

S. 287 – HELPING HOMELESS VETERANS ACT OF 2013

In 2009, VA set a goal to eliminate veteran homelessness by 2015, uniting the country around this effort. In collaboration with other critical partners, VA offers a variety of veteran-centered services to meet the needs of homeless veterans and those at risk of becoming homeless. Since 2009, VA has enhanced and established several programs to meet the rapidly changing needs of homeless veterans, recognizing that one solution does not meet the needs of every homeless veteran. This legislation will address several critical gaps in services provided to homeless veterans and those at risk.

Expands the Definition of Homeless Veteran

- Expands the definition of homeless veteran to include a veteran or veteran's family fleeing domestic or dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions in their current housing situation, aligning VA's definition to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition.

Improves VA's Grant and Per Diem Program

- Allows VA to offer capital grants to entities for gender-specific privacy, safety, and security improvements to existing transitional housing programs for homeless veterans.
- Directs grantees who provide transitional housing for homeless veterans to meet gender-specific privacy, safety, and security needs of veterans.
- Authorizes VA to award per diem grants to providers that offer veterans transitional housing units and allows homeless veterans to transition-in-place by assuming a lease for permanent housing in the same unit once transitional housing assistance has ended.
- Allows VA to provide per diem payments for transitional housing services provided to children who are under the care of homeless veterans who are receiving services through the VA grant and per diem program.

Expands eligibility for the Homeless Veterans Dental Program

- Expands eligibility to include veterans who have been housed through the HUD-VASH program for veterans that meet a certain criteria.
- Expands eligibility to veterans participating in non-VA funded transitional housing programs for veterans that meet a certain criteria.

Establishes Partnerships with public and private entities to provide legal services

- Allows VA to partner with public and private entities to increase the availability of specific legal services to meet the needs of homeless veterans.

Extension of authorities

- Allows for continued operation of critical programs to help homeless veterans, including drop-in centers, transitional housing programs, rapid re-housing programs, and employment programs for homeless veterans.