



JIM DESMOND
SUPERVISOR, FIFTH DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: June 24, 2025

08

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT:

**STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY HOUSING FOR HOMELESS VETERANS
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

Veteran homelessness remains a deeply pressing issue in San Diego County, which is home to one of the largest concentrations of military personnel and veterans in the United States. With more than 240,000 veterans living in the region, San Diego carries a distinct responsibility to ensure that those who have bravely served our nation are fully supported as they transition to civilian life. Yet for too many veterans, this transition is marked by challenges in securing stable housing, accessing healthcare, and connecting to critical support services.

While the County has made important strides in reducing homelessness among veterans, there continues to be a significant need for focused, sustained efforts. Veterans are still at disproportionate risk of falling into homelessness, often due to a combination of behavioral health conditions, economic hardship, and the breakdown of support networks that once existed during military service. These compounding issues require solutions that are both immediate and tailored to the veteran experience.

Today's action proposes exploring the feasibility of a targeted pilot program that would increase the number of Regional Housing Assistance Program (RHAP) beds specifically dedicated to homeless veterans. This initiative also includes evaluating enhanced funding options for associated services such as case management, behavioral health support, and rental assistance.

By increasing RHAP capacity to serve veterans, the County can provide more direct, dependable pathways out of homelessness—supporting long-term stability and reaffirming our commitment to honor and care for those who served.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to report back in 90 days on the feasibility of a pilot program expanding the Regional Housing Assistance Program to add beds for

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homeless veterans in the unincorporated area, including the number of beds needed, projected costs, and potential funding sources.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Increasing RHAP capacity to serve veterans ensures equitable access to emergency housing for those facing unique challenges from their military service. Veterans are more likely to experience mental health issues, substance use, and limited support networks. Targeted resources help meet these needs and build trust in public systems. With a 26% drop in veteran homelessness shown in the 2025 PIT Count, focused interventions are proving effective. Setting aside RHAP beds will sustain this momentum and embed equity in housing access.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Increasing RHAP capacity to serve veterans experiencing homelessness supports the County of San Diego's sustainability goals by promoting access to housing and improving health and social well-being for those who have served in the military. By reducing barriers to emergency shelter and connecting veterans to supportive services, this initiative contributes to a more resilient, inclusive, and responsive community that upholds the health, dignity, and long-term stability of all residents.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years required for the purpose of creating the report as described. There may be fiscal impacts associated with future related recommendations which staff would return to the Board for consideration and approval. The projected number of beds, associated costs, and potential funding sources including possible impact on net General Fund cost will be listed in the report and will inform any future staff recommendations.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The County of San Diego has long recognized the urgency of addressing homelessness through coordinated, compassionate, and strategic action. In January 2020, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved a set of immediate, short-term, and long-term solutions aimed at reducing homelessness in the County's unincorporated areas. These actions included expanding the hotel/motel voucher program, adding Homeless Assistance Resource Team (HART) personnel, and identifying properties for temporary and permanent housing solutions. That effort emphasized cross-agency collaboration and access to emergency housing resources like the Regional Housing Assistance Program (RHAP).

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As the region continues to confront homelessness, specific populations, particularly veterans, require tailored solutions. San Diego is home to more than 240,000 veterans, making it one of the largest military communities in the country. Many veterans face unique barriers to housing stability, including behavioral health conditions, substance use disorders, and a loss of support networks after transitioning out of military service.

On May 6, 2025 (13), the Board took additional action to target veteran homelessness by directing the development of a veteran-specific by-name list, landlord engagement strategies to expand HUD-VASH participation, and exploration of regionwide collaboration. These steps signaled the County's commitment to achieving functional zero for veteran homelessness.

The 2025 PIT Count finding reaffirms the impact of these strategies. The region saw a 7% decrease in overall homelessness, the largest year-over-year improvement in the past decade, and a 26% decline in veteran homelessness. In the County's unincorporated areas, unsheltered homelessness declined by 11%, resulting in the lowest unsheltered count in over 10 years (178 individuals).

RHAP serves as a critical bridge to stability, offering short-term housing paired with supportive services. Increasing RHAP capacity to serve veterans will create additional access and tailored supports to our homeless veteran populations.

Today's action builds upon previous County efforts to end veteran homelessness by proposing an increase in RHAP capacity and funding specifically for homeless veterans. By setting aside a defined number of RHAP beds, the County can ensure veterans receive timely access to emergency housing and the supportive services needed to transition into permanent stability. This targeted intervention enhances the County's homeless response system and reaffirms its longstanding commitment to addressing veteran homelessness through strategic and coordinated action.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the Community (Well-being) and Veterans and Military Families initiatives of the County of San Diego's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan by increasing equitable access to housing for homeless veterans and fostering a stable, healthy community. This initiative directly contributes to the County's goal of reducing homelessness and improving the lives of veterans and their families in San Diego County.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Desmond', written in a cursive style.

JIM DESMOND
Supervisor, Fifth District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A