

Potential Barriers to Success

As with all sectors, economic challenges impact agency and community financial support. The economic climate also increases unemployment decreasing the number and types of jobs available for the homeless and ex-offenders. Many ex-offenders would benefit from job training or re-training programs. Opportunities are limited and require significant coordination with local employers.

Community attitudes show a propensity for contributing food for the homeless but there is less awareness and/or interest in providing shelters and other key services. The need for children’s and women’s services is particularly hard hit. Homeless clients are difficult to track and their needs are often difficult to quantify and prioritize. Improving the sector’s access to accurate data would not only validate current services but would document gaps, unresolved issues and support effective public relations.

Meeting HUD Priorities

The emergency services sector specifically supports the following HUD Priorities.

HUD Priority	
B7	Make communities more livable.
F4	Establish job training programs that will provide opportunities for economic self-sufficiency.
F5	Establish counseling programs that assist homeless persons in finding housing, managing finances, managing anger, and building interpersonal relationships.
F6	Provide supportive services, such as health care assistance that will permit homeless individuals to become productive members of society.
F7	Provide service coordinators or one-stop assistance centers that will ensure that chronically homeless persons have access to a variety of social services

SECTOR 5: VETERANS' SERVICES

Overarching Goal

To end homelessness among veterans in southern Colorado.

Sector Description

Colorado Springs is home to five military installations: Peterson Air Force Base, Fort Carson, U.S. Air Force Academy, NORAD, and Schriever Air Force Base. They bring not only active military but many retirees who chose to stay on for the area's scenic beauty and access to veteran's services. Unfortunately, being a veteran brings its own set of challenges. The local Veteran's Administration staff is dedicated to ensuring that even homeless veterans receive the housing and services critical for stability. Veterans are estimated to comprise 22% of the local homeless population.

Established by a small group of veterans, Crawford house provides a supportive living environment for veterans facing physical, mental or substance abuse challenges. Fifteen beds are available for emergency housing. An additional 10 beds are available next door in Crawford House's transitional facility. Here the house director and health professionals help veterans gain back their self-sufficiency. Veteran's services also accesses 14 Shelter Plus Care and 35 HUD-VASH slots for long-term supportive care. Financial resources include employment, VA disability, Social Security, state Old Age Pension, and state Aid to Needy Disabled.

Progress in the Last Five Years

Over the past five years, homeless veteran's services have made significant strides. The percentage of veterans housed upon discharge has increased from 44% in 2003 to 86% in 2008. The percentage of veterans accessing financial resources (benefits) upon discharged was 58% in 2003 and is 84% in 2008. Finally, the new HUD-VASH program was added in 2008 bringing 35 new housing vouchers to the community.

Current Gaps and Barriers

Most homeless veterans struggle with mental health and/or substance abuse issues. The greatest needs are for increased access to case management, medical care (i.e., medical treatment, mental health treatment, and substance abuse treatment) and employment. The VA plans to increase staff. However, the local facility has physically reached maximum capacity. To quantify needs and service gaps, Veterans Services is in the process of comparing the cost of medical care for veterans before being housed and after being housed. Preliminary data indicate that there is a significant reduction in the cost of care between veterans who are housed compared to veterans who are living in shelters or on the streets.