The VA GPD liaison monitors the services the grantees offer to Veterans and provides direct assistance to them. The Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Transitional Program awards a daily grant of \$68.64 per day to the **NYC Dept of Homeless Services** and **Institute for Community Living** to provide supportive services and transitional housing for 154 veterans experiencing homelessness at **Borden Avenue Veterans' Residence**.

**Awarded \$68.64 per day for 154 veterans = \$10,570.56 per day**

## Actual Number in Borden Ave GPD Program:

June 1, 2024: 124 veterans

July 1, 2024: 118 veterans

August 1, 2024: 107 veterans

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Average: 116 veterans

**Total Award: 154 veterans \$3,858,254.40 per year**

**Average: 116 veterans \$2,906,217.60 per year**

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**Unaccounted For Funds**

**\$952,036.80 per year**

By all appearances, NYC Department of Homeless Services and Institute for Community Living is kicking out veterans from the Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Transitional Program as punishment for making waves, red-flagging their files, and sending them to the most violent shelters in New York City while keeping the money. In addition to the violations being committed against VA-eligible veterans at Borden, the ones transferred out then lose their access to Veterans Affairs GPD program as well as the HUD/VASH housing program for veterans and forcing them to start all over again.

## Summary

Veterans at Borden Avenue are regularly told by shelter staff with both DHS and ICL they aren't in the GPD program for various reasons. Veterans are unsubstantially "exited" from the program for issues such as 'violating policy' with no violations presented as what was happening with me before I was removed for my own safety in December 2022. One veteran was transferred after being assaulted in the bathroom and now being told that he is clinically ineligible which is in direct violation of his [Rights and Responsibilities of VA Patients and Residents of Community Living Centers](#).

While the VA makes no specific rights for veterans in the transitional programs, those rights that cover Community Living Centers apply. When a veteran overdoses or dies of suspicious circumstances, Veterans Affairs has the ultimate jurisdiction over that VA-eligible veteran and their families have a right to know how their loved one died. ICL and DHS have created an atmosphere where veterans are treated as throwaways.

The lack of oversight by the Veterans Affairs Manhattan VAMC Director of Homeless Services should have no bearing on the continued abusive treatment being imposed on veterans in the Grant & Per Diem program. This presentation will also be forwarded to VA officials in the new administration so that they might honor their campaign promises of taking care of our homeless veterans.

For more information:

Timothy Pena

[Veterans Justice Project](#)

[Linktree: veteransjustice](#)

(602) 663-6456

[tim.pena@yahoo.com](mailto:tim.pena@yahoo.com)

# Corruption in NYC Department of Homeless Services Affecting Transitioning Veterans

Timothy Pena

November 13, 2024



## NYC Department of Investigation Report Unveils Mismanagement

In January 2024, the *NYC Department of Investigation (DOI)* revealed troubling issues in the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and its management of the shelter system, costing the city an estimated \$10.6 billion over three years. These risks vary in their severity, and include, among other things:

- Conflicts of interest affecting City money. DOI identified cases where insiders at the shelter provider had personal business interests involving the shelter through which they received payments outside their regular compensation.

- **Poor City-wide controls over how City money is used for executive compensation.** DOI identified multiple shelter executives who received more than \$500,000 per year, and in some cases, more than \$700,000 per year, from providers and related organizations.
- **Numerous examples of nepotism,** in violation of City contracts. DOI found shelter providers that have employed immediate family members of senior executives and board members, in apparent violation of their City contracts.
- **Shelter providers failing to follow competitive bidding rules when procuring goods and services with public money.** DOI found numerous cases where shelter providers did not comply with the City's competition requirements or where it was unclear whether shelter providers conducted true competitive bidding processes.

Charity Navigator

**Institute for Community Living Inc.**

WWW.ICLINC.NET

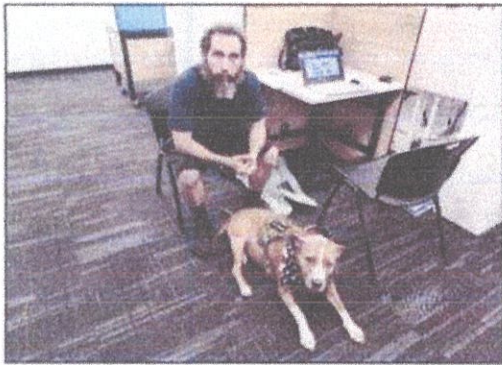
Salary of Key Persons - Data Available

Jody Rudin, Ceo	\$416,490
Nikant Ohri, Cfo	\$377,606
Ellen Tabor, Associate Cmo	\$286,304
Edward Tabasky, Medical Director	\$229,736
Twiggy Rodriguez, Coo	\$228,227

Source: IRS Form 990 (page 7), filing year 2023

## Veteran Homelessness and Supportive Services Failures

In NYC, the DHS and Institute for Community Living (ICL) are responsible for transitional housing for homeless veterans. ICL's facility at Borden Avenue



Veterans' Residence, a Veterans Affairs (VA) transitional site in Long Island City, has become a point of concern. Army Veteran Mount Lacy and his service dog Saddie, who moved from Florida in 2023, encountered violence and neglect in the DHS shelter system after expressing dissatisfaction with case workers about limited

supportive services and housing resources. Following an assault at Borden Avenue, the service-connected disabled veterans has been transferred

between numerous violent shelters while denied access to Veterans Affairs housing resources.

ICL reported \$188.6 million in revenue in 2023 while veterans at Borden Avenue lacked essentials such as food and hygiene products. CEO Jodi Rudin earned \$416,490 plus bonuses, with additional executives collectively making over a million dollars. Despite significant federal funding, veterans struggle to access transportation to VA healthcare appointments and basic supportive services.

### Safety and Service Gaps at Veteran Shelters

Borden Avenue’s environment has raised safety concerns among veterans, particularly during holidays. In one instance, a veteran assaulted on a subway was forced to sleep on the sidewalk after feeling unsafe in the shelter. Although he was VA-eligible, he was denied private space, remaining at risk until management intervened days later. Veterans in this program are often left with little choice: accept placement at Borden Avenue or risk losing VA services. This lack of choice has led to despair among veterans, increasing the risk of dangerous behavior, overdose, and even death. In December 2022, three veterans died within 11 days at Borden Avenue—two from overdoses and one from a hit-and-run near the shelter. The facility’s dark surroundings only recently saw lighting upgrades, illustrating the slow response to safety concerns.

VISN	VA Medical Center	Organization	Project Number (FAIN)	Type of O/PD Grant	Veteran Beds	Minor Dependents	Service Center Visits
2	12847 Syracuse NY	Volunteers of America of Western New York Inc	VQAU713-3549-12847-PD-24	Housing	5	0	0
2	12848 Albany NY	Albany Housing Coalition Inc	AHC-606-4706-52848-PD-24	Housing	28	0	0
2	12848 Albany NY	Veterans & Community Housing Coalition Inc	VCHC839-3551-12848-PD-24	Housing	13	0	0
2	561 New Jersey HCS NJ	Community Hope Inc	CHOP135-4471-561-PD-24	Housing	95	0	0
2	561 New Jersey HCS NJ	County of Bergen Human Services Dept	BCDH426-4343-561-PD-24	Housing	5	0	0
2	561 New Jersey HCS NJ	NJ Department of Military & Veterans Affairs Veterans Haven	NJDM626-5275-561-PD-24	Housing	75	0	0
2	561 New Jersey HCS NJ	VOICES OF OUR VETERANS INC	VOOS838-4652-561-PD-24	Housing	20	10	0
2	630 New York Harbor HCS NY	City of New York Department of Homeless Services	CCNY434-3674-630-PD-24	Housing	154	0	0
2	672 Northport NY	United Veterans Beacon House Inc	UVBH422-4125-632-PD-24	Housing	80	0	3
4	460 Wilmington DE	Home of the Brave	HO78521-5115-460-PD-24	Housing	20	1	0
4	460 Wilmington DE	Veterans Helping Veterans Inc	VHWV579-1098-460-PD-24	Housing	12	0	3
4	513 Allentown PA	Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania Inc	VLPP643-1251-513-PD-24	Housing	12	0	3
4	529 Butler PA	Robin's Home Inc	ROBN889-5175-529-PD-24	Housing	5	6	0
4	529 Butler PA	The Housing Authority of the County of Butler	HACB448-4757-529-PD-24	Housing	10	0	0
4	529 Butler PA	Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania Inc	VLPP643-1017-529-PD-24	Housing	15	0	0

The prison-like approach of Borden Avenue’s staff has compounded veterans’ challenges. Many are uninformed about their housing vouchers and receive misleading information about available resources. Case managers’ dismissive

attitudes toward veterans' concerns worsen their mental health, creating a culture of hopelessness.

## Broader Accountability Issues

The VA Homeless Program Office conducted a search for data responsive to your modified request. The search was conducted by utilizing the search criteria described above. At the conclusion of the search, the following was determined to be responsive to your request. The number of Veterans that were enrolled in the GPD grant at the NYHHCS with the City of New York, Department of Homeless Services on the dates specified below.

- June 1, 2024: 124 Veterans
- July 1, 2024: 118 Veterans
- August 1, 2024: 107 Veterans

Please note that these dates reflect a snapshot in time, as the numbers can fluctuate daily.

All information is provided in its entirety. No portions of the requested records have been withheld either in whole or in part. This concludes VHA's response to your FOIA request.

The oversight responsibility for these services lies with DHS and ICL, overseen by Karen Fuller, the Director of Homeless Services at

Manhattan's VA Medical Center. Although the Grant & Per Diem (GPD) program is federally funded as a transitional service, Fuller avoids the term "transitional," a stance seen as minimizing veterans' needs.

The VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) recently noted that 20% of veterans in federally-funded programs like the GPD are either unaccounted for or reported as "successfully transitioned" when they are not. DHS's inability to provide adequate services compounds the challenges veterans face, risking further deterioration of mental and physical health.

## The Need for Systemic Change

The findings underscore deep-seated corruption and neglect in DHS, affecting the lives of veterans who depend on stable housing and supportive services. These lapses in management and accountability can lead to tragic outcomes, as veterans may resort to living on the streets, enduring violence, or worse.



Navy Veteran and advocate Timothy Pena initially moved to NYC in July 2022 to collaborate on a documentary on veteran suicide prevention. His experiences as a homeless veteran in NYC inform his advocacy work, including his articles on transitioning from homelessness, testimony before the NYS Department of Veterans Affairs, and his role in the NYC Veterans Task Force. His journey highlights the need for urgent reforms in how veterans are supported by the city's shelter system.



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

JOCELYN E. STRAUBER  
COMMISSIONER

180 MAIDEN LANE  
NEW YORK, NY 10038  
212-825-5900

Release #39-2024  
nyc.gov/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024**

**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI**  
**(212) 825-5931**

**DOI EXAMINATION FINDS COMPLIANCE AND GOVERNANCE RISKS  
AT 51 CITY-FUNDED NONPROFITS THAT OPERATE NYC HOMELESS SHELTERS AND  
FLAWED CITY OVERSIGHT OF DHS-FUNDED PROVIDERS  
—DOI issued 32 reforms to address system-wide vulnerabilities—**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), issued a Report today memorializing the key findings from DOI's extensive examination of compliance risks at 51 nonprofit human service providers that operate many of the homeless shelters in New York City and of the City's oversight of the shelter system. The Report includes DOI's 32 recommendations for reform, intended to protect the billions of dollars that the City spends annually on shelter services from corruption, waste, fraud, and abuse. A copy of the Report follows this release and can be found here: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doi/newsroom/public-reports.page>

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "When it comes to protecting the vast taxpayer resources that City-funded nonprofits receive, prevention is key. City-funded nonprofit service providers pose unique compliance and governance risks, and comprehensive City oversight is the best way to stop corruption, fraud, and waste before it starts. This deep dive into the City-funded homeless service provider system builds on DOI's extensive experience investigating nonprofit fraud, and our 2021 Report concerning City-funded nonprofits. Today's Report provides ample evidence of the risks specific to nonprofits and shortcomings in City oversight and makes 32 recommendations to strengthen controls around this essential network. I thank the DOI team that has worked tirelessly on this investigation and the many City entities that provided assistance, including the staff from the City Department of Social Services who worked closely with DOI to support this examination."

The City, through the City Department of Social Services ("DSS") and the City Department of Homeless Services ("DHS"), operates the largest homeless shelter system of any municipality in the United States. DHS-funded shelters currently support an average of over 86,000 people per night at a cost of approximately \$4 billion annually in FY 2024, up from \$2.7 billion annually in FY 2022, due in large part to the influx of asylum seekers over the past two years. (DOI did not review City-funded contracts involving services to the asylum seekers that were procured under emergency procedures for this Report. DOI has oversight of these expenditures through an integrity monitor that is supervised by and reports to DOI.)

The examination for this Report began in 2021, well before the influx of asylum seekers, although some of the providers DOI examined are providing asylum seeker services. DOI's focus on this area was prompted in part by the investigation of Victor Rivera, the former CEO of nonprofit City service provider Bronx Parent Housing Network, who ultimately pled guilty to a federal bribery-and-kickback scheme involving that nonprofit. DOI investigators drew on their knowledge of financial and administrative vulnerabilities in City-funded nonprofit providers generally to examine individual shelter providers' governance and compliance practices, and potential conflicts of interest and other potential misconduct during this examination of 51 nonprofit organizations operating shelters for DHS. DOI reviewed the

operations of these organizations and their responses to a detailed questionnaire; analyzed an array of materials including audit reports, financial ledgers, invoices, and disclosures to the City; and conducted dozens of interviews, including of certain providers' senior executives. DOI also evaluated the oversight of these providers by the City, including by DHS and DSS. The provider practices and City oversight reflected in the Report dates from 2018 through the present, although the majority of DOI's information-gathering was completed from 2022 through 2024.

DOI received approximately 70 responses to the questionnaire distributed to City-funded nonprofit organizations. To date, DOI has completed findings on 51 providers and issued related referral letters to DSS, each one summarizing DOI's findings as to individual shelter providers and, in total, raising hundreds of governance and compliance concerns at these providers. The findings in these referrals already have caused some providers to make improvements to their policies and procedures. The Report makes 32 recommendations to the relevant City agencies to address system-wide vulnerabilities, strengthen controls with respect to providers to protect the substantial public funds providers receive, and enhance public trust.

Aspects of this examination are still ongoing, and this Report is a summary of DOI's major findings to date.

This Report builds on the findings from the investigations DOI has conducted in recent years that have focused on the City's nonprofit vendor spending and which have resulted in criminal charges, administrative findings, integrity monitorships, and recommendations to improve City oversight of these contracts and providers. Since 2018, DOI investigations have resulted in at least 25 arrests on charges involving fraud and corruption at City-funded nonprofits, including prosecutions related to homeless service providers. Since 2018, DOI also has issued more than a dozen administrative referrals to City agencies – in addition to the administrative referrals issued as part of this examination – reporting findings of mismanagement, noncompliance, or other non-criminal misconduct at City-funded nonprofits.

In 2021, DOI issued [\*Report on Corruption Vulnerabilities in the City's Oversight and Administration of Not-for-Profit Human Services\*](#), which identified gaps in the City's general oversight of its contracts with nonprofit human service providers. Many of DOI's prior findings and recommendations remain relevant to the findings of this Report, which focuses solely on the unique issues associated with the oversight of DHS-funded shelter providers.

This Report identifies a variety of compliance and governance risks at these providers, as well as in the City's overall management of the shelter system. **These risks vary in their severity and include:**

- **Conflicts of interest affecting City money.** DOI identified cases where insiders at the shelter provider had personal business interests involving the shelter through which they received payments outside their regular compensation. In some cases, shelter executives simultaneously held employment at a private entity, such as a security company, that was hired to provide services at City-funded shelters.
- **Poor Citywide controls over how City money is used for executive compensation.** DOI identified multiple shelter executives who received more than \$500,000 per year, and in some cases, more than \$700,000 per year, from providers and related organizations. Executive compensation in these cases is funded either largely or in part through City funds. The City lacks sufficient rules concerning how much City money can be allocated to nonprofit executives' salaries.
- **Nepotism, in violation of City contracts.** DOI found shelter providers that have employed immediate family members of senior executives and board members, in apparent violation of their City contracts. For instance, one provider that is largely funded by the City employed its CEO's children since at least 2007. This provider subsequently entered into a DOI-managed monitorship agreement.

- **Shelter providers failing to follow competitive bidding rules when procuring goods and services with public money.** DOI found numerous cases where shelter providers did not comply with the City's competitive bidding requirements or where it was unclear whether shelter providers conducted true competitive bidding processes. For example, this review identified multiple instances where shelter providers awarded multimillion-dollar building maintenance service contracts to companies affiliated with the buildings' landlords.

DOI issued 32 recommendations to address the system-wide vulnerabilities noted in this Report. Included among the key recommendations are:

- DSS should appoint a Chief Vendor Compliance Officer to provide overall leadership for DSS and DHS's compliance strategy with respect to nonprofit human service contracts, including contracts with shelter providers.
- Shelter providers should be required to regularly disclose additional information relevant to identifying compliance risks, including potential conflicts of interest for key persons.
- DSS and DHS should take steps to improve their oversight of shelter operators' expenditures, including by immediately stopping payments for costs that are not accompanied by a proper description and ensuring that relevant agency staff receive regular financial compliance training.
- The City should update its electronic procurement and invoicing systems to better enable third-party oversight and centralize key documentation.

This Report also reiterates many of the 23 recommendations that DOI issued in its November 2021 [Report on Corruption Vulnerabilities in the City's Oversight and Administration of Not-for-Profit Human Services](#). While the City has implemented some reforms since the 2021 Report and is also undertaking some work that closely tracks DOI's recommendations, many of the recommendations from 2021 have not been implemented at any substantial level. The 2021 Report recommended, among other things, that the City:

- ◊ Reform its conflict-of-interest disclosure system for the City's human service providers.
- ◊ Develop more specific guidance to agencies on executive compensation and consider setting a cap or other parameters on City-funded executive compensation.
- ◊ Conduct more robust reviews of expenses that human service providers invoice to the City, including by reviewing larger samples of supporting documentation.

New York City is currently making an unprecedented financial commitment to address homelessness. For that reason, it is more important than ever that it implement stronger risk management and compliance controls around this spending. Accepting and implementing the reforms set forth in this Report, as well as in DOI's November 2021 Report, would be critical steps in this direction.

**DOI Commissioner Strauber thanks DSS Commissioner Molly Wasow Park and her staff, for their partnership on this examination and the Mayor's Office of Contracts and Mayor's Office of Risk Management and Compliance for their assistance.**

DOI also received support from two private firms with experience in investigations, audits, and compliance monitoring, who provided auditing and investigative resources with respect to certain provider reviews.

At DOI, this examination was conducted by Deputy Inspector General/Special Counsel Daniel Kacinski and Confidential Investigator Rushelle Sharpe, with the assistance of Senior Investigative Auditor Olga Avram and Senior Investigative Attorney Alex Cane in DOI's Office of the Inspector General for City-Funded Nonprofits. Data Analysts Anthony McDowald and Zachary Sayle and Director of Data Analytics Shyam Prasad in DOI's Data Analytics Unit provided technical assistance. The examination was supervised

by Senior Inspector General Andrew Sein, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan, and Deputy Commissioner/ Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

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# Homeless Veterans Disappearing from Veterans Affairs Transitional Programs

Timothy Peña

November 15, 2024

1 in 5 Veterans Subjected to Inaccurate, Unsupported Discharges for Permanent Housing



Service-connected disabled Army Veteran Mount Lacy and his service dog, Saddle have been living on the street, in violent NYC shelters, and couch-surfing since being ‘transferred’ from the only Veterans Affairs Grant & Per Diem (GPD) transitional program at Borden Avenue Veterans Residency in October 2023 after he questioned the lack of



progress on permanent housing. He was attacked early one morning by two other residents in the bathroom but was arrested after getting the upper hand and choking out one of his attackers. The arrest led to his being transferred to another violent shelter and taken out of the GPD program and therefore, the permanent housing program for veterans called, HUD/VASH. Since then, Lacy has received no assistance from

Veterans Affairs and is currently couch-surfing with a friend with no prospects for housing.

Unfortunately, this is not uncommon for veterans in the New York City transitional program which awards nearly \$70/day to provide supportive services and housing assistance to 154 veterans in the GPD program run by NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS)

and provider Institute for Community Living (ICL). While DHS and ICL rake in millions of federal dollars, veterans in the GPD program are disappearing while they continue to receive the funding. Numerous veterans have been reported to have left or been kicked out and then never heard from again. The 'up to two years' Congressional program is being

The VA Homeless Program Office conducted a search for data responsive to your modified request. The search was conducted by utilizing the search criteria described above. At the conclusion of the search, the following was determined to be responsive to your request. The number of Veterans that were enrolled in the GPD grant at the NYHHCS with the City of New York, Department of Homeless Services on the dates specified below.

- June 1, 2024: 124 Veterans
- July 1, 2024: 118 Veterans
- August 1, 2024: 107 Veterans

Please note that these dates reflect a snapshot in time, as the numbers can fluctuate daily.

All information is provided in its entirety. No portions of the requested records have been withheld either in whole or in part. This concludes VHA's response to your FOIA request.

exploited to the point that veterans are told that being homeless is their fault while they are fed cold rice and green beans, subjected to violent assaults, and disparaged by staff.

After two years, veterans eligible for HUD/VASH find themselves in SRO's on a city voucher and oftentimes no documentation, no identifications, and no follow-up by the transitional program.

Apparently, these issues have also been a concern of [Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General](#). In a report published September 18, 2024, the OIG conducted a review of the Homeless Operations, Management, and Evaluation System (HOMES), to determine whether VHA has reliable data to monitor grantee performance, veteran outcomes, and progress in preventing the recurrence of veteran homelessness.

*"The review team estimated the HOMES outcome data were unreliable for about 888 of the 4,151 exits to permanent housing (21 percent), which included errors with inaccurate or unsupported housing arrangements and unrecorded negative exits.*

Specifically, the team found in these cases that the HOMES data on veterans' permanent housing arrangements at program exit either did not accurately reflect information found in VA medical records or the grantee files, or lacked supporting documentation.

Additionally, the HOMES data did not accurately capture all instances of veterans being discharged from the GPD program under negative circumstances. The team found that these issues mostly occurred when veterans were reportedly living with family or friends permanently after they were discharged from the GPD program."

For veterans in NYC shelters, this is no surprise. The conditions in the Borden Ave. Veterans' Residence are deplorable with daily visits from NYPD, continuous overdoses and deaths, and apathetic staff and security who regularly demean and disparage VA-eligible veterans while providing no supportive services or access to permanent housing as authorized by [Public Law 109-461](#). Dozens of complaints to the local Veterans Affairs Manhattan VAMC and Homeless Services have been ignored and follow-up refused.



# US DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Office of Audits and Evaluations

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## VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

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# **Additional Controls Are Needed to Improve the Reliability of Grant and Per Diem Program Data**

Review

23-02610-226

September 18, 2024

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## Executive Summary

The Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program is VA's largest transitional housing program. It awards grants to community partners (grantees) that provide veterans experiencing homelessness with temporary housing and supportive services, such as mental health and substance use disorder treatment and assistance in obtaining permanent housing.<sup>1</sup> With a budget of over \$275 million, the GPD program served almost 24,000 veterans in fiscal year (FY) 2022.<sup>2</sup>

GPD liaisons at VA medical facilities, who are typically social workers, oversee both grantees and veterans in the program. They use the Homeless Operations, Management, and Evaluation System (HOMES) to record veteran outcomes, such as housing arrangement at program exit, the reason for ending program participation, and discharge date from the program. Having reliable data in HOMES is critical for monitoring and measuring grantees' performance and supports the Homeless Programs Office's (HPO) strategic objective of using data to make informed and timely decisions. HPO also began using HOMES data to track VA's progress on achieving its 2023 goals to place at least 38,000 veterans in permanent housing and prevent their return to homelessness.<sup>3</sup>

Given the importance of the GPD program and VA's reliance on HOMES data, the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this review to determine whether the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has reliable GPD program performance data to monitor and measure program outcomes and progress in preventing the recurrence of veteran homelessness. Specifically, the review assessed whether veteran outcome data recorded in HOMES were accurate and supported based on grantee files and veterans' VA medical records.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> VA awards several types of grants under the GPD program, most commonly per diem-only grants. This report focuses on transitional housing provided through per diem-only grants. Grantees can be nonprofit organizations, state or local government agencies, or recognized tribal governments. For more information on the GPD program, see appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> VA FY 2024 Budget Submission, "Veterans Homelessness Programs," in vol. 2, *Medical Programs* (March 2023).

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the placement of at least 38,000 veterans in permanent housing, VA's 2023 homelessness goals called for no more than 5 percent of permanently placed veterans to return to homelessness and for at least 90 percent of veterans who returned to homelessness to be rehoused or on a pathway to rehousing by the end of 2023. On January 30, 2024, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) announced it had met its 2023 homelessness goals—placing 46,552 veterans in permanent housing, ensuring almost 96 percent of these veterans stayed permanently housed, and rehousing or placing on a path to be rehoused by the end of the year over 96 percent of the veterans who had returned to homelessness.

<sup>4</sup> Grantees maintain a participant record that includes administrative and clinical files documenting the veteran's treatment plan, treatment and housing goals, and services provided to the veteran. Throughout this report, these documents are referred to as grantee files.

## What the Review Found

VHA could improve the reliability of the data that HPO and VA medical facilities use to monitor program and grantee performance, inform care management decisions for veterans, and guide strategies to help veterans remain in permanent housing. The review team found that 172 of the 183 statistically sampled GPD program exits it assessed in HOMES had accurate discharge dates. The team concluded, in the few cases in which dates did not match those in the grantee files, that these minor and infrequent errors would not significantly impact program monitoring or decision-making.<sup>5</sup> However, based on further evaluation of the statistical sample, the review team estimated the HOMES outcome data were unreliable for about 888 of the 4,151 exits to permanent housing (21 percent), which included errors with inaccurate or unsupported housing arrangements and unrecorded negative exits.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, the team found in these cases that the HOMES data on veterans' permanent housing arrangements at program exit either did not accurately reflect information found in VA medical records or the grantee files, or lacked supporting documentation. Additionally, the HOMES data did not accurately capture all instances of veterans being discharged from the GPD program under negative circumstances. The team found that these issues mostly occurred when veterans were reportedly living with family or friends permanently after they were discharged from the GPD program.

### Recorded Discharge Dates Were Generally Accurate

The team found the discharge dates that GPD liaisons recorded in HOMES for 172 of the 183 statistically sampled cases were accurate based on the grantee files. Among the 11 other cases, one was missing a discharge date; for the remaining 10, the team found sufficient information to confirm the discharge date's inaccuracy. The inaccurate dates caused five of these 10 veterans' stays to be overstated by an average of 3.6 days and the other five veterans' stays to be understated by an average of 1.2 days. Although the discharge dates can be used to determine lengths of stay and track how long veterans were permanently housed, the team determined that the infrequent and minor errors in the discharge dates recorded in HOMES were not significant enough to affect the GPD program's monitoring of the grantees or HPO's ability to monitor the GPD program using its permanent housing and negative exit metrics.

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<sup>5</sup> These errors are not included in projections in this report.

<sup>6</sup> The 4,151 exits to permanent housing consist of exits to the five most common permanent housing categories for the five-month period ending May 31, 2023, as described in appendix B.

## Data on Veterans' Permanent Housing Arrangements Were Inaccurate or Unsupported

The team found that 86 of 183 statistically sampled cases reviewed had unreliable data in HOMES related to veterans' permanent housing arrangements.<sup>7</sup> In these cases, the team determined the veterans' housing arrangements were incorrect or were not supported by documentation in the grantee files and VA medical records. Based on these results, the team estimated 867 of the 4,151 exits to permanent housing (21 percent) were inaccurate or unsupported.<sup>8</sup> According to program policies, GPD liaisons are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of collected and submitted GPD program participant data in HOMES. GPD liaisons must ensure that documentation in HOMES aligns with the information in the veterans' medical records and that information in the veterans' medical records is consistent with the grantees' clinical records.<sup>9</sup>

### *Inaccurate Permanent Housing Data*

In 26 of 183 statistically sampled cases, the review team determined that GPD liaisons did not select the correct housing arrangement in HOMES based on information found in the grantee files and VA medical records. For 12 of these cases, the GPD liaisons should have selected a different permanent housing category, and for the remaining 14 cases, they should have selected a nonpermanent, instead of a permanent, housing category. In total, the team estimated 262 of the 4,151 exits to permanent housing (6 percent) had the incorrect housing category selected during the five-month review period. Selecting the correct housing category is critical to VA's ability to monitor grantee performance and hold grantees accountable when appropriate. Furthermore, it can help HPO make informed decisions about the types of assistance veterans need to help them maintain stable housing.

### *Unsupported Permanent Housing Data*

The review team also found that the permanent housing category selected in HOMES by GPD liaisons was not supported by information in grantee files and VA medical records in 60 of 183 statistically sampled cases. The team could not determine whether the housing category was correct because no documentation was found to support the HOMES data, such as documented discussions with veterans or detailed information about the veterans' housing arrangement at

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix C for sampling design and methodology.

<sup>8</sup> Estimated population proportions are not always equal to sample ratios because the review team used stratified random sampling with disproportionate sample sizes. See appendix C for statistical sampling methodology and table C.3 for the estimated population.

<sup>9</sup> VHA Directive 1162.01, *VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program*, November 17, 2020; VHA Homeless Programs Office, *Homeless Operations Management and Evaluations System (HOMES) Reporting Policy*, 17-01-06, February 17, 2022.

program exit. Based on these results, the team estimated about 605 of the 4,151 exits to permanent housing (15 percent) during the five-month period of review were not supported.

### *Data on Permanent Housing Arrangements with Friends or Family Need Most Improvement*

The review team found that the housing arrangements with the highest rate of inaccurate or unsupported HOMES data were for veterans living with friends or living with family on a permanent basis.<sup>10</sup> Of the 740 exits in which the veteran reportedly left the program to live with friends or family on a permanent basis during the five-month review period, the team estimated that 467 (63 percent) were inaccurate or unsupported. Based on this estimate, these two categories of permanent housing constituted over half of the 867 estimated cases with inaccurate and unsupported HOMES data. In September 2023, after the OIG's review began, HPO provided guidance to GPD liaisons and emphasized that grantees must be able to substantiate their permanent housing designations and that liaisons should not document veterans are living with friends or family permanently unless the liaisons believe the arrangement is accurate and substantiated. However, HPO did not address ways to improve grantee and medical record documentation that the team found to be insufficient, and interviews conducted with GPD liaisons after the new guidance indicated that they did not change their processes to verify information provided by grantees.

### **HOMES Data Did Not Capture All Instances of Veterans Leaving the GPD Program under Negative Circumstances**

The review team found that GPD liaisons also did not select the correct disposition in HOMES when veterans exited the GPD program unsuccessfully for 17 of 183 statistically sampled cases reviewed.<sup>11</sup> In 16 of those 17 cases, the team found that the GPD liaison had recorded in HOMES that the veteran was living with friends or family permanently. However, in those 16 cases, the team found evidence that a negative exit had occurred. Documentation in grantee files or VA medical records indicated that the veterans were asked to leave because of a violation of

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<sup>10</sup> HPO defines a move-in with family or friends as permanent when a veteran states it is a permanent housing situation or when there are indicators such as the veteran's name being on the lease or having a key to the residence. Conversely, a move-in with family or friends is considered temporary if the veteran states it is only a temporary situation, there are indicators that the veteran is moving in because housing has not been secured but the program has ended, the veteran has a history of moving in and out with family or friends, or the veteran is staying with family or friends because no alternative is available.

<sup>11</sup> Fourteen of the 17 cases are also included in the 86 cases in which the team determined the permanent housing arrangement was incorrect or unsupported. In the remaining three cases, the team determined the permanent housing arrangements were supported, but they were not accurately recorded as negative exits. Veterans may in some cases have a negative exit and a permanent housing arrangement at the time of exit. For example, a veteran could have been asked to leave the GPD program for violating program rules and moved in with family on a permanent basis at the time of program exit. This case would be counted as both a negative exit and a permanent housing arrangement with family.

program rules or failure to comply with program requirements, or that the veterans left the program without consulting staff. However, the GPD liaisons incorrectly selected the veterans had successfully completed the program or some components of the program. Based on these results, the team estimated that during the five-month review period, 101 of the 740 (14 percent) HOMES permanent housing exits to live with friends or family should have been recorded as negative exits.

It is important for GPD liaisons to select the correct reason for veterans' discharge from the program because negative exits are a key grantee performance metric, and the target rate for negative exits is below 20 percent.<sup>12</sup> Accurate data can be used to hold grantees accountable and provide homeless program staff reliable information they can use to reconnect veterans with services that meet their needs if they return for additional assistance.

### **Additional Controls Could Enhance Data Reliability**

The team determined that HPO and medical facilities had limited controls over the reliability of HOMES data. GPD liaisons generally use the information the grantees report on exit forms or provide through emailed summaries to enter data into HOMES for veterans who have exited the program.<sup>13</sup> However, most GPD liaisons interviewed by the team reported that they typically did not review the grantee files or follow up with veterans to verify the information reported by grantees. Consistent verification of grantee-provided discharge information by GPD liaisons prior to entry into HOMES would increase the likelihood that the data are accurate and supported. Program policies also lacked guidance on how GPD liaisons should substantiate grantee-provided information.

Further, GPD liaisons did not consistently follow the HOMES data definitions guide, which explains every data element collected in HOMES, when they recorded the veterans' housing arrangements.<sup>14</sup> Half of the GPD liaisons interviewed (11 of 22) told the team they did not follow any specific guidance, or used their own interpretation when they determined whether veterans were staying with friends or family on a temporary or permanent basis.

Lastly, the team found that HOMES data were not reviewed at medical facilities to ensure the data were accurate and supported. Although HPO has implemented some data validation processes, they are limited in scope and rely on medical record documentation. This reliance on medical record documentation demonstrates the importance for GPD liaisons to validate

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<sup>12</sup> VA, "Fiscal Year 2023 Transitional Housing Grants," *VA Grant & Per Diem Grant Recipient Guide*, October 18, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Grantees are required under 38 C.F.R. 61.80(q)(5) to document the outcome of supportive services, such as assistance provided to obtain permanent housing (38 C.F.R. 61.2(a)(5)), in each participant's record. VHA and HPO expect GPD liaisons to ensure outcome and other information entered into HOMES is complete, accurate, and aligns with the information in the veteran's medical records, which must be consistent with the grantee's clinical records.

<sup>14</sup> HPO, *HOMES Data Definitions Guide*, October 2021.



**Testimony**

**New York City Council**

**Committee on Veterans**

**03/20/2026**

Good Morning \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you, Chairman Morano and the rest of the city council veterans committee, for this opportunity to speak.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge Operation Epic Fury and the troops currently deployed in support of combat operations, including those families who have someone deployed, along with those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to the United States. It has been nearly a quarter century since the terror attacks on 9/11 and the start of the Global War on Terror and we continue to send troops into harms way across the globe.

I am Ryan Graham, representing the largest combat Veterans organization throughout the nation and globe, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, as the State Vice Chairman of the VFW Department of New York Legislative Committee, as well as the Legislative Chairman for VFW District 1 here in New York City. I am also here as an advocate and Chairman of the New York City Veterans Advisory Board.

Since it's inception just over 10 years ago – to include its predecessor, the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs – the New York City Department of Veterans' Services has been an agency tasked with working to assist the near quarter million Veterans calling the five boroughs their home. But the agency and its staff is severely underfunded. Out of the \$116.8B total current city budget, DVS is allocated just \$6.6M – this is just a fraction of a percent of the total budget.

From an operational and programming viewpoint, the needs of the agency and community partners, this is well below the necessary funding to operate at a feasible and desirable amount.

As we know, New York City is suffering through a largely difficult housing crisis. Although a smaller demographic of the total NYC population, the Veteran community is also going through the same cycle of potential housing insecurity, along with a potential homelessness. The

housing services with DVS have been seeing an influx of these numbers as well, enough to overwhelm their staff and agency.

Transition services is another key unit within DVS, assisting servicemembers and their family members with the necessary guidance and resources to navigate the civilian sector.

Transitioning service members and their family members face a less-than-optimal environment when they leave active military service. Without the correct number of resources, these service members and families face instability on various fronts.

These are just a few of the divisions within the New York City Department of Veterans' Services in dire need of funding to bring this agency to its full capacity.

Furthermore, continuous funding of important programs, such as the Vallone Veterans Initiative, is important to the Veteran community. Since just last year, July 1s, 2025, the Vallone Veterans Initiative, in partnership with the State VFW, has processed 261 claims up until the end of February 2026. Initiatives and programs, such as this, are important investments into the New York City Veterans community.

With the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 a few months on the horizon, as well as the Homecoming Parade for our Post 9/11 Veterans, and a monument about to break ground in Queens remembering NYC's Post 9/11 Veterans lost on the battlefield, now more than ever, can we Honor The Contract for our fellow neighbors who risked their lives for something greater than themselves. Not just as Veterans but as New Yorker's.

It is recommended that the New York City Department of Veterans' Services budget be increased to \$20M to be able further its mission to the NYC Veteran Community.



Good Morning Chair Morano and members of the City Council. I am John Holt, the Director of the Senior Law Project at Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS). For over 40 years VOLS has partnered with community-based organizations and the private bar to provide free civil legal services to New Yorkers who otherwise cannot afford or access representation. Our five core projects serve small business owners, individuals accessing benefits, immigrant young people, incarcerated mothers, and older adults in every borough.

The VOLS Senior Law Project's focus is providing low-income aging New Yorkers with access to free, high-impact legal services that allow them to plan for death and incapacity through the execution of life planning documents, including Last Wills and Testaments, Powers of Attorney, Living Wills, and Health Care Proxies. For our clients, these documents are vital tools to help ensure that their wishes and preferences around health care decision making, end of life care, personal finances and benefits, funeral planning, and the distribution of assets after death are followed. Without these services, many of our clients would find themselves unable to safely remain in their communities, forcing them to enter into costly institutional care environments or be subject to overly restrictive protective arrangements, like Article 81 Guardianship.

Every day in our work, we see the real barriers that prevent older adults from accessing these important services, often missing the window of opportunity where advance planning can be a viable preventative tool. Lack of information or resources, social isolation, cognitive and physical decline, exploitation and abuse all contribute to aging New Yorkers being unable to effectively learn about our organization and receive services. These barriers can be even higher among older adult veterans, further reducing access and widening the justice gap. Veterans experience higher rates of disability and drug and alcohol misuse and many struggle with mental health issues and chronic housing insecurity.

Over one half of New York City's 200,000-plus veterans are over the age of 65. The Veterans Initiative of the Senior Law Project seeks to ensure that our life planning services are particularly accessible to these older adult veterans. We have set increased financial eligibility guidelines for veterans over the age of 60 to broaden the number of clients we are able to serve and have worked with the NYC Department of Veterans Services and community based organizations across the city to advertise the availability of our services and provide information and resources directly to veterans.

Since its creation, the Veterans Initiative has grown to include additional legal services offered by other VOLS projects, such as our Microenterprise Project. For over 20 years, the Microenterprise Project has helped existing and aspiring small business owners and microentrepreneurs access high-quality legal services; helping draft contracts, review government documents, protect intellectual property, and advise on commercial leases. For many veterans, owning a small business is an effective path to financial stability and independence upon their return from service. When the Senior Law Project is contacted by a veteran who presents with legal or social issues that cannot be addressed by VOLS' programs, we speak with them to better identify their needs and make a targeted referral to an organization or government agency that can provide responsive services. The Senior Law Project is also in the



process of amending its intake form to affirmatively ask self-identifying veterans if they are interested in referral to NYC DVS services.

VOLS calls upon the Council to continue to invest in programs like the Veterans Initiative that provide legal services to veterans that help them plan for their financial and personal futures and ensure they have the resources to remain a vital part of our New York City community. VOLS respectfully requests that the Council assist us in continuing to provide legal services through our Veterans Initiative by supporting our request for \$150,000 in funding for FY27 through the Legal Services for Veterans Initiative.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for the work of this committee in making certain that the service and sacrifices of our veteran neighbors are honored.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jack Brodie

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DVS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yesenia Mata

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DVS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Charlotte Martin

Address: W 46<sup>th</sup> St & 12<sup>th</sup> Ave New York, NY 10036

I represent: Intrepid Museum

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn NY 11226

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nicole Orlando

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DVS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ashton Stewart

Address: 55 Water Street

I represent: MJHS Hospice & Palliative Care

Address: Same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 03/20/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ryan Graham

Address: VFW District 1

I represent: VFW

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/26/26

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Bill Gross

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: SAGE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Timothy Pena

Address: 257 W. 29th St

I represent: Veterans Justice Proj / The Forgotten Vet

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

6

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOE BELLO

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NY METRO VETS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

7

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/20/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: COCO CULHANE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT

Address: 1 Wiesty Pl. #123 NY 10006

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀