

# LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MURRAY RELEASES PLAN TO PREVENT AND END VETERANS' HOMELESSNESS

## Plan sets goals to end veteran homelessness by 2015

BOSTON – Tuesday, March 12, 2013 – Lieutenant Governor Murray today announced the release of the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness' [Integrated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Among Veterans](#). Joined by Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services Secretary Coleman Nee, Department of Housing and Community Development Undersecretary Aaron Gornstein, officials from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH) and veteran service providers, Lieutenant Governor Murray outlined the report prior to touring the New England Center for Homeless Veterans.

"By working with key stakeholders in the veteran and housing communities, I am proud that Massachusetts will become one of only a few states to outline a comprehensive action plan to ensure all veterans have a safe place to call home," said Lieutenant Governor Murray, who chairs both the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness and the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services. "As we support the men and women who have bravely served our country, we will continue to leverage this partnership to deliver critical resources proven to be effective in ending homelessness."

The Massachusetts Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Among Veterans (Plan) seeks to ensure all Massachusetts veterans will have a stable place to call home. The objectives of the plan are to reduce the number of homeless veterans in the Commonwealth by 1,000 (based on the annual Point In Time count) by the end of 2015 and to statistically end veteran homelessness in Massachusetts. The annual Point In Time count measures the number of homeless persons in the U.S. on a single night in January 2012, including the number of homeless veterans.

The objectives will be achieved by four primary goals: 1) Rehouse and stabilize veterans who become homeless by implementing a housing strategy; 2) Ensure veterans most at risk of homelessness remain housed to prevent homelessness; 3) Increase access to benefits and resources for veterans through greater intervention; and 4) Align and integrate federal, state, and community resources to support veterans through effective partnerships. Each goal, focused on housing, prevention, intervention, and partnerships, is supported by a detailed action plan to accomplish the goal over time.

"Massachusetts leads the nation in providing benefits and services to our veterans and their families," said Secretary Nee. "No one who has ever worn the uniform of this great nation should struggle to find a roof over their head. This unprecedented coordination and collaboration of the ICHH steering committee is one more example why the Commonwealth leads the way. The plan set forth today will enable Massachusetts to become the first state in the country to end veterans' homelessness."

“DHCD will continue to work aggressively to create more permanent housing options for formerly homeless veterans,” said Undersecretary Gornstein. “We look forward to collaborating with our local, state, and federal partners to implement this important plan.”

According to the 2011 Point In Time count, there were 1,268 homeless veterans on a given night across Massachusetts, which represents 7.6% of the total homeless population in the state. This Point In Time count has been trending downward in recent years, with the 2011 count 20.6% lower than that of the previous year. It is also estimated that 450 of those individuals meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s definition of chronically homeless.

The Plan is a product of an ICHH Steering Committee to End Veterans’ Homelessness. The Steering Committee engaged well over 200 stakeholders from across the Commonwealth to identify barriers, opportunities, and best practices. Finally, the Steering Committee reviewed emerging best practices in preventing and ending homelessness among veterans from here in Massachusetts, as well as other parts of the country.

“Veterans Service Officers are key allies in preventing homelessness among the veterans in our home communities,” said Steven Connor, President of the Massachusetts Veteran Service Officers Association. “Whether we serve in our Commonwealth’s major cities, or in our most rural small towns, we know there are homeless veterans or those living on the edge of homelessness that we have a duty to serve. The MVSOA is fully supportive of the Patrick-Murray Administration’s efforts to end veterans’ homelessness and we are committed to partnering with veteran service organization and providers to make this vision a reality in all of our cities and towns.”

“The New England Center for Homeless Veterans is honored to host and provide the location for today’s important announcement by Lieutenant Governor Murray,” said Andy McCawley, President and CEO of the New England Center for Homeless Veterans. “The Center’s mission is to provide support and services to those who have served this country, and find themselves facing or at risk of homelessness.

The Center joins the Patrick – Murray Administration, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Federal support agencies, the City of Boston, and the entire community of outstanding Veteran service providers here in Massachusetts to make the end of Veterans’ homelessness a reality.”

In December 2011, Lt. Governor Murray charged the ICHH and the Massachusetts Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS) with drafting the first statewide plan to prevent and end homelessness among veterans. This action is part of the Patrick-Murray Administration’s efforts to end homelessness among veterans. In recent years, the Administration has fostered emerging partnerships, setting the stage for a new way of approaching the challenge of ending veterans’ homelessness in a targeted and collaborative fashion. Last January, DVS launched a pilot program in collaboration with VA known as the Statewide Housing Advocacy for Reintegration and Prevention (SHARP) program. The SHARP team is administered by DVS, and represents a first-in-the-nation model that accelerates the housing process and offers veteran-to-veteran peer support, mental health services, psychiatric evaluation and linkages to emergency shelter to chronically homeless veterans. The team also identifies and enrolls new homeless veterans in the HUD-VASH program. Since January 2011, the SHARP Team has housed 48 chronically homeless veterans out of the initial 50 pilot vouchers awarded to the program and has maintained a

higher than national average success rate in keeping these veterans housed and case-managed for mental health, substance abuse and other issues related to their well-being.

In addition to the work of the DVS and ICHH steering committee and the recently implemented SHARP program, DVS funds more than 30 shelter and transitional housing non-profit organizations, providing housing services to eligible veterans ranging from Emergency Homeless Shelters, group residences, to Single Room Occupancy quarters.

The Patrick-Murray Administration is a leading provider for veteran services and continues to implement programs to complement efforts to end homelessness among veterans. In 2011, the Administration launched an aggressive employment campaign aimed to increase the hiring of Massachusetts veterans. Among these initiatives, the Patrick-Murray Administration partnered with major trade associations to encourage them to hire veterans and circulate information on veterans benefits. The Massachusetts Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, the Mass High Tech Council, the Defense Technology Initiative, and the Retailers Association of Massachusetts are among the growing list of major trade associations committed to working with the Administration and the Massachusetts veteran community.

To lead by example, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor called for the establishment of an Interagency Taskforce on Hiring Veterans within the Executive Branch. The Secretary of Administration and Finance charged the head of the Human Resources Division along with Taskforce members to take a critical look at the Executive Branch's current policies, processes and practices on hiring veterans and recently completed this [plan](#). Last week, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order to help small businesses owned by disabled veterans increase access to contracts for public projects in the areas of construction, design and goods and services procurement. This executive order follows the Governor's authorization of "An Act Relative to Veterans' Access Livelihood, Opportunity, and Resources" (The VALOR Act), signed last year, to provide greater assistance to help veteran-owned small business participate in public projects.

To learn more about services for Massachusetts veterans, visit [www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans).