



**Picture This:
Ending Homelessness
Among Veterans
in Chicago**

DISABLED
VETERAN
PLEASE HELP



Picture This:
Ending Homelessness Among Veterans in Chicago

Picture This is a guide to the key issues related to homelessness among Veterans as identified by social workers, advocates, housing coordinators, policy-makers, and others working to improve public awareness about homelessness among Veterans in Chicago.



Entertainment Industries Council

—Encouraging the Art of Making a Difference

Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.

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Picture This: Ending Homelessness Among Veterans in Chicago

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Acknowledgments

Researching homelessness among Veterans in Chicago can be as basic as finding resource articles on the Internet or as complex as delving into public policy and the philosophical positions of interest groups. Most important is the perspective of people who, for one reason or another, make a deep commitment by dedicating their personal and professional time to a cause. This publication is the result of a formal meeting of experts in the fields of homelessness and Veterans. Numerous individuals and organizations provided insight into the complex issues concerning Veteran homelessness in Chicago as we created *Picture This: Ending Homelessness Among Veterans in Chicago*. The goal of the forum was to bring together these experts to formulate an action strategy to end homelessness among Veterans in Chicago by using the media as a catalyst. The following are tools that can help the media and stakeholders make this goal a reality.

Thank You to Our Collaborator!

Thank you to FOX 32 for hosting *Picture This: Ending Homelessness Among Veterans in Chicago*. We would like to thank Dennis Welsh, general manager; Carrie King, vice president of creative; Patricia Oliva, community affairs; Chris Myers, assistant news director; Bill Boesen, production manager; Dr. Mona Khanna, executive producer; Adam Zielinski, web editor; Jim Selle, producer; Anna Davlantes, anchor; and Corey McPherrin, anchor. We also extend a special thanks to the Pritzker Military Library, www.pritzkermilitary.org.

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Preface: Action Strategy

Picture This: Ending Homelessness Among Veterans in Chicago was a forum to showcase the stories that put a face, context and actionable steps of resolve into the public conversation around ending Veteran homelessness. *Picture This* is a tool to discover the important messages stakeholders of various health and social topics we would like to see and hear in the media. *Picture This* has been used as a tool on various topics ranging from different mental health challenges, foster care, diabetes, substance abuse, and treatment and recovery. FOX 32 has set the bar high – with many wonderful news stories and special reports on veterans and homelessness that have the power to enlighten the conversation and increase awareness. In the increasingly complex media environment, local media plays an important role as primary information sources that have the power to reach the public in an unequivocally significant community-centered manner.

Those who are tackling homelessness daily and are working directly with Veterans have the knowledge, heart and passion to shape the conversation about ending homelessness among Veterans in Chicago. This passion was put to work at the *Picture This* event and helped create this strategy intended to help you, the local media, spread the important messages that will assist Veterans in avoiding homelessness and transitioning successfully into civilian life. By enriching the opportunities for local story tellers, news providers, journalists (radio, print, broadcast and online) and public officials to address homelessness among Veterans in news stories and special features that exhibit a high degree of authenticity, the viewing audience gains greater knowledge of the issues affecting Veterans in the community.

This action strategy will provide you with a better understanding of Veterans, homelessness and the associated concerns, ways to improve public awareness of this serious issue and the key ways we can encourage greater collaboration that sparks change and empowers these brave men and women to get the support they deserve.



A Special Message to the Media

Brian Dyak, President, CEO & Co-Founder, Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.



The first time I recognized the extent to which homelessness impacted Veterans in my community was in 1974 in Tampa, Florida. At that time, I was opening the first YMCA youth hostel for transient travelers in the southeastern United States. The first day of operation we had a group of European backpackers show up at the ribbon cutting. As the evening went on we were approaching no vacancy, but it wasn't solely because of travelers. The word was out on the street that we had beds, showers and air conditioning. To our surprise, many of our guests were Vietnam War Veterans who came flowing in from under bridges, coves on the bay and small parks on the Hillsborough River.

Over the course of the first year, we served 1,200 people; more than one-third were homeless Veterans. Our Veterans came home to a public soured on the Vietnam War. Many of these Veterans suffered from displacement from their families and friends, society, and the community. Many needed medical attention, mental health support and, most importantly, they needed jobs, but the community was not prepared to meet their most basic needs. After the media started telling stories about these Veterans, we were able to rally the community agencies to provide food, clothing, and shelter. A temporary employment company sent a van over at sunrise every morning to provide day jobs. But the lack of connection to family and friends was a common theme; the lack of broader community support was debilitating, and, in many instances, many of these young veterans had lost hope.

Picture This: Ending Homelessness Among Veterans in Chicago builds on the foundation of my experience in Tampa and how the media has the power to influence the public at large and be an agent of change. With the right information at their fingertips, this action strategy, enables journalists to accurately tell the story of the homeless Veteran experience and create public awareness around this important issue.

I would like to thank Fox 32 Chicago for being a great working partner in creating this opportunity for the city of Chicago to hear the voices of those on the ground working with our homeless and Veteran populations. This action strategy will assist you, the city of Chicago, and other cities around the country in creating public awareness around this issue so that we may end homelessness among Veterans.

A Special Message to the City of Chicago

Dennis Welsh, General Manager, Fox 32

Fox 32 is honored to partner with the Entertainment Industries Council to help those who protect the First Amendment, among other rights, that protects the freedom of the press. An increasing number of veterans who return home are ending up homeless due to family disconnection, financial hardship, social, physical, mental challenges and difficulty transitioning back to civilian life. As of January of 2012 there were an estimated 62,000 homeless veterans with more than 500 of them right here in Chicago.

Fox 32 is raising awareness of these veteran issues through several news reports and features that we have broadcast leading into this forum and we plan on producing additional stories after this forum. The Fox 32 station plans on keeping the focus on this topic. By holding this first-ever webcast on homeless veterans, we hope to elevate this issue to an online discussion on a national platform that will be housed on our station website for all to access. Visitors to the webpage will find the archive of the webcast, resources to help veterans, and this action strategy for the news media.

Thank you to our guests here today, elected officials, leaders in Veteran Affairs, homeless and other advocacy groups. We look forward to your deliberation and most of all, we thank our military representatives here today. Fox 32 thanks you and we salute you.





Picture This Speakers Provide a Call to Action

The speakers from state and federal government featured below have a strong commitment to ending homelessness among Veterans throughout the state of Illinois and Chicago. They were invited to set the tone from a public policy point of view and make a public call to action. Below are select comments from their speeches.



Jesse White

Illinois Secretary of State

“One of the things that I do is provide state I.D.’s for veterans. So if a veteran can prove that they have served our country, then we will give them their state I.D. free of charge. And if you are on active duty and you’ve lost your state I.D. then the State Department, whether it is, your daughter, your wife, or your son, someone within your immediate household, we will make sure that we will provide them with an opportunity to get a state I.D. as well. It is important for us as citizens of this wonderful state and this country of ours to do all we can do to combat homelessness. There are several ways in which we can bring this about; the first is providing job opportunities, then job training to make sure Veterans have the skills

and resources they need for these jobs, and lastly is providing affordable housing. Those are some of the elements that must be put in place, in order for us to help these individuals move forward in their life. They’ve represented us well in the military, it’s important that we help improve their quality of life. I know we have some substance abuse counselors and mental health experts here today, and that is part of the equation as well. So I just want to applaud and commend everyone who is here for their participation in this wonderful program that is designed to help, veterans.”

Erica Borggren

Director of the Illinois Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of Governor Pat Quinn

“It’s a complicated one, the veteran story. There is no one aspect of it that you can tell, and understand the whole veteran experience. And I think that’s particularly the case when it comes to homelessness and veterans. I look forward to this conversation today, to what comes out of it to help us all understand what are the points in this story where we can help folks tell the whole piece of it and understand the whole narrative. Whether it be women veterans, families, and homelessness. What leads to it? How do we prevent it? What happens afterwards so we understand the whole spectrum of the veteran experience? And again, I’m really privileged to be here to be a part of that, and to see so many familiar faces, folks that do this, that we work with.”



Christina Angarola

Communications Director Office of Senator Dick Durbin

“Many of you know the statistics. Here in our city, nearly one out of every 10 homeless people is a veteran. In Illinois that’s closer to one out of seven. That’s unacceptable. Senator Durbin recognizes the scope and the severity of the problem and is working on a couple of efforts at the federal level to help. We learn more every day about the physical, mental, emotional, and financial challenges veterans face when they come home. We should not treat any of those problems in isolated fashion. Just last week the VA announced that communities throughout Illinois would receive more than \$2 million in funding in support of this initiative. Of course, the path out of homelessness depends not only on housing and healthcare, but on giving our veterans the tools they need to be successful by helping them with job placement and educational assistance.”



Veteran stakeholder groups discuss what the media can do to get to the heart of the veteran experience.





What Challenges Do Veterans Face Today?

For Service members re-entering civilian life, the transition can be difficult, especially if they have recently returned from active duty. As they reintegrate into society, Veterans may face a variety of obstacles and challenges that can lead to homelessness if unaddressed, including:

- **Affordable housing.** A major obstacle for Veterans can be finding affordable housing. Veterans who joined the armed forces at the lowest pay grade can have a particularly hard time finding housing that is affordable and thus are the most likely to experience homelessness. Veterans are also accustomed to having their housing provided while serving, and may not be used to paying for housing and related expenses such as utilities and home repair.
- **Employment.** Veterans can have difficulty applying the skills they acquired while serving to civilian jobs, making finding stable employment a challenge. In addition, Veterans who are or used to be homeless can have an even more difficult time finding stable employment due to gaps in their work history and the stigma associated with homelessness.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or other mental health challenges.** These illnesses can have long-lasting and far-reaching effects on Veterans' lives. Mental health challenges can disrupt personal relationships, cause isolation from society, result in increased substance use, and even lead to harming oneself or others. Service members who have recently returned from combat duty are at particular risk for these challenges and may be reluctant to seek help for these "invisible wounds."
- **Substance use.** Similar to the mental health challenges Veterans can face, Veterans are also at an elevated risk for substance use. Veterans who use substances may be trying to escape from personal hardships or trying to self-medicate in an attempt to remedy mental health challenges they may be experiencing.
- **Family strains.** Especially in recent years, thousands of Service members have had to leave their spouses and children behind for long periods of time—often more than once. These long and repeated deployments take a toll on families and can result in disrupted relationships that may leave Veterans without a home to return to.

Reporting Priorities

The news industry continually makes positive contributions addressing health and societal issues in the United States. With the ability to reach millions, the news is a powerful tool with the potential to help address the need to enhance public dialogue about the key issues associated with Veteran homelessness and ways to help those Veterans who are homeless obtain housing and the support they need to get back on their feet.

Identified by local Chicago Veteran and homelessness experts at the Picture This: Ending Homelessness Among Veterans Chicago forum, these priorities and reporting suggestions outline top issues Veteran experts believe are needed to further public awareness. The priorities below are in order of importance and are accompanied by reporting suggestions to provide industry professionals with context and ideas in an effort to inspire stories that could lead to social change.

Priority #1: Spreading the message to the community that VA services for health care, housing, substance use, mental health issues, job training and more are available to homeless Veterans.

The impression exists that services do not exist in the community for homeless Veterans and those at risk of homelessness. While at times they may prove to be more difficult to access than anticipated for some individuals, there are organizations that help Veterans at risk of homelessness manage access to these services. In Chicago alone there are over 15 organizations (See Community Resources section page...) that provide housing for Veterans as well as help them transition back into civilian life with job training, health services, and counseling. This expansive list also includes the local and national Veteran Affairs offices that have countless programs that are proven to be successful in assisting Veterans in every aspect of their lives. Even with all these programs that do exist, homelessness persists; often times it is a lack of knowledge and awareness in the community about these resources that contributes to homelessness. The news media can help spread the word about on these resources available to assist our Veterans who have sacrificed so much already.

- o Keep in mind how the family around the Veteran is affected by homelessness. Stories of homelessness often times focus on the individual. Incorporate the perspective of the family member affected by their loved one's homelessness which may help bridge the gap in the community and how one becomes homeless even when they have family support.
- o Consider reporting on the difficulty agencies and organizations face when it comes to communicating with homeless Veterans. Due to the transient nature of the problem, homeless Veterans do not always have access to a telephone or a computer to seek out information and communicate with the organizations that can help them. Showcase some of the tactics that organizations are currently using to alleviate this problem, such as providing cell phones and business cards with email addresses to ease accessibility for homeless Veterans.
- o When reporting on any kind of story that involves Veterans, especially homelessness among Veterans, strongly consider including a possible resource in the local community that may assist Veterans or their family and friends get the help their loved one needs.





Priority #2: Redefining the definition of homeless and breaking down stereotypes of homelessness.

The face of homelessness is not always the person sleeping on a park bench or under a bridge. One is considered homeless if that person is “doubled up,” a term that refers to a situation where individuals are unable to maintain their housing situation and are forced to stay with a series of friends and/or extended family members. This kind of situation can be described as chronic homelessness, which means that a homeless individual has experienced homelessness for a year or longer, or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years. Like many sensitive issues in the public discourse such as mental health and addiction, homelessness carries stereotypes with it as well. To end homelessness among Veterans it is important to understand that becoming homeless is not a failure of just picking yourself up by the boot straps. The notion that homeless populations are lazy and have no wish to work is not true. Many times there are severe underlying issues that need to be addressed such as unemployment, substance use or mental health issues and difficulties reintegrating into civilian life.

- o Consider reporting on the varying degrees of homelessness. Not all Veterans who are homeless necessarily live on the street or in a homeless shelter. A Veteran may be considered homeless if he or she is “couch surfing” between family and friends. Showing the varying degrees of homeless to your audience will help break down stereotypes that persist in the public.
- o Veterans may feel they're the only ones experiencing homelessness issues and may consider it a sign of weakness to seek help and discuss their problems with those around them. Your reporting has the ability show the strength it takes to make the decision to seek help when it comes to dealing with homelessness. Consider finding stories that showcase Veterans taking action to seek support in resolving their housing situations.
- o Encourage your audience to seek help by reporting on positive encounters in the community where understanding and persistent encouragement lead the subject of your story to discover the support and help that is available. These kind of stories that include a conflict and then a positive outcome, give other Veterans who may be going through similar struggles, hope that better days lay ahead for them.
- o Showcase personal stories when reporting on the problems of homelessness among Veterans. A personal story is a powerful way to engage the audience and realize their problem may not be so different and encourage them to seek help. In addition to the VA, many organizations such as those listed in the “Community Resources on page...” of this publication are more than happy to help the news media get connected with homeless or formerly homeless Veterans to get their message across.

Priority #3: Homelessness is not only a matter of shelter but a health issue at its core.

Our Veterans return from service with wounds we cannot always see. Too often, the emotional scars of service can contribute to Veteran homelessness or place Veterans at risk of homelessness. Just providing shelter for homeless Veterans is not always enough and many Veterans require health care services. When researching or covering stories on homeless Veterans, consider exploring what the underlying issue is, such as mental health or substance use problems, and more poignant than ever, sexual assault.

- o When reporting on Veterans that have experienced mental health challenges related to their service in the Armed Forces and in turn experience homelessness, consider including the sequence of events and people that lead the subject of your story to seek out help. This will demonstrate the reality that most Veterans take steps to find appropriate support when they need it and are therefore able to avoid many challenges related to reintegration such as homelessness.
- o Consider reporting on Veteran stories of triumph over mental health and substance use issues by engaging in and finding opportunities from therapies tailored specifically for Veterans. Your stories can add interest by demystifying treatment and countering negative perceptions of outdated forms of therapy with information on new and effective (but not experimental) treatment options that work.
- o In your stories, consider ways to show support groups and other forms of treatment, consider highlighting the camaraderie and friendships formed among members of the groups. The bond between Veterans and mental health professionals—who are often Veterans themselves or are specially trained to work with Veterans—can be a compelling aspect to report in your stories. Your stories also may explore how experiencing mental health challenges can lead a Veteran to feel alone and misunderstood and in turn lead to homelessness.

Many women Veterans face challenges when returning to civilian life that are different from those of their male counterparts, including raising children on their own or dealing with the psychological after effects of events such as military sexual trauma. According to the Department of Defense, approximately one in three military women has been sexually assaulted compared to one in six civilians (Foster & Vince, 2009). These issues, without intervention, can put women Veterans at greater risk of becoming homeless.

- o Think about exploring the issue of sexual assault in women Veterans in your news reports by reporting on the psychological effects of such events and how it can lead to substance use and mental health issues and eventually homelessness if not addressed appropriately. While raising awareness on such tragic events be sure to provide recovery resources and conclusions of hope for your viewers.
- o Consider profiling women Veterans who are adapting to civilian life who may have families to look after, and how the adjustment period can be a difficult task. Report on the many complexities and challenges women Veterans face that may differ from male Veterans when it comes to family.





The risk for suicide is higher in Veterans than in the general population. Due to the influx of returning soldiers who will be re-integrating back into civilian life over the next few years it is crucial that the media gets the right information to Veterans to seek help if they are contemplating suicide. The way suicide is reported and portrayed in the media can have a huge effect on the way the public views this issue.

Consider these suggestions when reporting on stories that involve suicide:

- Placement** If you determine the story is newsworthy, don't dramatize the event by placing it on the front page—or by placing “suicide” in the headline. (In headlines, “dies” is appropriate.)
- Details** Avoid exact details on locations and methods.
- Photos/videos** Avoid photos or videos of the location or method of death, as well as dramatic images of grieving family and friends or memorial services.
- Language** The words “committed,” “succeeded” or “failed” are inaccurate. Appropriate wording is that someone died by suicide, took his life or killed herself.
- Don't oversimplify** Suicide is complex and often has many factors. It is almost certainly inaccurate to cite a single cause as, for example, “recent money woes” or “a fight with a spouse.” Suicides usually result when a confluence of events and circumstances makes life temporarily unbearable. Mental health disorders and/or substance abuse are associated with 90 percent of suicides. Often, even family and friends do not recognize the warning signs or the underlying mental health problems leading to a suicide.

(Adapted from TEAM Up Style Guide: Reporting on Mental Health)



One formerly homeless Veteran explains his time on the streets of Chicago and what the media can do to help Veterans find shelter.

Your Developing News Stories

Journalists have a substantial influence on the public's attitude about homelessness among Veterans. The emphasis a daily newsroom places on breaking news and crises can give people a skewed view of Veterans experiencing homelessness, leading to misperceptions and even discrimination. These questions to ask when a developing story hits your desk can help present a more accurate picture of homelessness among Veterans.

Questions to Ask

Here are some sample questions to ask yourself as you are researching and developing stories involving homelessness among Veterans:

Can you position the story in a manner that focuses on the successes of individuals transitioning from being homeless rather than reporting from a more negative perspective that may perpetuate stigma and feelings of fear, estrangement, mistrust and shame?

Does the story convey that successful transitional housing is available for homeless Veterans but is often underutilized (VA resources, local resources)?

Does the story acknowledge the person's problems and struggles as well as the elements of hope that can be found by utilizing the appropriate resources?

Does the audience see the effects of homelessness on the nucleus of family and the person's social circle?

Did other issues contribute to the individual's homelessness (such as problems with substance abuse or mental illness)?

Does the story convey that homelessness can happen to anyone and it is not a character flaw?

Does your story take into account the barriers perceived by your audience regarding Veterans connecting with services for the homeless? Do you offer solutions to those perceived barriers, such as the locations of community shelters and the availability of transitional programs (VA resources, local resources)?





Real People Real Stories

Jim Z. A Veteran who was formerly homeless

Jim Z.'s family members have defended our nation in the armed services since the Revolutionary War. He was proud to follow their example. Jim served as a combat skills instructor and intelligence analyst in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve after 9/11, and was deployed in Iraq for 15 months.

After his service, Jim and his family moved from Washington State to Southern California so his wife could attend the University of California, Los Angeles. Jim struggled emotionally when his father died, and he and his wife fought. The Department of Children and Family Services threatened to remove Jim's children from his home unless he and his wife separated. Jim and his oldest son left home and went to a hotel. Just before they were forced to start sleeping in his car, Jim decided to call the VA medical center. Local VA officials placed Jim and his son in temporary housing through the Grant and Per Diem Program, which funds community agencies that provide services and stable housing to Veterans who are homeless. "We stayed there for seven months until I was able to save up some money and get on my feet and move out," he said. VA also provided Jim with mental health support, which he called "a blessing." "They really understand how to help guys with combat issues," he said. "I tried seeing some outside providers who aren't specialized in treating military trauma and it just wasn't helping, wasn't working." Now, Jim is the program manager at the Grant and Per Diem Program for the Hollywood Veterans Center. He completed his master's degree from the University of Southern California and is living happily with his family again. "I feel very fortunate to have all the services that VA offers. I signed up and I knew I was getting the GI Bill, but I didn't sign up to get all this help afterwards," he said. "I consider myself just very lucky."

Michelle O'Neil A Veteran who was formerly homeless

Michelle O. came from a family of Army Veterans and spent 11 years in the Army Reserve, troubleshooting radios and navigational equipment. But when she left military service in the early 1990s, Michelle struggled with moving, a divorce, and alcoholism. She moved to her brother's home in California to rebuild her life, but the city's social scene fueled her alcoholism. Wanting to get her life on track, Michelle stayed for more than a year at the Bimini Recovery Center, a nonprofit agency that receives funding through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program. The VA initiative funds community agencies that provide services and stable housing to Veterans who are homeless. She left with a job and her own apartment, but was soon out of work and living on the streets again. She spent six months in another GPD housing program for female Veterans before receiving a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) voucher for her current apartment. Michelle said her life turned around when she discovered the services dedicated to helping Veterans. VA, she said, "gave me my life back." "Veterans have different needs than the average person. We're conditioned to survive," she said. "But when you have programs that deal with Veterans on a regular basis, they can connect with the different problems that we have." Michelle works at VA; she first conducted outreach among Veterans who are homeless in West Los Angeles and now is a medical support assistant. She has been sober for more than 10 years and received her bachelor's degree in human services. She plans to earn a graduate degree and become a social worker. "Vets respond to Vets. I want to be able to assist them in a higher level," she said. "I want to advance the level of reaching out to Vets."

Veteran Homelessness Facts and Figures: Did You Know?

Slightly more than one in 10 homeless persons are Veterans. (<http://va.gov/homeless/>)

Women Veterans are 2.5 times more likely to be homeless than women who aren't Veterans, and they represent 8 percent of the Veterans receiving care from homeless programs administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). (<http://va.gov/homeless/>)

Although Veterans who live on the street are the most visible, Veterans who are staying with family members or friends, couch surfing, living in a car, or living in shelters are also defined as homeless and are eligible to receive the benefits VA offers to help them find safe, stable housing. (<http://va.gov/homeless/>)

Veterans of the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq experienced higher incidences of homelessness after military service than their counterparts from other wars. (<http://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-11-03428-173.pdf>)

Veterans face a variety of risk factors that may lead them to experience homelessness, including mental and physical illness including substance-abuse conditions, lack of family support, social isolation, and financial hardship. (<http://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-11-03428-173.pdf>)

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working toward its goal to end Veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. Volunteers on a single night in January 2012 counted an estimated 62,619 Veterans who were homeless in the United States. That's a 7.2 percent decline in Veteran homelessness since 2011 and a 17.2 percent decline since 2009. (<http://www.va.gov/opa/issues/Homelessness.asp>)



A leader of a local homeless shelter explains the challenges in housing Veterans.



Our *Picture This* News Media Panelists

The comments featured below are from the news media panelist that participated in the discussion. The role of the panelist was to explain, to the audience of Veteran stakeholders, how they research, write, and report on stories. The goal was for the stakeholders to have a clearer picture of how they could work with the media to get their stories out on Veteran homelessness to the public. Once they had a clearer picture, they would determine the top three priorities they would like to see the media focus on when covering stories on homelessness among Veterans.



Dr. Mona Khanna

Medical Contributor, Fox 32, Executive Producer, *Picture This*

"It shouldn't come as a surprise that many of us have ties to the military. Every single one of the Fox team that you will see here today on stage holds the military and veterans near and dear to our hearts. I currently serve on the Medical Brigade of the 19th Regiment of the North Texas Division of the Texas State Guard. I think the reason for putting this together was very laudable. What I see in the medical world actually is something a little bit different. I think a lot of us are very aware of the general issues of homelessness and homelessness in veterans. But what I see is, in terms of medical issues are the veterans who are coming back who have a lot of medical problems. A significant number of service members who are coming back

from having served overseas are now filing for disability. They have amputations, they have post-traumatic stress disorder, they have mental illness issues that don't allow them to go back and function in society. They have dysfunctional family issues because of their time away. So even from a medical perspective, we have a lot of these problems in all veterans that can contribute to homelessness. And I can tell you as a physician, I know that there's a big transition from being an active serviceman or woman and transitioning over to VA from medical services. That seems to be another point to where people kind of fall through the cracks. So that's important to know because that's an area that we as part of the media can help raise awareness about."

Anna Davlantes

Anchor, *Good Day Chicago*, Fox 32

"I'm very proud to be the daughter of a member of our military. I'm also very proud to be part of this program. Our veterans sacrifice a great deal for us for our country and it's only fitting that we as a community reach back when they fall on hard times themselves. So that's why we're here, to be part of the solution, as a community, come together and say that we care and not only we care, but we care enough, to do



something. I had a chance to talk to some of the people who offer services to the homeless and some of you who have been homeless in the past, O.J. and others, and what I was thinking about as a journalist, I was trying to figure out how I'll cover stories differently. And that was helpful. But just as a human being I learned something today that I'm going to do moving forward."

Corey McPherrin

Anchor, Good Day Chicago, Fox 32

"I learned so much today and it's such a complicated issue. But, the homeless veterans who are women, I had no idea it was that high. I had no idea the numbers of the epidemic of suicide being as high as it is. The problem of making veterans aware about the resources that are out there and how do you connect with them seems to be a major problem. As well as how do you make sure that they know that there are resources out there that can help them and all the ancillary problems that go with those? I think for us in local TV, the stories that appeal to me and I think would make it on our air, are the kind of stories that I think will resonate with people, the stories of Michael at the red table who has found new hope and in some ways a new life through the help of this organization, A Safe Haven. And if we can tell those stories, how it's being worked on and the end result of somebody going through this process and coming out on the other end, I think we'll be doing our job and, helping others at the same time."



Enrique Rodriguez

Anchor, Univision Chicago

"I grew up in Los Angeles and I remember vividly every day on my way to middle school I used to see a man sleeping on the street with just a blanket. On my way back home, I notice that he always had an alcoholic drink and I was very curious and intrigued about Charlie's situation. So I went home, 12 years old, I spoke to my parents about it and we decided to help Charlie or at least try. So we knew he was going to be a challenge because Charlie, perhaps wasn't going to trust us. We managed to become friends and we found out that he was a veteran from Vietnam. He suffered PTSD, we all know that's one of the main reasons why our veterans end up on the streets. We came across his family after talking to relatives, neighbors, and we realized that because of Charlie's condition, there was a lot of domestic violence issues at home. They simply did not know what the resources were at the local, state and federal level. They didn't know where to go, who to call, what to do. So they went the easy way out. Charlie, we don't want you in the house anymore. In DuPage County where I live over the last decade the Latino community has increased by 60 percent, with changing demographics, the needs, awareness, and research issues have to change.





Fortunately, there's organizations who are doing a phenomenal job. But for us in the Latino community I can go on and on talking about statistics but let me tell you, our viewers, they have a personal attachment to Univision. They really hold us accountable, just like I and my parents wanted to help Charlie back in the day, I can assure you, our viewers if they see anyone in the same scenario, they will not hesitate to try and help that individual. But they need to know how to do it, what the resources are, where to start and that's where we as the media come into place. That is the responsibility that we have to these veterans."

Chip Mitchell

Reporter, WBEZ 91.5

"Some of my favorite reporters in town are up here and correct me if I'm wrong, but none of us focuses on either homelessness or veteran issues, correct? We're kind of all over the map, all of us, all sorts of issues. Well, last time I checked, we had dozens of reporters focused on sports, in Chicago, dozens more focused on entertainment. You know most major news outlets have people working full-time on a single sports team, even. It's not an accident that happens because most major news media, remains dependent on advertising for all of their budget. And those advertisers are trying to reach the same middle and upper class people who don't have family members serving or coming home and having all sorts of problems and ending up on the street. We have some structural problems and I don't know what the answers are but, I just wanted to throw those out on the table and maybe we could put our heads together and try to do something about it."



Mark Brown

Local News Columnist, Chicago Sun-Times

"The thing that struck me, is that as much work as I've done in this area, I find that there are people that do this work like Matthew House. I didn't really know about Matthew House. I've not had any dealings with them over the years. I find this all over the city, people who work with the homeless they don't always know what somebody else is doing over here. I dealt with a city official one time who had no idea that there was this great southwest Chicago PADS program that I'd done so many stories about in Marquette Park. Because they didn't get city funding so he never had to deal with them. So there's just a lot out there, but as our homeless veteran here at the table, was saying, he doesn't know how to reach these services.

And I think there's a lesson in there for all of us that we need to learn more and the word needs to get out more about what everybody already is doing in this field."



John Cody

Reporter, WBBM Newsradio

"Who are the veterans? I got out of the service and I was just grateful to be alive, and have a job guaranteed at WBBM, since I was drafted out of WBBM. I think, you've heard the most useful specifics already from Chip at WBEZ. Money follows information and the other way around. Which means money's not going to be following you guys. Information won't be following you guys unless you've got a specific story. So you better make it specific and this is like Mark said, you need some conflict, you need an actual human being. We can do stories about homelessness and the stories about homelessness will be submerged in stories about pollution, stories about lost ducks went down the drain because it was raining

really hard, or people digging out from tornadoes, I mean, that's a fact. I've been there a long time and stories kind of blend together, but one fellow I really remember was a gentleman on the west side who I ran across. He was taking his shower in a half-cracked fire hydrant. He was meticulous about it from his feet up. He'd take his shoes off and wash. He'd wash his feet and then he rolled up his pants. And then turned out he was a master sergeant and he was in charge of a maintenance division at an Air Force base. And somewhere between the bottle and an ex-wife or two he ended up destitute and so there he was taking a shower in the fire hydrant. And I asked him why he was taking a shower in the fire hydrant. I figured he was going to tell me he was homeless. And he just said I got my pride."



EIC and Panelists thank the leaders of Chicago Veteran groups for their dedication and work to end homelessness among Veterans.





Community Resources

The single best way to help Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless is to connect them with VA. Each VA medical center has a homeless coordinator on staff and specific programs that provide Veterans the support they need to establish or maintain safe, stable housing. VA has also established the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (877-4AID-VET, or 877-424-3838), a toll-free hotline available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Trained responders—many of them Veterans themselves—are available to provide support to Veterans and their loved ones who lack safe, secure housing. These services are also available on an online chat at va.gov/homeless.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Since its inception, the Lifeline has engaged in a variety of initiatives to improve crisis services and advance suicide prevention. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), for Veterans press 1.

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

A Safe Haven

<http://www.asafehaven.org/>

773.435.8300

A Safe Haven gives people the tools to transform and sustain their lives from homelessness to self-sufficiency with pride and purpose. A Safe Haven provides the tools for each individual to overcome the root causes of homelessness through a holistic, scalable model. A Safe Haven's list of services include; transitional, supportive, and affordable housing units; behavioral health services, education, job training and placement services and military Veteran specific services.

Back on My Feet Chicago

<http://chicago.backonmyfeet.org/>

773.697.8508

Back on My Feet (BoMF) uses running to help those experiencing homelessness change the way they see themselves so they can make real changes in their lives that will result in employment and independent living. The BoMF staff works to build a road map toward self-sufficiency using financial literacy and skill-building classes with for-profit and nonprofit partners. After training, Members have access to interview and employment opportunities with partners including Marriott and White Lodging. Members are also offered financial assistance to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency such as a security deposit for more permanent housing.

Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness

<http://www.thechicagoalliance.org/>

312.379.0301

The Alliance's vision for the future is that all individuals and families facing homelessness in Chicago will have access to safe, decent, affordable housing and the resources and support needed to sustain their housing.

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

<http://www.chicagohomeless.org/>

312.641.4140

A non-profit in Illinois dedicated to advocating for public policies that curb and can ultimately end homelessness. Our organization leads strategic campaigns, community outreach, and public policy initiatives that target the lack of affordable housing in metropolitan Chicago and across Illinois. In addition, CCH presses for access to jobs, training, and public schools. Our community organizers, policy specialists, and public interest attorneys advocate with people hurt by homelessness, including mothers with children, unaccompanied youth, ex-offenders, prostitution survivors, and low-wage workers.

Cornerstone Community Outreach

<http://www.ccolife.org/>

773.271.8163

Cornerstone Community Outreach (CCO), a non-profit organization, was created in 1989 to raise the quality of life for low-income residents of the United States and the rest of the world through social, educational and economic development programs that include: development & preservation of decent & affordable housing for the poor, job training & creation, educational & social programs, and feeding & sheltering the homeless.

La Casa Norte

<http://www.lacasanorte.org/>

773.276.4900

La Casa Norte provides scattered site permanent supportive housing for homeless youth and families. Clients live in private apartments located throughout the city. We offer many support services to accompany their needs. This includes life skills training, therapy, community building and the basic needs of food, clothing, and transportation.





Matthew House Chicago

<http://www.matthewhousechicago.org/>

888.270.3433

Matthew House assists Veterans transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing and prevents at-risk Veterans from becoming homeless. Services include: supportive housing and housing counseling, employment training, transportation, peer-to-peer counseling and mentoring, personal financial planning, fiduciary and payee training (?), and preventative health care.

National Veterans Art Museum

<http://www.nvam.org/>

312.326.0270

The National Veterans Art Museum inspires greater understanding of the real impact of war with a focus on Vietnam. The museum collects, preserves and exhibits art inspired by combat and created by Veterans.

The Salvation Army of Chicago

<http://www.salarmychicago.org/>

773.725.1100

Strengthening communities is a hallmark of The Salvation Army and is accomplished by being a part of the communities they serve. Each community center offers a wide range of programs reaching people of all ages – from children to seniors. The centers provide leadership, guidance, encouragement, resources and programs that empower members to unite and work together to help resolve old problems and create new opportunities that lead to a safer, more prosperous future.

Sarah's Circle

<http://www.sarahs-circle.org/>

773.728.1991, ext. 301

Sarah's Circle is a refuge for women who are homeless or in need of a safe space. By providing housing assistance, case management, referral services, and life necessities, this organization encourages women to empower themselves by rebuilding both emotionally and physically in order to realize their unique potential.

St. Leo Campus for Veterans- Catholic Charities

<http://www.stleoveterans.com/>

773.651.9950

The St. Leo Campus, located in Chicago's Auburn Gresham neighborhood, is another monumental step in Catholic Charities' dream to keep Veterans safe, off the streets, and treated with dignity. The St. Leo Campus is comprised of Catholic Charities' St. Leo Residence, the Auburn Gresham Community Based Outpatient Clinic, the St. Leo Veterans Garden, and the Pope John II Residence, which provides apartment housing for persons who have physical disabilities.

Streetwise Chicago

<http://streetwise.org/>

773.334.6600

Streetwise Chicago assists Chicago area men and women who are facing homelessness achieve personal stability by providing a combination of supportive social services and immediate access to gainful employment.

Veterans View

<http://veteransview.com/>

312.263.5388

The mission of Veterans View is to promote articles, news and information pertaining to Veterans issues and topics. This group serves as a one-stop source to quickly obtain the latest news and happenings from a variety of Veteran groups, such as the Veterans Administration (VA), American Legion (Legion), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and an array of other highly respected military and veteran groups.

Veteran of Foreign Wars Service Office

<http://www.vfwil.org/PostServices.asp>

312.980.4284

The VFW Department Service Office is co-located with the VA Regional Office in Chicago. The VFW Service Office staff is prepared to assist Veterans with the preparation of claims for VA benefits. The VFW Service Office works together with field offices of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Assistance Commissions throughout the State and VFW Post Service Officers to provide assistance and advice to Veterans and their families.



Volunteers of America

<http://www.voaininois.org/Services/Homeless-Veterans>

312.564.2302

Volunteers of America provides services to more than 250 Veterans each year through a comprehensive program specifically designed to move Veterans from homelessness to long-term stability and self-sufficiency. The program meets Veterans wherever they are in the healing process and provides the long-term, hands-on support they need to lift themselves up and reach their full potential.



Panelist Corey McPherrin listens intently as a Veteran advocate speaks of his experiences working with returning Veterans.

EIG *Picture This* Team

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Facilitator Marie Gallo Dyak prepares participants to report their findings to the group for priority-setting discussion.

Picture This: Ending Homelessness Among Veterans in Chicago



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