



ISSUE BRIEF: VETERANS SERVICES

Military personnel returning home from deployment often face social, emotional and psychological problems. The constant threat of attack, and perhaps witnessing the injuries and deaths of comrades, are not easily forgotten when a service person returns home. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has been called one of war's "signature injuries."

Returning veterans often need help making the adjustment to civilian life – finding counseling, jobs, housing and health care. Aging veterans of earlier conflicts and tours of duty face all the same challenges of growing older as the general population, but many do so without the resources of family, retirement income and secure housing, things that help smooth life's passages for their contemporaries. Federal, state and local services can ease such challenges and assist veterans in their transition back into society.

Michigan veterans by the numbers:¹

- Nearly 641,000 veterans live in Michigan in 2015, out of a total population of 9.8 million, or 6.6 percent.
- Approximately 1,070 veterans were homeless in Michigan in 2015, an 11.3 percent increase since 2010. ²
- The unemployment rate for Michigan veterans was 10.6 percent in 2013, much higher than the national average.
- Almost half of Michigan veterans are age 65 or older, compared to 17 percent for non-veterans.
- Ninety to 95 percent of homeless veterans no longer accessed homeless services one year later.

Community Action Agencies' Role

Many Community Action Agencies and other nonprofits in Michigan administer the Supportive Services for Veterans and Families (SSVF) program in partnership with Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency. The SSVF program's goal is to end homelessness among veterans, achieved through a coordinated and efficient community system that assures homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring. To do so, every veteran needs access to the necessary level of supports to avoid life on the street and move quickly to permanent housing.

Community Action Agencies identify homeless veterans in their service areas and ensure they are rapidly engaged and offered shelter in coordination with local Homeless Continuum of Care partners. A Community Action Agency case manager works through a personalized housing plan with the veteran and family, helps with rent, security deposits, or shelter and continues the support so as to maintain permanent housing. Some local Community Action Agencies partner with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide the Expanded Homeless Services Program and Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program. Through such programs, homeless veterans may receive assistance in identifying underlying causes of homelessness, access to mainstream benefits and resources, obtaining safe and affordable permanent housing and employment skill building.

Funding

CAA funding for veterans services comes from the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

To learn more or to be considered for veterans' services, residents should contact their local Community Action Agency, which can be found on the Michigan Community Action website www.michigancommunityaction.org.

¹ Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency

² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2014 Annual Homeless Report