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## **Breaking the Chains: Impact of a Timely and Holistic Approach to Veteran Homelessness in San Francisco, CA**

Joshua Thompson

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**Breaking the Chains: Impact of a Timely and Holistic Approach to Veteran Homelessness**

**in San Francisco, CA**

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## **Abstract**

This research project delves into the complexities of veteran homelessness in San Francisco, exploring three critical themes and proposing possible solutions that could yield a more desirable outcome. The theory of change asserts that if San Francisco Department of Veterans Affairs provided timely access to sustainable housing for veterans experiencing homelessness, it would lead to increased participation in mental health programs, increased participation in employment services, and long-term self-supported housing for homeless veterans. The study examines the assumptions and key factors influencing this theory, highlighting the role of resource allocation, timely access to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), and the correlation between homelessness and mental illness through a mixed-method research approach. Drawing on global and regional perspectives, the review emphasizes the urgent need for a holistic approach that combines housing, mental health, and employment services to break the cycle of veteran homelessness in San Francisco. Relevant research will inform this study by providing evidence-based insights and best practices from similar interventions, ensuring that the proposed solutions are grounded in proven strategies and contextualized to address the unique challenges faced by veterans in San Francisco.

## Chapter I: Introduction

### Background

The predicament of homelessness among veterans stands as a poignant issue, underscoring the unique circumstances faced by those who have served in the armed forces. In the vibrant cityscape of San Francisco, California this challenge takes on a distinctive character shaped by a confluence of factors that demand nuanced solutions.

San Francisco, renowned for its scenic beauty and cultural diversity, grapples with a homelessness crisis that uniquely affects veterans. Over “the past decade, the city has experienced a nearly one hundred percent increase in housing costs”(Coleman, 2024), making it one of the most expensive places to live in the United States. The struggle to secure affordable housing is very apparent in San Francisco, particularly for veterans who are often confined to lower-paying jobs, as supported by a study conducted by the Washington Center for Equitable Growth which found that “Veterans often face unique challenges in the civilian workforce, which can confine them to lower-paying jobs despite their valuable skills and experiences”(Crampton, 2022). Similarly, a study by the Department of Veterans Affairs found that “veterans have a higher unemployment rate compared to their civilian counterparts, largely due to the difficulties in translating military skills to civilian job market”(Chen, 2024). Thus, navigating the housing market becomes daunting for veterans, accentuated by the high demand and steep prices that erect significant barriers to stable accommodation. Making the mental transition to civilian life compounds these challenges, with many San Francisco veterans reporting difficulties adapting emotionally and psychologically, according to a report by the

Center for Employment Training, “veterans often face significant hurdles when re-entering civilian life, including the emotional and psychological adjustments necessary to adapt to a non-military environment”(Lawrence, 2021). These intertwined economic, emotional, and social factors create a pressing and distinctive issue that demands a re-evaluation to the traditional approach.

A probable solution to veteran homelessness in San Francisco hinges on timely access to services that address the multifaceted nature of their needs. Delayed access to veteran-specific housing programs exacerbates mental health issues, perpetuates a cycle of homelessness, and extends prolonged periods of homelessness. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, “a lack of access to housing solutions and health care services significantly impacts veterans' mental health, leading to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse among homeless veterans. This situation often results in veterans experiencing longer durations of homelessness and a vicious cycle of instability”(Diaz, 2023).

Lasting resolution lies in a multifaceted approach that extends beyond housing, addressing the intertwined dimensions of employment and mental health. Sustainable housing is not merely a roof overhead; it is a foundation upon which veterans can rebuild their lives. Integrating employment support services becomes pivotal, offering financial stability and a sense of purpose necessary for successful reintegration into a self-sustaining cycle. Mental health needs must be prioritized, recognizing the invisible wounds carried by veterans, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These elements are interconnected, requiring a holistic strategy that acknowledges the complexity of the veteran experience.

Addressing homelessness among veterans in San Francisco demands a tailored and timely response. A nuanced understanding of the unique challenges veterans face paves the way



for a comprehensive, multifaceted approach. Through a concerted effort encompassing housing, employment, and mental health services, we can honor the sacrifices of those who served and ensure they receive the care and support they rightfully deserve.

## **Problem Statement**

Amidst San Francisco's scenic beauty and cultural diversity, veterans face unique challenges that are heightened by the high cost of living, creating significant barriers to affordable housing, particularly for those in lower-paying jobs. The transition to civilian life exacerbates these challenges, with emotional and psychological difficulties reported by San Francisco veterans. A critical one-third express uncertainty about where to seek assistance and face excessive delays in receiving aid, highlighting gaps in support systems.

### **Problem Statements:**

1. Homeless veterans' access to mental health programs is inadequate.
2. Homeless veterans are challenged with their ability to utilize employment and training programs.
3. Veterans struggle with the ability to provide their own sustainable housing.

## **Purpose of the Study**

This comprehensive study addresses the complex challenge of veteran homelessness in San Francisco, California, emphasizing the critical need for timely access to sustainable housing and associated services. The research identifies critical problems that lead to or extend homelessness cycles, providing valuable insights for the VA and local services. By examining the global issue of homelessness and its unique challenges for veterans in San Francisco, the study delves into the correlation between homelessness and mental illness. It emphasizes the imperative role of timely access to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and the importance of resource allocation to end veteran homelessness. Furthermore, the study investigates a multifaceted approach that integrates

housing, mental health, and employment services to address the issue. By assuming that timely access to housing services will lead to reduced mental health issues, increased employment opportunities, and an overall reduction in the number of homeless veterans in San Francisco, the study addresses critical problems such as delayed access to housing programs, lack of awareness, and the absence of timely employment support.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its extensive exploration of the challenges faced by homeless veterans in San Francisco and the potential solutions that can provide a long-term impact. The VA will particularly benefit from this research as it provides evidence-based recommendations that can enhance their existing programs and policies aimed at reducing veteran homelessness. Additionally, this project will add to the existing body of knowledge on this subject by offering new data and analysis on the effectiveness of various interventions. This study not only highlights the urgent need for coordinated efforts to support homeless veterans but also contributes to a deeper understanding of the systemic issues that perpetuate homelessness, informing future research and policy development in this field.

### **Themes**

Themes covering the timeliness of veterans' services and impact on participation in mental health programs, the timeliness of veterans' services and impact on participation in employment and training programs, and the timeliness of veterans' services and impact on sustained housing and self sufficiency. The study underscores the transformative impact of long term housing or permanent supportive housing. Moreover, it highlights the complex relationship between

homelessness and mental illness among veterans and explores the effects of enhanced resource allocation and a timely allocation of housing resources that couple with mental health and employment support.

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to explore whether the timeliness of housing services provided to homeless veterans significantly impacts their ability to access and utilize mental health programs and employment training services, as well as their capacity to secure sustainable housing. By investigating the delivery of timely housing, employment, and health services, the research aims to determine if a reduction in service delivery time can correlate with a decrease in the duration of homelessness experienced among veterans.

### **Theory of Change**

Providing timely access to sustainable housing will allow veterans to focus on addressing mental and physical health issues and employment needs, enhancing the effectiveness of reintegration programs, and providing a long-term solution to Veteran homelessness.

The research assumption is: If the Department of Veterans Affairs in San Francisco extend timely housing services to Veterans:

Assumption 1 (A1): Then, veterans' participation in mental health programs will increase

Assumption 2 (A2): Then, veterans' participation in employment and training programs will increase

Assumption 3 (A3): Then, veterans will be able to provide for their own self-supported housing

## Limitations

This research project focuses on the issue of veteran homelessness in San Francisco, California, within a specific geographical and demographic scope. The primary limitation of this study is its geographic restriction to San Francisco, which may not fully represent the experiences and challenges of veterans facing homelessness in other regions. The unique socio-economic conditions and local policies of San Francisco may differ significantly from those in other cities or states, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Additionally, this research is concentrated solely on veterans, excluding other homeless populations who may experience similar challenges but are not within the scope of this study. The exclusion of non-veteran homeless individuals means that the insights and conclusions drawn may not be applicable to broader homeless populations.

Another limitation is the study's reliance on available data and the experiences of veterans and service providers who were willing and able to participate. This may introduce a selection bias, as those who participated may have different experiences or views compared to those who did not participate. This study does not delve into the root causes of homelessness or the underlying mental health factors contributing to it. Instead, it focuses on the timeliness of service provision and its impact on mental health and employment outcomes for veterans. Consequently, the broader systemic issues and personal histories that lead to homelessness remain unexplored.

## Definition of Terms

- **Timely** – refers to providing assistance and support promptly and efficiently. It involves addressing the needs of veterans experiencing homelessness promptly to prevent prolonged periods without stable housing.

- **Sustainable housing** – Sustainable housing for veterans involves providing long-term, stable living arrangements that contribute to the overall well-being of veterans. This type of housing aims to be environmentally friendly, economically viable, and socially responsible, ensuring that veterans have a secure and lasting place to call home.
- **Veteran/Veterans** – A veteran is an individual who has served in the military, typically the armed forces of a country. Veterans may have completed their service through enlistment or commission and are no longer on active duty.
- **Mental health issues and disorders** – Mental health issues and disorders encompass a range of conditions that affect a person's emotional and psychological well-being. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety are a common mental health disorders experienced by Veterans.
- **Physical health issues and disorders** – Medical conditions or illnesses that affect the body's physical well-being. Including but not limited to injuries sustained during military service, chronic diseases, or disabilities that impact overall health.
- **Employment needs** – Requirements and opportunities for veterans to secure sustainable and fulfilling employment.
- **Reintegration programs** – Initiatives designed to help veterans successfully reintegrate into civilian life after periods of homelessness. These programs often include support for housing, employment, education, healthcare, and addressing mental health concerns.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The literature review below is the result of a thorough exploration of online databases that was undertaken to identify peer-reviewed articles, journals, and studies relevant to the study's three focal points: providing housing, employment, and mental health services to veterans in a timely fashion. The subsequent summary encapsulates the essential findings from the gathered information pertinent to this study.

### **Theme 1 –the timeliness of veterans’ services and impact on sustained housing and self sufficiency**

Timely access to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) stands out as a pivotal factor in providing a long-term solution to veteran homelessness, (Kasprow, 2000). The study reveals that only eight percent of the more than 65,000 eligible veterans contacted by outreach workers were referred to the PSH program. Importantly, those referred were more likely to be female and exhibited positive indicators such as having multiple sources of income, recent use of VA services (including residential treatment), and serious mental health problems. These findings emphasize the targeted and tailored nature of PSH, addressing the specific needs of veterans facing complex challenges that contribute to homelessness. Kasprow, (2000) mentioned that the transformative impact becomes evident once enrolled in the PSH program. Sixty-four percent of veterans eventually transitioned into apartments, marking a significant step toward stable housing. Moreover, 84 percent of those who obtained an apartment through the program remained stably housed one year later. Kasprow's findings underscore the enduring effectiveness of PSH in breaking the cycle of homelessness among veterans. The stability achieved reflects not

only the provision of housing but the sustainability of the solution, providing a foundation for veterans to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society successfully. Robert Rosenheck's research found similar importance and effectiveness in the timely access to housing "The Housing First approach, which prioritizes permanent housing as a prerequisite for addressing other social and health issues, has shown to be particularly effective for veterans. (Rosenheck, 2018) Tainio and Fedriksson (2009) also found comparable results when they studied the effectiveness of long term housing first initiatives employed by the Finnish government. The new program utilizes a comprehensive partnership approach to develop a range of provisions for people experiencing long-term homelessness in ten cities across Finland and to improve preventive homeless services. Notably, the program represents a significant shift in Finland's approach to long-term homelessness by drawing on 'housing first' principles. Although such an approach was already being utilized for some parts of the homeless population, until this point, the prevalent view amongst key players in the homeless sector was that the rehabilitation of a service user should be envisaged as a series of stages (staircase model), where a permanent home is something of a 'reward', earned via positive behavioral changes on the part of the homeless person. In contrast, provisions based on the housing first principle view appropriate accommodation as the starting point and as a prerequisite for solving other social and health problems.

Ultimately, Tainio and Fedriksson (2009) argued that there is a need for a more detailed analysis of the elements that are required in successful housing first solutions. Their research found that evidence suggests that this new approach is likely to be more successful in meeting the needs of people who have been homeless for a long time.



Kasprow et al. (2000) highlighted the imperative role of case managers in the success of the housing process. Activities such as accompanying veterans to the public housing authority and securing additional sources of income were identified as key factors associated with positive outcomes. The research emphasizes the personalized and hands-on approach that case managers bring to the process, addressing individual needs and navigating the complexities of securing and maintaining stable housing. The association between case manager activities and success underscores the importance of comprehensive support services in maximizing the effectiveness of housing programs for homeless veterans, making timely access to PSH a linchpin in providing a lasting solution to veteran homelessness. (Stergiopoulos, 2015) reported similar findings through their randomized research of long term housing coupled with intensive case management ICM. Among homeless adults with mental illness in 4 Canadian cities, long term housing with ICM services compared with usual access to existing housing and community services resulted in increased housing stability over 24 months.

## **Theme 2 – the timeliness of veterans’ services and impact on participation in mental health programs**

Compelling research findings illuminate the intricate relationship between veteran homelessness and mental illness. Fargo's (2012) underscores the alarming overrepresentation of veterans within the homeless population, surpassing both general and poverty populations across genders. The paradox deepens as Tsai and Rosenheck (2015) reveal that homeless veterans, despite being older, better educated, more likely to be married, and having health coverage, paradoxically face a heightened risk of homelessness. This quandary challenges conventional wisdom, prompting an exploration into the role of mental illness as a contributing factor.

Tsai and Rosenheck's (2015) investigation into the perplexing scenario where the advantages of military service, employment history, and education should theoretically mitigate the risk of homelessness among veterans. However, the study unveils a crucial missing piece of the puzzle—mental health. The psychological toll of military service, including exposure to trauma and combat stress, contributes significantly to mental health challenges among veterans. The invisible wounds carried by many veterans, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health disorders, emerge as critical factors influencing their vulnerability to homelessness. (Pallares, 2020) conducted research and semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with five male homeless veterans in Fresno, CA. Four themes emerged from this study: childhood trauma, substance use, mental health, and common goals to exit homelessness. The findings indicate that veterans who are experiencing homelessness share common hardships throughout their lives that they perceive have placed them on a pathway to homelessness. Montgomery's research of veteran homelessness and mental health found that "Housing is healthcare, especially for our veterans. When veterans have stable housing, they are more likely to engage in mental health and substance use treatment and experience improved overall well-being."(Montgomery, 2013) The importance of stable housing on mental health and recovery is echoed by Dr. Padgett and her research "Stable housing is a critical foundation for veterans to recover from trauma and mental health issues. Without a safe place to live, addressing mental health concerns becomes significantly more challenging"(Padgett, 2020). Lastly, Wenzel found that "Stable housing is not just a basic need; it is the cornerstone of health and recovery for homeless veterans. Ensuring that veterans have a safe and permanent place to live enables them to focus on their mental health and regain their independence."(Wenzel, 2018)

### **Theme 3 – the timeliness of veterans’ services and impact on participation in employment and training programs**

In a 2011 study completed for the Department of Veteran Affairs (O’Connell, 2011) stated that one of the main findings of this study was that HUD-VASH case managers who had good therapeutic alliances with their clients over time had clients who stayed in the program longer. This finding is consistent with the vast literature on the importance of therapeutic relationships. (Crowther & Huxley, 2021) found that implementing comprehensive employment services emerges as a potent solution to combat veteran homelessness in San Francisco. Crowther and Huxley's research explored programs such as vocational rehabilitation, sheltered workshops, job clubs, and transitional and supported employment. (Crowther & Huxley, 2021) reveal varying degrees of success in assisting individuals with mental illness in gaining employment. Extending these services to homeless veterans can serve as a pivotal step in their reintegration into the workforce, providing not only financial stability but also a sense of purpose and routine that contributes to overall well-being.

The accessibility and desirability of Veterans Affairs (VA) services for homeless veterans add another layer to the potential impact of employment-focused interventions. Gamache's (2000) findings indicate that homeless veterans were nearly twice as likely as other poor veterans to use VA services, highlighting the existing connection between this demographic and available resources. Leveraging the accessibility of VA services for homeless veterans can streamline the delivery of employment support, creating a pathway for them to access job opportunities and vocational training.

However, Gamache's (2000) research also uncovers a critical gap in the utilization of VA services among homeless veterans with mental illness. A significant portion, one-fourth, of those

who accessed VA services did not report receiving psychiatric care. Moreover, a majority of homeless veterans with mental illness, including those who never used any VA services, did not receive psychiatric care. Gamache's research helps to underscore the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach, ensuring that employment services are coupled with mental health support to address the multifaceted challenges faced by homeless veterans in San Francisco. By bridging this gap, employment services can become a holistic solution, addressing both economic and mental health aspects to end veteran homelessness.

## Chapter 3: Research Methods

### Introduction

This research study will employ a mixed method approach to data collection. Quantitative data collection will focus on surveying veterans regarding their opinions on the utilization of support programs. The Qualitative data will be collected by structured interviews of veteran service providers. During these interviews participants will be asked to provide candid feedback on how timely access to sustainable housing impacts veterans' participation in mental health programs at the San Francisco VA, how can improvements to timely access to sustainable housing impact the involvement of homeless veterans in employment services, and improving timely access to sustainable housing, and its relationship to increasing homeless veterans' ability to transition to self-supported long-term housing.

### Research Questions

This study's primary research goal is to investigate if the timely delivery of housing services to veterans in San Francisco, Ca is associated with increased participation in mental health and employment services and an increase in long-term self-supported housing for once homeless veterans. The following are the associated sub-questions which will be investigated.

1. Will homeless veteran participation in mental health programs increase if timeliness of veterans housing services are improved?
2. Will homeless veteran utilization of employment and training programs increase if improvements to timeliness of veteran housing services are made?
3. Will there be an increase in veterans who are able to provide for their own long term self-supported housing?

## Theory of Change

Providing timely access to sustainable housing will allow veterans to focus on addressing mental and physical health issues and employment needs, enhancing the effectiveness of reintegration programs, and providing a long-term solution to Veteran homelessness.

The research assumption is: If the Department of Veterans Affairs in San Francisco extend timely housing services to Veterans:

Assumption 1 (A1): Then, veterans' participation in mental health programs will increase

Assumption 2 (A2): Then, veterans' participation in employment and training programs will increase

Assumption 3 (A3): Then, veterans will be able to provide for their own self-supported housing

## Operational Definitions

- Veteran service provider – refers to an individual who is currently or has previously been employed or undergone training to provide service to veterans (ie. Mental health professionals, representatives working for veteran housing assistance programs, etc)
- Increased participation – for the purposes of this study an increase in participation in San Francisco VA mental health programs will represent a 5% increase in program enrollment compared to 2022 rates.
- Increase ability to utilize services – for the purposes of this study an increase in ability to utilize services will represent a 5% increase in enrollment in San Francisco VA employment and training programs compared to 2022 rates.
- **Increase among once homeless veterans who are able to provide for their own long term self-supported housing:** For purposes of this study, an increase in veteran's

providing for their own long term self-supported housing will represent a 5% increase in veteran self-supported housing in San Francisco lasting a minimum of 18 months.

**Sustainable housing** – Sustainable housing for veterans involves providing long-term, stable living arrangements that contribute to the overall well-being of veterans.

- **Veteran/Veterans** – A veteran is an individual who has served in the military, typically the armed forces of a country. Veterans may have completed their service through enlistment or commission and are no longer on active duty.
- **Mental health issues and disorders** – Mental health issues and disorders encompass a range of conditions that affect a person's emotional and psychological well-being. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety are a common mental health disorders experienced by Veterans.

### **Population Sampling Strategy**

This research study will employ a purposive sampling strategy. This strategy was chosen to ensure a diverse and representative selection of participants who could contribute first-hand and secondhand knowledge to the study. The population targeted for surveys will comprise of veterans. Interviews will be conducted with veteran services providers who have experience working in San Francisco, Ca. Interviewees will be deliberately selected based on their potential to provide unique insights and experiences related to the study's focus. By surveying veterans and interviewing veteran service providers, the study aims to capture a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced factors contributing to veteran homelessness in the specific context of San Francisco, Ca. This approach ensures that the data collected will reflect the diverse perspectives within the veteran population and that of the professionals who provide

services to veterans, providing a rich and insightful foundation for the study's analysis and conclusions.

## **Procedures**

The research procedures for this study involve a multi-step approach to gather comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data. A thorough literature review was conducted to inform the development of interview questions and ensure alignment with existing knowledge. Following this, a purposive sampling strategy was implemented to select veterans to complete the survey and subject matter experts to complete the interview. To ensure the data gathering process is replicable, specific actions were taken: interviews were conducted with 10 to 15 veteran service providers virtually via email. Each interview used structured questions to ensure consistency. Additionally, a survey targeting 100 veterans was deployed both online and in person to ensure accessibility. Online surveys were shared via QR code and shared on relevant social media platforms and at shelters, veteran service organizations, and community centers.

## **Data Processing and Analysis**

Once data was collected it was consolidated on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to assist with analysis. A frequency distribution across a 5-point Likert scale was used to quantitatively analyze the data from the veteran surveys. A visual aid of these results was created to provide further understanding. Thematic analysis was employed to systematically examine the data yielded from the interviews of the subject matter experts. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were paramount throughout the research procedures to protect the well-being and rights of the participants. This thorough and ethical approach to data



processing and analysis helps ensure that the findings are reliable and can be used to inform future policies and interventions aimed at reducing veteran homelessness.

### **Internal and External Validity**

In this research project, validity was upheld through strict methodological measures. The use of a purposive sampling strategy ensures that the chosen participants represent the diverse experiences within the veteran population in the city of San Francisco, Ca. The carefully designed interview protocols and qualitative data analysis techniques contribute to the accuracy and reliability of the study's findings, enhancing internal validity. To address external validity, the researcher considered the unique context of San Francisco, allowing for a nuanced understanding of veteran homelessness within this specific geographical and sociocultural setting.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the complex challenges of veteran homelessness in San Francisco, emphasizing the urgent need for timely access to sustainable housing and associated services. By addressing the multifaceted nature of the issue and advocating for a comprehensive approach encompassing housing, employment, and mental health services, the research provides a roadmap for effective interventions. The significance of this study lies in its potential to guide policymakers, service providers, and communities in developing tailored strategies to combat veteran homelessness.

## Chapter 4 Results and Findings

This chapter offers an analysis of the survey and interviews conducted to test the research hypothesis. A total of sixty three veterans completed the survey, and nine subject matter experts were interviewed. This chapter examines each survey question and interview question independently to provide a detailed analysis of the results.

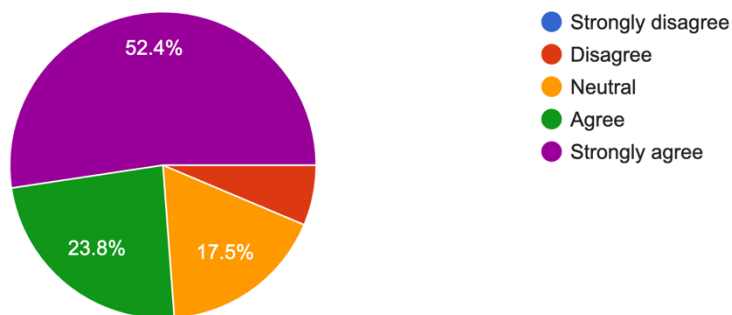
### Assumption 1 (A1)

If the Department of Veteran Affairs provided timely access to sustainable housing programs then, veterans' participation in mental health programs will increase.

#### Quantitative Results From Survey Question #1

To what extent do you agree that providing timely access to sustainable housing will increase homeless veterans' participation in mental health programs?

63 responses

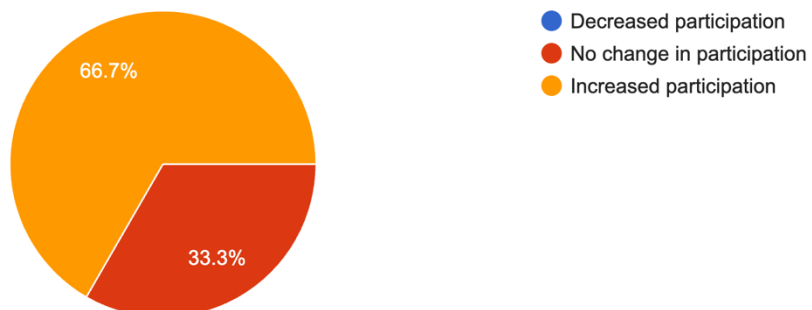


As demonstrated by the pie chart above, the majority of veterans surveyed (76.2%) either strongly agreed or agreed that providing timely access to sustainable housing will increase veteran participation in mental health programs. This aligns with the hypothesis of this study.

#### Qualitative Results From Interview Question Regarding Participation in Mental Health Programs

In your professional opinion, how has access to sustainable housing affected homeless veterans' participation in mental health programs at the San Francisco VA?

9 responses



Overall interview results supported the positive impact of sustainable housing on increasing the utilization of mental health programs. Noteworthy remarks such as “Timely access to sustainable housing greatly enhances veterans' participation in mental health programs by providing the stability and security they need to focus on their treatment” (Barbara Smithers, VA mental health professional). However, a small portion of interviewees (33.3%) made statements to the contrary. One notable statement came from an interviewee who wished to have their name withheld, “in my 5 years working with veterans I have seen little to support the correlation between access to timely housing and increased participation in mental health programs”.

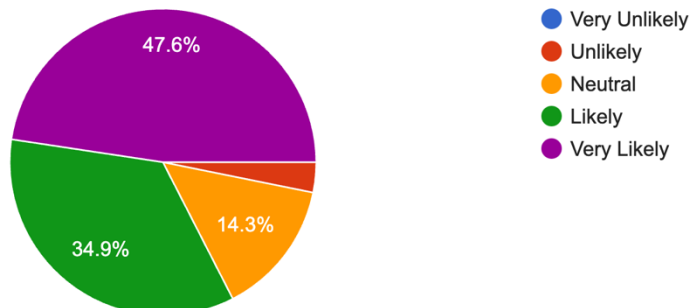
### **Assumption 2 (A2)**

If the Department of Veteran Affairs provided timely access to sustainable housing programs then, veterans' participation in employment and training programs will increase.

Quantitative Results From Survey Question #2

How likely do you believe it is that timely access to sustainable housing will increase homeless veterans' participation in employment services?

63 responses

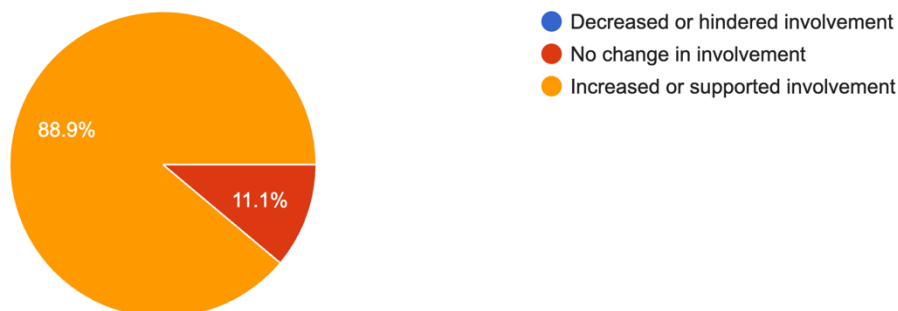


As demonstrated by the pie chart above the majority of veteran who completed the survey (82.5%) found it likely or very likely that timely access to sustainable housing will increase homeless veterans' participation in employment services. This supports the hypothesis of this study.

#### Qualitative Results From Interview Question Regarding Participation in Employment and Training Programs

Based on your observations or experience, how has timely access to sustainable housing impacted the involvement of homeless veterans in employment services?

9 responses



The second interview question elicited more positive remarks or statements supporting timely access to sustainable housing's impact on veteran involvement with employment services, with all but one interviewee affirming support for timely access to sustainable housing and a notable increase in veteran participation in employment services. One significant response was "access to sustainable housing removes critical barriers to employment for homeless veterans" (confidential VA employment services counselor)

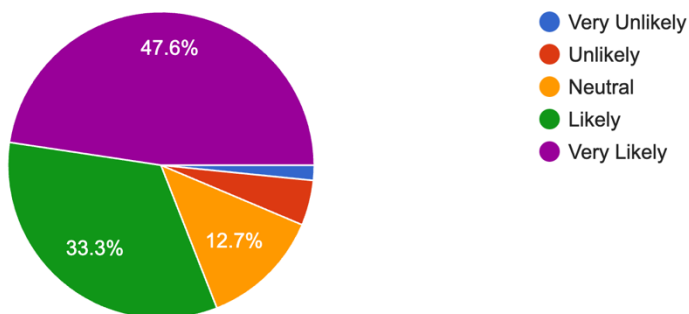
**Assumption 3 (A3)**

If the Department of Veteran Affairs provided timely access to sustainable housing programs then, veterans will be able to provide for their own self-supported housing.

Quantitative Results From Survey Question #3

How likely is it that timely access to sustainable housing will lead to reintegration into self-supported long-term housing for homeless veterans?

63 responses

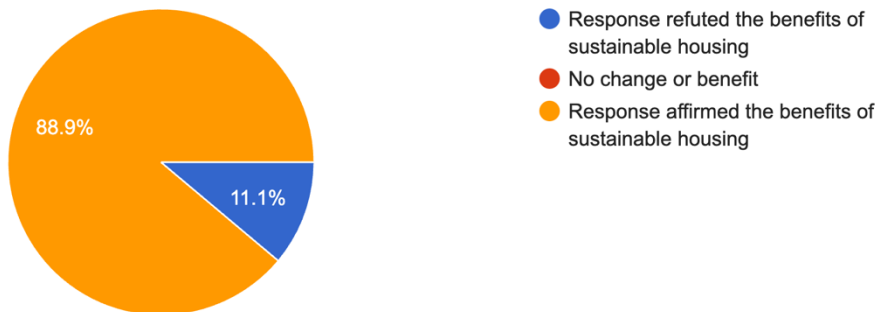


As demonstrated by the pie chart above the majority of veterans surveyed (80.9%) found it likely or very likely that access to sustainable housing will lead to a reintegration into self-supported long-term housing for homeless veterans. These results affirm the hypothesis of this research.

Qualitative Results From Interview Question Regarding Veterans Ability to Transition to Self-supported Long Term Housing

What are your thoughts on the impact of improving timely access to sustainable housing, and its relationship to increasing homeless veterans' ability to transition to self-supported long-term housing?

9 responses



The third interview question found similar support as the second, with the majority (88.9% or eight of the nine subject matter experts interviewed) finding benefit in long-term sustainable housing and its ability to aid homeless veterans in transitioning to self-supported long-term housing. However, there was one outlier who had a noteworthy response suggesting that no such correlation existed “providing timely access to housing may not address the complex, underlying challenges that many veterans face, which are essential for achieving long-term, self-sustained stability” (confidential VA employment services counselor).

### **Summary**

The convergence of data from both the surveys and interviews underscores the critical role that timely access to sustainable housing plays in the overall well-being of veterans experiencing homelessness. The high level of agreement between veterans and service providers strengthens the validity of the study’s findings and suggests that the proposed hypothesis is well-founded.

However, the few dissenting views also highlight the complexity of the issue. While housing is foundational, addressing veteran homelessness may also require simultaneous improvements in mental health and employment services to ensure that the root causes of homelessness are effectively tackled.

## Chapter 5 Analysis and Conclusions

The survey conducted with 63 veterans strongly supported the hypothesis that timely access to sustainable housing positively impacts participation in mental health programs, employment services, and the ability to transition to self-supported long-term housing. Specifically, 76.2% of respondents agreed that stable housing would increase their participation in mental health programs, indicating a clear link between housing stability and veterans' capacity to engage in mental health services. An even higher percentage (82.5%) believed that timely housing access would likely enhance their participation in employment services, suggesting that housing stability removes critical barriers to job training and employment opportunities. Furthermore, 80.9% of respondents felt that access to sustainable housing would facilitate reintegration into self-supported long-term housing, supporting the idea that sustainable housing is a steppingstone toward long-term independence and stability.

Interviews with nine subject matter experts reinforced these survey findings, emphasizing the importance of timely housing in facilitating veteran reintegration. A significant majority (66.7%) of interviewees agreed that stable housing positively impacts mental health treatment, with one VA mental health professional highlighting that secure housing is essential for veterans to fully engage in mental health programs. Experts also supported the notion that housing stability is critical in removing barriers to employment, echoing the survey results. Additionally, 88.9% of experts recognized the benefits of long-term sustainable housing in helping veterans transition to self-supported living situations, though some noted that a multifaceted approach might be necessary to address deeper underlying issues.

These findings validate the theory of change and suggest that policymakers and veteran service providers in San Francisco VA should prioritize the timely delivery of sustainable housing as a key strategy in reducing veteran homelessness. Doing so can significantly enhance the effectiveness of mental health and employment programs, ultimately leading to a more stable and self-sufficient veteran population.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed for policymakers at the San Francisco VA to implement effective, sustainable changes:

#### Recommendation

##### Implement Timely Access to Housing Services for Homeless Veterans

The San Francisco VA should establish a policy to ensure that homeless veterans are provided with short-term housing services within 30 days of application to the program, with access to long-term housing services secured within 45 days.

Track the number of veterans successfully housed within these timeframes and evaluate the impact on their overall well-being and reintegration.

Assign veterans to a coordinator who serves as a liaison between local housing authorities, non-profits, and VA resources to streamline the application and approval process, ensuring rapid response and placement.

Set up and enforce these timelines within 12-24 months, with regular reviews every quarter to ensure the policy's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

These recommendations, if implemented, will not only address the immediate operational challenges but also set the foundation for a more efficient, transparent, and veteran-centered VA system in San Francisco.

### **Areas for Further Research**

Future research should focus on several key areas to more effectively address veteran homelessness. Comparative analysis of different housing models, such as permanent supportive, transitional, and community-based housing, could identify the most effective approaches for reducing homelessness and promoting self-sufficiency among veterans. Understanding the barriers veterans face in accessing sustainable housing, including systemic, financial, and psychological challenges, is essential for tailoring interventions that make stable housing more accessible. Research into the role of support services like mental health care, employment training, and substance abuse counseling can determine which are most critical in maintaining housing stability. Lastly, examining the impact of housing location, including factors such as urban versus rural settings and proximity to services, will help identify how environment influences veterans' reintegration into society. These areas are vital for developing comprehensive strategies to combat veteran homelessness.



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## **Appendix A: Data Collection Instrument**

### **Survey Questions**

**I believe that providing timely access to sustainable housing will increase homeless veterans' participation in mental health programs?**

- **Strongly disagree**
- **Disagree**
- **Neutral**
- **Agree**
- **Strongly agree**

**How likely do you believe it is that timely access to sustainable housing will increase homeless veterans' participation in employment services?**

- **Very Unlikely**
- **Unlikely**
- **Neutral**
- **Likely**
- **Very Likely**

**How likely is it that timely access to sustainable housing will lead to reintegration into self-supported long-term housing for homeless veterans?**

- **Very Unlikely**
- **Unlikely**
- **Neutral**
- **Likely**
- **Very Likely**

## **Appendix B: Data Collection Instrument**

### **Interview:**

**In your professional opinion, how does timely access to sustainable housing impact veterans' participation in mental health programs at the San Francisco VA?**

**Based on your observations or experience, how can improvements to timely access to sustainable housing impact the involvement of homeless veterans in employment services?**

**What are your thoughts on the impact of improving timely access to sustainable housing, and its relationship to increasing homeless veterans' ability to transition to self-supported long-term housing?**