

Shinseki details plan to end homelessness for veterans

Contributed by Editor
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WASHINGTON ‐ On Tuesday during the "VA National Summit Ending Homelessness Among Veterans" Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki unveiled the department's comprehensive plan to end homelessness among veterans by marshaling the resources of government, business and the private sector.

“President Obama and I are personally committed to ending homelessness among veterans within the next five years," said Shinseki. "Those who have served this nation as veterans should never find themselves on the streets, living without care and without hope."

Shinseki's comprehensive plan to end homelessness includes preventive measures like discharge planning for incarcerated veterans re-entering society, supportive services for low-income veterans and their families and a national referral center to link veterans to local service providers. Additionally, the plan calls for expanded efforts for education, jobs, health care and housing.

"Our plan enlarges the scope of VA's efforts to combat homelessness," said Shinseki. "In the past, VA focused largely on getting homeless Veterans off the streets. Our five-year plan aims also at preventing them from ever ending up homeless."

Other features of the plan outlined by Shinseki include:

‐ The new Post-9/11 GI Bill provides a powerful option for qualified veterans to pursue a fully funded degree program at a state college or university. It is a major component of the fight against veteran homelessness.

‐ VA is collaborating with the Small Business Administration and the General Services Administration to certify veteran-owned small businesses and service-disabled Veteran-owned small businesses for listing on the Federal Supply Register, which enhances their visibility and competitiveness ‐ creating jobs for veterans.

‐ VA will spend \$3.2 billion next year to prevent and reduce homelessness among veterans. That includes \$2.7 billion on medical services and more than \$500 million on specific homeless programs.

‐ VA aggressively diagnoses and treats the unseen wounds of war that often lead to homelessness ‐ severe isolation, dysfunctional behaviors, depression and substance abuse. Last week, VA and the Defense Department cosponsored a national summit on mental health that will help both agencies better coordinate mental health efforts.

‐ VA partners with more than 600 community organizations to provide transitional housing to 20,000 veterans. It also works with 240 public housing authorities to provide permanent housing to homeless veterans and their families under a partnership with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The VA/HUD partnership will provide permanent housing to more than 20,000 veterans and their families.

Over the duration of the conference it is expected that over 1,200 homeless service providers from federal and state agencies, the business community, and faith-based and community providers will attend and participate in the summit.

"This is not a summit on homelessness among Veterans," added Shinseki. "It's a summit on ending homelessness among veterans."