

White House Council on Native American Affairs
Health Committee
Native American Veteran Homelessness Initiative
White House Tribal Nations Summit 2022

The Native American Veteran Homelessness Initiative (Initiative) is a multi-agency effort undertaken to increase access to care and services for Native American Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness in urban areas. Initiative work is being performed under the auspices of the White House Council on Native American Affairs Health Committee, led by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), with collaborative partnerships with the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Administration leadership intends to announce this Initiative at the White House Tribal Nations Summit (Nov. 30 – Dec. 1, 2022, Washington, DC).

American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans are proportionally over-represented by the population of Veterans facing homelessness. Too often, Native American Veterans do not access the support needed to end their homelessness (or “houselessness” as Native Americans term it). It is understood that one of the reasons for this is that Native American Veterans are not aware of the resources available at VA to support Veterans experiencing homelessness. This Initiative’s overall goal is to develop relationships between VA and organizations serving Native Americans to provide education on VA resources and promote encouraging Native American Veterans to access these services. These organizations include Federal/tribal partnerships, mainly Urban Indian Organizations (UIO), Indian Health Service (IHS) and tribal medical facilities, and other tribal government agencies (such as Tribally Designated Housing Entities). This Initiative aims to ensure every urban Native American Veteran experiencing homelessness or at risk of being homeless receives the needed resources and assistance offered by VA.

Commitments made by Federal partners will incorporate the Initiative goals into the VHA-IHS MOU Annual Operational Plan. The Initiative will collaboratively develop a map pinpointing UIO and VA Medical Center (VAMC) Homeless Programs sites in fiscal year (FY) 2023 Quarter 1 that will develop an externally facing, print-ready informational brochure for distribution to UIOs for Native American Veterans detailing VA’s Homeless Program resources (Q1) and to develop a training webinar for UIOs regarding the Initiative in order to build or increase effective, responsive, and collaborative relationships between the UIOs and Federal partners in Quarter 2.

In addition to these efforts, VA’s Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) and Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA) Homeless Program Office (HPO) will coordinate with IHS Headquarters and Area Offices, UIOs, and local VAMC Homeless Program staff to hold regularly recurring, in-person or virtual forums focused on coordinating care, services, and benefits for Native American Veterans affected by homelessness. VHA HPO, VA OTGR, and IHS will expand their partnership to other relevant Indian Health and tribal entities and will establish meaningful metrics for this Initiative along with a methodology for how measurement data are captured (end of FY 2023).

Part of this effort will also be to promote the Tribal HUD-VASH program, where appropriate, and to expand the Native American Veteran Homelessness Initiative to IHS, tribes, and other agencies as the Initiative develops.