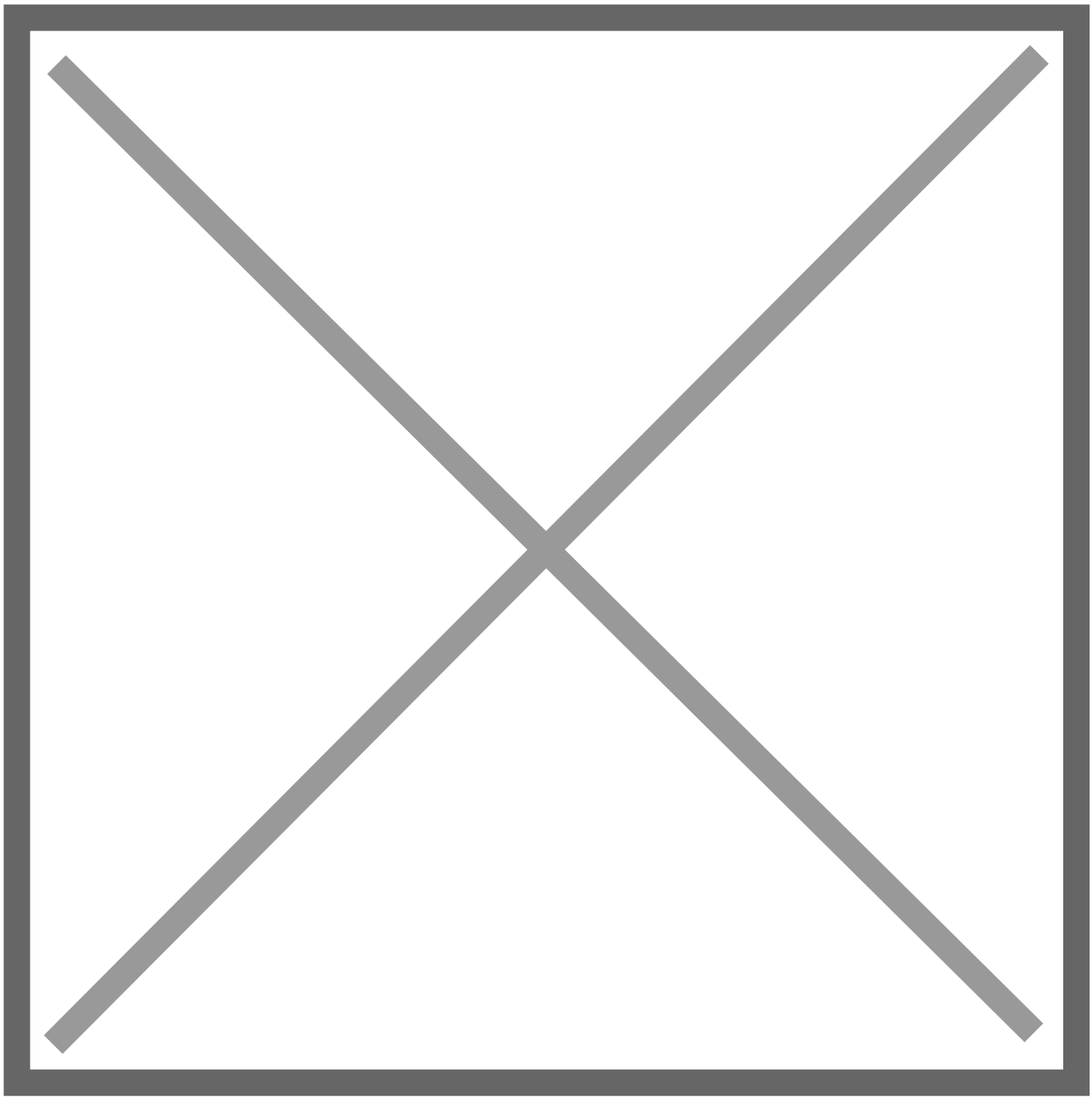
News



A homeless war veteran is pictured in a file photo at Camp Hope in Las Cruces, N.M. (OSV News/Reuters/Shannon Stapleton)



Simone Orendain

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While a recent federal government housing statistics report found a 56% decline in homelessness among veterans — from 2009 through 2025 — local Catholic Charities around the country continue the fight to get them housed.

Catholic Charities USA, a national network of local Catholic Charities agencies, has multiple veterans' housing programs established across dioceses with funding mainly from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and in partnership with other housing organizations.

In Minnesota, officials announced Oct. 13 there are no more homeless veterans in that state and that their numbers have reached "functional zero." "Functional zero" refers to the incidence of homelessness as rare and brief, and that the supports to keep this status are maintained.

Twin Cities Catholic Charities, serving Minneapolis and St. Paul, is "lucky," because the "functional zero" status has meant "the state or continuum of care has enough resources to meet the needs of veterans that may be homeless at any single time," said Keith Kozerski, chief program officer.

Kozerski said the Catholic Charities office connects veterans with government housing programs and has 34 housing units out of 1,100 set aside for veterans.

But as with the general homeless population that gains permanent shelter, a portion of them return to the streets or stay at emergency shelters despite the efforts of those serving them. Kozerski said his agency sees about 20% of the veterans who gain permanent housing go back to homelessness.

A study published by the National Library of Medicine in May 2023 found among newly-housed veterans, 5% returned to the streets after six months, while 9% and 16% went back after one year and two years, respectively.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2025 Annual Homelessness Assessment to Congress found that on a single night in January 2025, there were 32,495 homeless veterans. The report, released in May 2026, also said 40% of them did not have shelter that night. According to the National Alliance for Care at Home's "We Honor Veterans" program, HUD's 2024 report found nine in 10 homeless veterans were men.

"The men and women who show up at our doors sacrificed a great deal for our country and our communities, and we feel like it's our obligation to honor that sacrifice and commitment that they made to ensure that they have appropriate services to help them out in their time of need," said Kozerski.

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Kelly Anderson also has a strong sense of service toward the country's veterans. Anderson, a military wife and daughter of a service member, is program director of Catholic Charities Baltimore's Sarah's House, an emergency shelter that is one of only four in the country supported by the U.S. Army. The house mostly refers veterans to housing programs and helps get them situated with government housing vouchers.

"The significance is just quite simply serving people that have protected and cared for all of us in however many different ways, however many different spaces. Serving veterans always is, you know, the word unique is a great way to put it, right? Because anybody experiencing homelessness has some kind of trauma that's associated," Anderson told OSV News.

"Veterans who come to us have much more extensive and different types of trauma most of the time," she said. "And oftentimes, it takes just a bit more patience. It

takes an additional phone call. It takes more time to build these solid relationships, so that they are able to engage at a level that allows us to provide them the services that they need."

At the St. Patrick Center of Catholic Charities St. Louis, sometimes it can take about six or seven tries from an outreach worker for a homeless veteran to respond to the services being offered, according to John Coleman, senior director of housing. The center helps those in need gain access to housing, employment and healthcare, and its outreach workers go to where homeless veterans converge.

"It's really imperative that we are consistent, that we continue to reach out, and we continue to talk about what we offer, talk about what we can do for the veteran," Coleman told OSV News. "Because, you have to break through some walls sometimes; because, unfortunately, the unhoused (veteran) in that community is not always treated well. They're looked down upon. People kind of shut doors in their faces. So they're used to being turned away."

He said once the veterans get to the point where they place themselves on the intake list, St. Patrick Center aims to get them housed within 24 hours. Supporting them once they have a home is key, he added.

But even getting them to seek help can also be a challenge.

"They're not great at asking for help, because they are the helpers of our world," said Rainie Campagna, director of community support services of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Allentown, Pennsylvania. "So sometimes they will opt to struggle a little bit longer than some of the other populations. Sometimes we see them when they've been outside for a little while, so that's an issue."

But Campagna told OSV News her office's case teams include people who have experienced the difficulties of the populations they serve, which can make a significant difference in gaining trust. The Allentown outreach to homeless veterans includes a formerly homeless veteran.

And, Campagna added, he was originally a Catholic Charities client. Once his situation stabilized, he started working in the agency's homeless veterans program.

At Catholic Charities Arizona's MANA House, or Marines Army Navy Air Force House, in Phoenix, homeless veterans are given 90 days of transitional housing, including

meals and laundry services, as they work with the VA system to eventually become integrated into regular society. At any given time the program can house up to 60 veterans.

Rachel Masch-Perez, community engagement coordinator of MANA House, said the three months can stretch to "six or even nine months" sometimes, because it can be hard to find affordable housing for the veterans, who are in their mid-50s and older.

But Masch-Perez said in coordination with the Arizona Housing Coalition in Phoenix, Catholic Charities has put up several affordable apartment buildings and converted old buildings such as hotels into affordable housing units. Also, there is St. Michael's Crossing, an apartment complex dedicated to veterans, added the self-described advocate of homeless veterans.

"I have a long lineage of people in my family who served in the military, and often when they've left their service, there's so many things that I feel like have fallen (by the wayside)," she said. "I know that veterans have done so much for our country ... and I know they need (the help)."

Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington also has dedicated housing for homeless vets named after St. Michael. St. Michael's Haven in Walla Walla, located next to a VA hospital, is a "newly renovated historic complex" made up of 40 permanent units for veterans. The complex was developed by Catholic Charities and includes supportive services from the VA and Blue Mountain Action Council, a veterans service agency.

David Sackmann, Catholic Charities Eastern Washington's vice president of stabilization, reiterated the significance of building trust and building relationships with veteran clients.

"It's important for us as a community," he told OSV News. "And it's important for us as a country to be taking care of the folks that have served us and sacrificed for us."