

Gaps and Vantages in Mental Health and Homeless Veterans

Bruce Hidden Jr.

Healthcare Management, Granite State College

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Dr. Kathleen Patenaude

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Aim and Purpose

New Hampshire is no stranger to the challenges and tribulations in dealing with the increased percentages of homelessness. In conjunction with homelessness, mental health, and its services available for them, funding and research has shown signs of improvement between 2010 and 2020 with a 55% decrease in the population (NH Coalition to End Homelessness, 2021). The purpose of this research is to identify primary topics including:

- Background of Hillsborough County statistics of mental health and homelessness.
- Identifying the correlation between the availability of services to homeless citizens and their mental health being diagnosed and treated.
- Utilizing data, showing current services and treatments to provide a solution to the apparent gaps between mental health and the homeless population.
- Financial appropriations to addressing the imminent and futuristic needs to mental health and homelessness throughout Hillsborough County.
- Ethical logistics being addressed and identified by governmental entities and those alike.
- Presenting evidentiary statistical components to both homeless populations and mental health availability.
- Provide all facts and data in a conclusive nature to exhibit the ability to be interpreted and identified to develop clear indicators of need.
- Identify the challenges and see what areas are regarding the most focus and attention.
- Present reasonable recommendations which will not inhibit any of the existing solutions being implemented.

Background and Circumstances

New Hampshire is a state located in the east coast of the United States that has a population of around 1,500,000. It consists of ten counties to which Hillsborough County has the largest population of 429,603 people (World Population Review, 2023). It is important to note the pattern of growth in the top 3 counties which are: Rockingham, Belknap, and Strafford. Hillsborough County rounds out the top five at number four with a growth rate of 7.21%. Hillsborough County consists of the two largest cities in the state, Nashua, and Manchester. In 2020, the state of homelessness in New Hampshire has seen a turn of events that has produced new challenges in combatting homelessness (NH Coalition to End Homelessness, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic was another igniter to which homelessness became an increased challenge to Hillsborough County. In 2021, the pandemic caused an interruption in the data collections regarding the homeless population. Homeless veterans fall under two categories. The first one identifying themselves as homeless veterans and the other categorized as “individuals” experiencing homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). Factually, this is a result of what is categorically emphasized as focused goals of attention in data retrieval (“NH Balance of State Supplemental Funding 2022”). There are two specific types of homelessness in New Hampshire. One is called sheltered homelessness, the other being un-sheltered. Sheltered is when the population uses overnight shelters or a temporary stay, usually not for a long period of time. Un-sheltered is when the population is not in shelters but rather in cars, under bridges, in the woods, camps, or as seen in more recent viewpoints, in the main streets of cities themselves (NH Coalition to End Homelessness, 2021).

New Hampshire has a homeless veteran percentage comprised of a total of 8% in the entire state (NH Coalition to End Homelessness, 2021). On any given night in Hillsborough

County, there is an estimated 300 reported civilians homeless. Many of those living in the streets are veterans. The complexity of non-veterans compared to several factors. Lack of affordable housing, poverty, job loss, income reductions, substance abuse, and other health related issues. Military occupations have a distinct and direct correlation to mental illness such as PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) ("StatPearls - NCBI bookshelf," 2022).

In the United States, there are almost 107,000 homeless veterans on any given day (Mightyspark, 2023). The causes of homelessness consist of:

- Low Income
- Health Issues including mental health specifically for veterans.
- Violence from trauma in combat services (war, security, etc).
- Racial disparity and gender disparity.

Males are typically most at risk when assessing the figures for homeless veterans as to female ratios (NAEH, 2022). Hillsborough County's veterans are primarily in the age range of 65-74 years old being in the following wars: World War II, Vietnam, Korean, and also Gulf Wars I & II. 2023's estimated count of total veterans in Hillsborough County are 25,905. 23,446 are males, and 2,459 are females (World Population Review, 2023). Before the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, the homeless veteran population in the United States was cut in half due to the ongoing efforts and reporting from the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. The figures recognized 79 communities and 3 states as to ending by definition meaning rare, brief, and one-time (NAEH, 2022).

New Hampshire's population of veterans (96,098) have 19.1% reporting a service-connected disability including mental illness (Housing Assistance Council, 2023). The pandemic

of 2019/2020 has caused a data interruption in what is called Point-in-Time count stating the last full comprehensive data accumulation was in 2020 before the pandemic caused its full effect on veterans and their living situations involving mental health (Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, 2022). Since 2010, the overall homelessness in the United States has decreased by 55.1% (Health, 2012). These estimates are now seeing a turn in the opposite direction with the funding that has ended from the American Rescue Plan and Cares Act which was designed to prevent homelessness in New Hampshire (Grossmith, 2022).

The New Hampshire Emergency Rental Assistance Program in Hillsborough County has assisted 30,000 applicants through the pandemic in which assisted with rent, utilities and other housing expenses including court fees, evictions, security deposits, internet expenses, and homelessness placement and shelter (New Hampshire emergency rental assistance, 2023). Through this program, the homelessness issues faced in Hillsborough County prevented thousands of un-sheltered in providing shelter such as hotels, housing, apartments, sober living, rooming houses, and many other means to deter the issues in 2020 through 2023 (New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority 2023). The program concluded taking any applicants or re-applicants October 21, 2022. The New Hampshire Coalition to End Homelessness reports that numbers depicted in their 2021 report does not fully reflect the overall efficient system designed to respond to veterans needs regarding homelessness (NHCEH, 2021).

Project Management Framework

The method used in merging two key components is called a SWOT analysis. This analysis consists of four components. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These four components will identify and point out key elements of two important and vital topics of

mental health and homeless veterans in Hillsborough County New Hampshire. Figure 1.1 breaks down all four elements and identifies the importance of each.

SWOT Analysis

In the following analysis, the information contained in the SWOT analysis shows funding provided to Hillsborough County's homeless veterans in which mental health services are incorporated into these statistics. Several entities have exhibited efforts to subvert and circumvent Hillsborough County's homeless veterans while assisting their mental health needs. One important statistic in the SWOT analysis is the demand for more veterans to be advocates for themselves as well as organizations merging their services to decrease and potentially end the homeless veteran challenges.

Figure 1.1

INTERNAL FACTORS

STRENGTHS +	WEAKNESSES –
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VHA- Homeless Budget 2021 \$2 Billion granted. • HCHV – Healthcare in 2021 reaching 76% of all veterans. • VJO – Preventing criminalization of mental illness and homelessness. • HUD VASH – 81,000 Veterans housed in 2021. • HPG VA – Largest transitional housing program 50,000 veterans' w/grants. • HVCES – 2021 Veterans exiting homelessness and entering workforce. • Cares Act 2020 – Veterans granted \$7 million in New Hampshire combatting homelessness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing shortages in New Hampshire • Chronic homelessness • Livable income hard to sustain on veterans' incomes. • Substance abuse issues • PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder • Limited Access to Healthcare • Lack of family support • Lack of social support • Government funds reaches 60% of all veterans. • Collaboration with other organizations to circumvent mental health issues in veterans. • Lack of advocates to utilize all funding for

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NH Mental Health Support and Relief Program - \$4 million through Cares Act. 	<p>veterans.</p>
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EXTERNAL FACTORS

<p>OPPORTUNITIES +</p>	<p>THREATS –</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300 organizations across the United States available for homeless veterans Engaging local healthcare providers, faith communities, civic and veteran groups. Veterans instituting advocacy organizations to combat healthcare challenges and homelessness. More communities available to increase assistance for mental health services. Additional funding in future government passed legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate numbers and community-by-community homeless veterans are not known to make appropriate assessments by population. Services not available to homeless veterans dishonorably discharged from active duty or war. Discontinued funding of veteran’s programs. Healthcare provider shortages / lack of available shelters. Veterans not at the forefront of their own advocacy.

Availability of Services and their Significance

Many resources are available in Hillsborough County to help deter homelessness and mental health issues with veterans. From an organizational perspective, the Veterans Administration has identified that 37.1% of all veterans are from the Vietnam War era (Veteransdata.info.org, 2023). Veterans with lingering PTSD symptoms are at a higher risk of becoming chronically homeless. As veterans age, the abilities to seek the proper channels for assistance has become a challenge to their significant needs of mental health and homelessness with aid and solutions (National Library of Medicine, 2018).

The VA's Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program serves veterans that are homeless and experience mental health issues. The 2020's federal budget for assisting veterans annually was \$160,864,000 (VA.gov, 2020). The average number served is around 150,000. Veterans Count, an organization associated with Easter Seals of New Hampshire, provides timely aid between 2007 and through 2021 utilizing funding to assist 7,905 service members (vetscount.org, 2021). Hillsborough County offers a community action partnership organization for the residents including veterans dealing with homelessness.

Southern New Hampshire Services provides assistance to low-income veterans dealing with homelessness including the U.S. Treasury's Cares Act called the New Hampshire Emergency Rental Assistance Program (Southern New Hampshire Services, 2021). This was a pandemic government funded program that helped veterans whether they were discharged honorably or not. Most programs dealing with veterans' issues have restrictions regarding military status active or non-active (Veterans Administration, 2023).

The significant value incorporates one conclusive fact in which there is no concrete value to exactly how many homeless veterans experiencing a high degree of mental illness (NCHV.org, 2023). From a professional experience standpoint, I have worked as a service provider using the New Hampshire Emergency Rental Assistance Program's funding to assist veterans experiencing homeless by providing rental assistance as well as homelessness relief.

Placement in hotels was one example of aiding veterans having experienced legal evictions through the court system in Hillsborough County. The application process required little proof as to supporting documentation on the application itself becoming an attestation (oath of truth) to the circumstances of the pandemic timeframe (2020). Eligibility was based on Covid-19 impact, financial eligibility including being in the standard AMI (area median income)

brackets for Hillsborough County, household member size, and proof of housing instability meaning having a past due rent / eviction pending, or paying more than 30% of income on rent, utilities, etc.

Ethical Analysis

The Veteran’s Administration is known as a beneficiary system. This is a system in which the government and the citizens have unilaterally made a commitment to healthcare needs of the men and women who served in the military (VA.gov, 2023). Figure 1.2 categorizes ethical decisions made in veterans care and quality (NCHV.org, 2023).

Moral Justification	Utilitarianism Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHCHC – National Health Care Homeless Council • HUD – Housing and Urban Development • VA – National Center for Ethics in Healthcare • Beneficence, autonomy, justice, and non-maleficence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm Reduction – Housing, mental healthcare services in NH • Providing Housing and care- eligibility, requirements, enlistment, and non-enlistment status • Cost / Risk / Reward – Results whether positive or negative negate actions for future action and funding for veterans
Boundaries	Dilemmas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIPPA – The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act • Privacy Rule, Security Rule, and The Breach notification rule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services to dishonorably discharged homeless veterans with mental illness • Continuous funding after 2023 in New Hampshire specifically Hillsborough

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA Policy 5CFR Part 2635 – Standards for employee conduct dealing with veterans care. 	<p>County</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA – Utilization of the Ethical Consultation Services
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Financial Implementation and Implications

There has been no shortage of funding in New Hampshire to combat the homelessness and mental health needs of veterans. While some funding services are beginning to discontinue from the Cares Act of 2020, the sub-grants awarded to New Hampshire have amounted to over 3 million dollars. Some of the beneficiary assistance programs are: (Goferr.nh.gov, 2020).

- Easter Seals Military and Veterans Services Grant - \$1,120,225.00
- Liberty House Hillsborough County New Hampshire - \$1,000,000.00
- Currier Museum of Art Manchester, NH - \$717,500.00
- Harbor Homes Inc. Harborcare - \$200,000.00
- Annie’s Angels Memorial Fund- \$100,000.00

These sub-grant awardees were through the New Hampshire Homelessness and Mental Health Support and Relief Program (Goferr.nh.gov, 2020). The financial significance here shows funding granted in amounts that are showing trends in homelessness and mental healthcare in a positive direction. The funds shown above have since expired through the Cares Act and additional funds will need to be advocated for to continue circumventing the issues at hand in Hillsborough County. Where all the funding has proven to be beneficial, the shortage of affordable housing, limited access to healthcare remains a continuous obstacle based on the following key points: (NCHV.org, 2023).

1. Only 25% of veterans have used homeless services through the Veterans Administration
2. 11% of veterans have been dishonorably discharged preventing eligibility
3. 45% suffer from mental illness
4. 46% are older than 45 with Vietnam Veterans being the primary population

Funding from the Coronavirus Support and Relief Fund was allocated as follows: \$2 million for expanded mental health services, \$2 million in traditional veterans' services, \$2 million to address homelessness, and \$1 million to assist veterans service organizations (VSO) such as VFWs, American Legions, and Disabled American Veterans Chapters (DAVs) that have lost revenue due to COVID-19 (Goferr.nh.gov, 2020).

SWOT Analysis /Ethical /Services Recap

Through the analysis of the aid being distributed to the veterans in Hillsborough County, funding has been granted through many different entities. The aid is available through several organizations totaling over 300 nationwide. Many gaps have been the focus of the funding approved. The challenges still faced in today's climate for veterans with mental illness experiencing homelessness is met with allotted funding sources. Remaining challenges are still prevalent since the Covid-19 pandemic which also resulted with funding specifically through the American Rescue Plan. The joining of many institutions to combat these very important issues will require entities to engage veterans to advocate for themselves as much as institutions do on their behalf.

Methods

There are two phases of the methods used to accurately determine the current state of homelessness for veterans in Hillsborough County in New Hampshire. The first one is the pre-pandemic statistics. Before Covid-19 entered the United States and more specifically New Hampshire, Hillsborough County was in an inconsistent increase and decrease ratio monitoring. If you view the table in Figure 1.3, it shows trends between 2016 and 2018. The chart shows population of veterans totals in the three years shown below.

Figure 1.3

COUNTY	2016	2017	2018	-/+ % CHANGE
Hillsborough	97	87	108	+ 10.20 %
Merrimack	6	14	6	0.00 %
Rockingham	1	6	7	+ 600 %
Belknap	1	1	4	+ 300 %
Grafton	5	4	8	+ 60 %

The figures show that many of the trends were on the increase, The vast majority of the homeless veterans through these times are staying in sheltered programs while 5% stay in unsheltered situations (NHCEH, 2018). While the sheltered situations are the safer option for the veterans, the actual totals of exactly how many homeless veterans are in Rockingham County may never be fully known (VA.gov, 2023). One significant cause of mental health issues for veterans is suicide. While mental illness touches the lives of one in four Americans, it affects veterans at a higher rate. The VA reported in 2020 that a combined nationwide total of veteran suicides was 6,146. (VA.gov, 2020). This equates to around 17 suicides per day. The primary

methods used for the purpose of homeless veterans with mental illness will range from 2016-2023. In 2021, there were 365 veterans reported as experiencing homelessness in NH.

This number represents people who have served our country living in dire situations but does not fully demonstrate the comprehensive and efficient system of the exact care that has been designed to respond to a veteran's needs when homeless in New Hampshire (NHCEH.org, 2021). In 2021, the Department of Housing and Urban Development approved continuum of care grants that New Hampshire received for homelessness.

This grant was designed for homelessness which encompassed a total of 54 programs with a funding amount of \$9,467,458 (HUD, 2021). A defining method used to identify the needs of the veterans with homelessness and mental health needs have broken down which veterans are from active duty (current status) or those from previous services consisting of past wars.

Figure 1.4 breaks down the major conflicts in which veterans are identified to interpret patterns of where certain distinguishments have been made as a point of ranges of necessity.

Figure 1.4

Department of Military Affairs and Veteran Services NH 2020 Info

Veterans by War	Hillsborough County	%
Vietnam	9,304	44.37
First Gulf War	4,755	22.68
WWI	773	3.69
Second Gulf War	4,022	19.18

The figure shows that Vietnam Veterans are the primary makeup for Hillsborough County's homeless population (Worldpopulationreview.com, 2020). Of this population, 19.1% of veterans have a service-connected disability (Housing Assistance Council, 2021). Entities connected with helping veterans in New Hampshire in 2020 as the pandemic was becoming more aware of its affect are:

- Department of Military Affairs and Services
- Division of Veterans Services
- Division of Community Based Military Programs
- NH State Veterans Cemetery
- State Veterans Council
- NH Military Leadership Team

Community Based Methods

The communities in Hillsborough but not limited to Hillsborough have also played a role in establishing effective methods of aiding the homeless veteran population and also mental health needs. 2020 totals of veterans in the state of New Hampshire calculated to 99,249 (HAC, 2021). Some of the community programs directly involved with the Department of Military Affairs and Services are:

- Justice Involved Veterans Task Force
- Legislative Committee on PTSD & TBI
- Veterans Coalition Community
- Behavioral Health Association Governor's Commission on Housing Stability
- Alliance for Healthy Aging

- NH Veteran-Friendly Business Program
- Manchester Mayor's Challenge Team
- State Veterans Advisory Committee

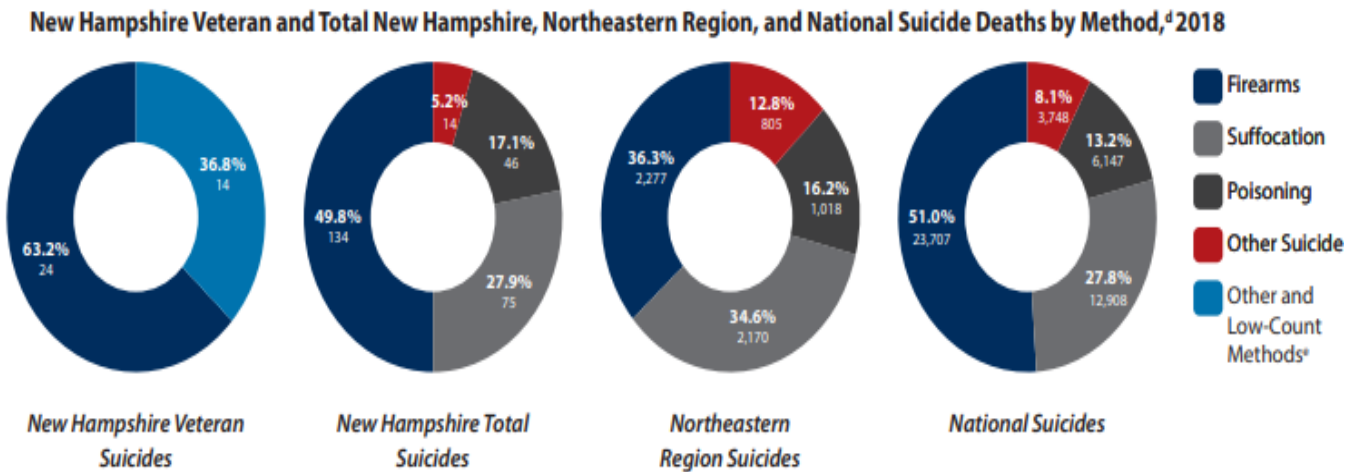
One of the methods used to address the mental health issues and needs of veterans in Hillsborough County is the New Hampshire Suicide Prevention Council. Nationally, suicide is the second leading cause of death for those aged 10 through 34, the 4th leading cause of death for people aged 35-44, and the 8th cause of death for those aged 55-64.

Suicide death rates in New Hampshire are approximately 35% higher than the national rate (19.27 per 100,000 in NH compared to 14.21 per 100,000 nationally) (DMAVS.gov, 2021). New Hampshire ranks 12th in the United States for suicide deaths. Figure 1.5 provided by mentalhealth.va.gov shows the suicide rates in comparison to the rest of the United States which identifies the importance of assistance.

The 2018 state data shows findings from VA's ongoing analysis of suicide rates and include the most up-to-date state-level suicide information for the United States. This data in Figure 1.5 includes information about New Hampshire Veteran suicides by age, sex, and suicide method and compares this with regional and national data (Mentalhealth.va.gov, 2020).

The Department of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense, and the National Center for Health Statistics worked in unison to retrieve the provided data to analyze facts specifically regarding the New Hampshire's high rate of suicides of veterans compared to the rest of the nation.

Figure 1.5 (Mentalhealth.va.gov, 2020)



Deliverables and Results

New Hampshire's action's for dealing with the homeless population with veterans has been exemplified between 2010 and 2023 with statistical data that has shown areas of increase and decrease year by year (VA.gov, 2023) The trends have been mainly on the decrease most years but one fact remains in that to have a conclusive amount of how many veterans that are experiencing homelessness with mental health disorders cannot be substantiated to a full certainty (NCHV.org, 2023). Some communities do an annual count, while others do an estimate based on a variety of factors. There are three entities which can provide the statistics which have been used to estimate the homeless population of veterans in New Hampshire which are:

- Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center
- Homeless Coordinators
- Office of the Mayor
- Other presiding entities of the government that hold vital records and information.

The findings resulting from the concerted efforts to combat the homelessness and mental health have been overall in the positive trending trajectory between 2010 through 2023 in New Hampshire's Hillsborough County (Veterans Homeless Committee, 2023). The following agencies have been a part of the mission in dealing with subverting the challenges:

- Air Force Aid Society
- American Legion
- Armed Forces Relief Trust
- Army Emergency Relief
- Coast Guard Mutual Assistance
- Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training (DOLVETS)
- Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
- Friends of Veterans
- Helping Hands Outreach Center
- Liberty House
- National Veterans Services Fund
- Navy – Marine Corps Relief Society
- NH Easter Seals
- NH Employment Security
- NH Office of Veterans Services (formerly known as NH State Veterans Council)
- NH VFW Over-There Fund
- Semper Fi Fund
- Soldiers Angels
- State Veterans Advisory Committee

- The Vet Center
- The Way Home
- United Way
- USA Cares
- VFW- Veterans of Foreign Wars

The agencies and institutions have all played integral parts in which New Hampshire is 36th in the United States in total homeless veteran population (statista.com, 2020). Funding has been granted in March of 2022 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the amount of 2.6 billion dollars (HUD.gov, 2022). This aim was to provide a community wide involvement to the mission of ending homelessness with veterans included.

Although the stakeholders in many cases have no concrete evidence as to the exact number of veterans being homeless, including those who are dishonorably discharged, they may be incorporated as the general public due to their status (Hudexchange.info, 2023). Their status of dishonorably discharged may be limited due to their severity status. With numbers being uncertain, the funding still allots for the purpose to aid homeless populations of any specificity.

Summary of Methods and Results

New Hampshire has many resources that have been effectively utilized to address the needs of mental illness and homelessness within the veteran population. The pandemic has proven that the statistical provisions that have been disseminated to public record have identified that the numbers are not an exact science based on the difficulty of measuring this specific type of population. The methods used have also proven that the mental illness in conjunction with veterans has had the help of several entities that have provided sheltered needs which have a

higher rate than un-sheltered needs. Funding has been provided since 2010 which saw decreases in these populations and one important regard to this matter is that the funding will need to be continuous to sustain this positive trajectory. While numbers shown in figures above have proven not entirely consistent between 2016 and 2020, they have kept Hillsborough County from dramatically being all negative reports.

Project Discoveries

This report has analyzed the homeless veterans in Hillsborough County in New Hampshire. The mental health of these veterans experiencing homelessness is also analyzed as to exploratory data available. The reports show New Hampshire's homeless veterans around 8% (County Office, 2023). In Hillsborough County, this accounts for 26,925 total veterans. From 2017-2019 the numbers have increased in a minimal percentage (State of Homelessness in New Hampshire, 2019). New Hampshire overall has seen an 11% drop in the number of homeless veterans within this three year span. Hillsborough County has seen a data interruption from the Covid-19 pandemic in which the accurate number of veterans remains a challenged endeavor.

The communities in Hillsborough have used coordinated outreach, multiple data sources, and other methods, to identify, enumerate, and engage all veterans experiencing homelessness, including veterans who experience chronic homelessness and veterans who are unsheltered, as well as veterans in shelters, grant and per diem programs, other VA residential programs, and other transitional housing programs, etc.

For these purposes, a "veteran" is any person who served on active duty in the armed forces, regardless of how long they served or the type of discharge they received (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), 2019).

Healthcare reports from the Hillsborough County VA show the comparison from the rest of the state.

Figure 1.6 (County Office, 2023)

Hillsborough County Veteran Status		
	Hillsborough County	New Hampshire
Veterans	26,925 (8.3%)	97,644 (9.0%)

Hillsborough County VA Health Care Coverage		
	Hillsborough County	New Hampshire
VA Health Care Coverage	9,971 (2.5%)	35,500 (2.7%)
No Other Coverage	1,219 (0.3%)	4,002 (0.3%)
Age: Under 19	56	222
Age: 19 to 64 Years	4,104	13,995
Age: 65 Years+	5,811	21,283

According to the above totals for healthcare coverage in Figure 1.6, almost two times the amount of veterans who do not have VA coverage with the total of almost 10,000. This equates to 16,000 veterans who could be covered by the VA regardless of their discharge status (USICH, 2019). The discoveries in this report show that trends have been primarily positive. 2021 shows the findings of being homeless for certain timeframes as shown in Figure 1.7.

Figure 1.7 State of Homelessness

Year	Population	County
NH 2021	1714	Hillsborough
NH 2020	1577	Hillsborough
NH 2019	1382	Hillsborough
NH 2018	1450	Hillsborough

Figure 1.7 has findings of an increase of veteran homelessness around the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The population has increased every year for the last 2 years. The general outlook of this report shows positive trends for all years prior to the pandemic. Homelessness among veterans with mental health issues can utilize the VA's resources to acquire insurance. HUD (The Department of Housing and Urban Development) has awarded in the neighborhood of 10,000 of these vouchers a year since 2008 (Shelter Listings, 2023).

The findings implicate that the efforts through several agencies have proven effective throughout the last 5 years. The pandemic was one major contributor of showing a reversal of progress beginning in 2021 as shown on Figure 1.7. The methods used in circumventing veteran homelessness are decreasing overall. The several organizations in New Hampshire's Hillsborough County such as:

- Veterans Administration
- NH Coalition to End Homelessness
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Urban Housing and Development

Challenges and Accomplishments

Due to the nature of information and statistics involving homeless veterans with mental health challenges, it took a very narrowed approach specifically Hillsborough County. There was no shortage of available information showing the trends of pre-pandemic, and also post-pandemic which could be correlated to 2023's current status involving Covid-19. A challenge in this report was the gathering of accurate number of veterans which the VA has conclusively verified there is no exact total known with certainty. One accomplishment in this report was the positive light shown on the assistance available for the state's 97,000 veterans (Veterans Data, 2023). Another accomplishment writing this report was discovery of many resources that veterans can refer to in Hillsborough County.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will have a continued goal set as to propel the results to an even more enhanced outcome progression for veterans experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges:

- Sustain funding that requires legislation to be passed continuously.
- Offer mental health career positions bonus and other incentives to increase workforce.
- Utilize commercial property to open more homeless shelters, mental health offices, and emergency veteran shelters.
- Create a veteran-based advocacy group where veterans can advocate for themselves and fellow servicemen and women.
- Increase the ratios of transitional housing to higher figures.

The report concludes that the efforts have been positive and progressively trending in the right direction with some recommendations that will aid in this trajectory of improvements for Hillsborough County's veterans.

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