

# EVH - BONUS - VA Permanently Housed Nearly 48,000 Homeless Veterans in FY 2024

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** [00:00:00] Welcome to Ending Veteran Homelessness, your first hand look into our nation's efforts to ensure that every Veteran has a safe and stable place to call home. From the Department of Veterans Affairs, Homeless Programs Office, I'm your host, Shawn Liu.

If you're a Veteran who's homeless or at risk of homelessness, reach out. Call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 877-424-3838. Trained counselors are standing by to help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That number again is 877-424-3838.

Hey everyone, Shawn here. As many of you know, in fiscal year 2024, we set out new goals towards reducing and ultimately ending Veteran Homelessness.

And if you've been following along this year since last October of 2023, you know we've been sprinkling little updates [00:01:00] and addressing some of the different components of the goals in a lot of the different work that we do.

Today, I'm excited to let you know we have the final results of the Homeless Programs Fiscal Year 2024 Homelessness Goals.

And so, you know what I'm going to say to let us know about what the goal results are, we've brought her back. You know her, you love her. She's Jill Albanese. She is the Senior Advisor to the Executive Director and Director of Clinical Operations here in the Homeless Programs Office. Let's jump right in.

Jill, welcome back to the show.

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** Hey, Shawn, great to be back.

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** Yeah, great to have you back. Amazing news. I know you're going to share with us. We're all really proud of the work that has been going on this fiscal year. Delivering for homeless Veterans.

Before we get to the results though, Jill, can you remind us what were our goals for this year? I know that for the last three years, we've actually been doing this annual goal thing, making a big kind of public show of it. And for the last [00:02:00] two of the three years, we've not only met, but exceeded those goals.

And so this year, we set some of our ambitions a little bit higher, a little bit more of a stretch goals. Can you remind us? What the actual goals were for this fiscal year.

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** We set a goal to permanently house at least 41,000 Veterans. So, again, that's placing Veterans who are homeless into permanent housing. 41,000 was the goal, the target for that. We also set a pretty ambitious goal to ensure that at least 95% of those Veterans who we placed in housing remained permanently housed. And then the last goal that we set was a goal to engage with Veterans who are unsheltered. It's definitely a priority for our office, and we set a goal to engage with at least 40,000 unsheltered Veterans.

And so I am ready to announce how we did.

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** Ready. How did we do? Lay it on us.

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** We did great. [00:03:00] We did so great. So this is really exciting.

So our FY 24 target was 41,000 Veterans housed. We actually housed 47,925. So just...

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** That's a, lot. Wow. So nearly 48,000 homeless Veterans were permanently housed.

I want to acknowledge a couple different things. First and foremost, the degree to which we exceeded our goal of 47,000, we didn't exceed it by as much as we did last year. Last year we exceeded the goal by around 22-23%. This year it looks like we're exceeding the goal by around 17%. But a big part of that is because the floor was higher, we had a harder target to hit. But we also, it sounds like we ended up housing more Veterans this fiscal year than we did last year, so we actually improved upon last year's performance.

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** Yes, that's right. That's exactly right. The target last year was 38,000, and we exceeded that by over [00:04:00] 20%. This year, the target was 41,000. We did raise that target a little bit more. Folks just worked so

hard to make this happen. That's 47,925 Veterans whose lives have been improved and changed...

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** Yeah, and I also want to acknowledge, if I remember correctly, Jill, and this is something we've been really transparent about.

The last two years were calendar year goals, so January to December. And this year we made the conscious decision to convert to a fiscal year. And for those who could benefit the clarification, a fiscal year is like a money year, it's how a lot of organizations, do their budgets, and that actually covers October of one year to the September of the following year.

And so something we've been pretty transparent on is there's a little bit of an overlap of October, November, December of 2023 both were part of the last calendar year goal and are part of this fiscal year goal. And we've been very transparent about that.

One of the reasons why, and actually correct [00:05:00] me if I'm wrong, Jill, one of the big reasons why we thought it was important to convert from calendar year to fiscal year was a lot of the different reporting and evaluations and the ways that our staff was calibrated to fiscal year on a day to day, and we didn't want them to spend all this needless brainpower trying to do the conversion. We just wanted them focusing on all the tools that they had so that they could actually do the real work of housing homeless Veterans.

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** Yeah, that's absolutely right, Shawn. Most of our performance measures that we look at for our various homeless programs are set on the fiscal year. Having this kind of performance target for programs that were on the fiscal year, but then having a calendar year target, it was just a little bit confusing for the field. We did make that decision to switch to a fiscal year goal, even though we do recognize there was some overlap there with those three months.

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** But also, it looks like we essentially improved on our performance. You know, if we look at calendar year 2023, we housed 46,552 Veterans. In fiscal year [00:06:00] 2024, we housed 47,925, I think you said, right? That's an improvement on our performance. It's a 12 month span, but the second set of 12 months is higher.

So that's a good thing. We're getting better at housing more Veterans. And this upcoming year, we won't have this overlap stuff, because we will have made the conversion.

So it'll be...

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** That's right. We'll have made the full conversion. And to your point, yes, we were just housing more Veterans month after month. We're pretty confident that this is what we can do. We've seen this now, we've built momentum. The field has implemented some proven strategies. And so we think that this number is, probably what we'll be able to do next...

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** Sounds like we've like locked in the gains, we've locked in the improvements and strategies. Maybe we're now calibrated to being able to house 46, 47, 48,000 Veterans a year now. That may be our new norm or our new, [00:07:00] baseline.

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** Yeah. Yeah, agree. Agree.

And Jill, have

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** two other goals. What were the results of the other two goals?

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** Just like last year, we set a goal to prevent returns to homelessness. We recognize we don't want to just put Veterans in housing only to have them fall out of housing and become homeless again. We set a pretty ambitious goal to ensure that at least 95% of those Veterans remain permanently housed again in the fiscal year 2024. I'm really happy to say that 96% of Veterans remained in housing, so we just had about a 4% return rate which again is really phenomenal and hard to do, so this again is just speaking about how much folks in the field and our frontline staff are working to make sure that Veterans are not only housed, but that they're staying in housing, and that really takes a lot of effort.

It takes a lot of wraparound services to, to help Veterans stay in housing, so folks are connecting those Veterans to the VA health system and other mainstream resources to help folks stay engaged...

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** Yeah, and Jill, that's [00:08:00] absurdly close to what we were able to deliver in 2023 for homeless Veterans. Last year, I believe it was around 95.9% of the Veterans remained in housing.

This year, it's 96% . so sounds like we locked in those gains too, in terms of preventing Veterans from returning to homelessness, that we've established a new baseline in a way.

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** Yeah, agree. I think folks have really worked at keeping Veterans connected to housing and have really worked at identifying when somebody's housing is at risk. Yes, we absolutely did just about the same as we did last year. Again, just those strategies that folks started implementing a couple of years ago and kept working on last year.

The last goal, we actually also did fantastic here. Our goal was to engage with 40,000 Veterans and we actually engaged with 42,064 unsheltered Veterans and again, really just beefed up our outreach efforts to [00:09:00] really connect with those Veterans who are unsheltered.

And again, this is a priority population for us. We just don't want any Veteran to be living on the streets or living in an encampment. It's an effort that we've continued to work on for the past couple of years.

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** And I want to acknowledge that this one also has a little bit of an overlap, similar to the permanent housing one. And, this one saw maybe a little bit better performance improvement? I think we've gotten even better at engaging with unsheltered Veterans.

Just looking at the calendar year goals for 2023, we engaged with 40,203 Veterans. We improved upon that by a little over 1,800 Veterans. So we're getting better.

And, Jill, I would love actually, first, let's just pause and just recognize this amazing amount of work that was done not only by our VA homeless programs, but our grantees, our community partners, the Veterans themselves, the homeless Veterans who joined in us with us and trusted us, With their care to get back into permanent housing, like this is [00:10:00] a big collective effort.

You know, it actually takes a lot of courage and resolve for Veterans to accept help from the government, especially if they've been burned or we've broken their trust to, at the most dire moments of their lives, to trust us again, to help them get out of the elements and into housing. That's big.

I want to shift gears a little bit, Jill, and just reflect on these accomplishments. 2024, fiscal year 2024, was a very full, busy year. When you think about the

work that was done to lock in these gains, what are the big themes that come to mind for you?

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** I would say the biggest theme, and this is just me, because I think about this all the time, is really embracing and talking about the One Team Approach. And we've talked about this for a couple of years now, but I really feel that this has made a difference, because we are working as a team.

We're working as a collective system. We still have work to do. But I think that has really made the difference that we are one team at VA [00:11:00] with our community partners and we're working for the Veteran. And really putting the Veteran first and not putting program first. But really what is the right thing for the Veteran, not what is the right thing for my program, what is the right thing for the Veteran.

It's very...

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** Yeah, we're gonna put a link to the episode. We actually had you on one of our mainline episodes a couple months ago to talk about the One Team Approach. We're going to put a link to that into the description so folks can check it out.

A lot of folks don't realize that generally speaking, homeless services, both for Veterans and non Veterans, are pretty fragmented, historically been very siloed. So for anybody who's probably listening to you now, it's like, "What do you mean, working as one team? What were you working at before?" Check out that episode, and you can hear more about how things used to be.

But yeah, I got that impression too. We've had, in many ways, the same amount of resources. I know we get new HUD-VASH vouchers every year or so, but a lot of the other resources in terms of beds, grant dollars, are generally fixed year over year. What I've heard from you correctly, Jill, is that a [00:12:00] lot of the gains that we made were not an injection of new resources, but finding even more new efficiencies with the resources that we had.

Does that ring true for you?

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** Yes, absolutely, that is absolutely it. We have used the existing resources for the most part, just in a different way and in a more efficient way. And sometimes, you know, I think folks are thinking, "Why do we need to have two programs working with this Veteran?" And the answer is

because it provides the Veteran with better care and because it gets the Veteran house faster and because it keeps the Veteran in housing.

Yeah I'm a firm believer in the team based

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** Well said, Well said. Jill this has been fantastic.

These are usually short episodes. Before we let you go, is there anything that you could tell us? Can you read the tea leaves for us in the future? I'm pretty sure that we will likely have this pattern of annual goals going forward. I know it's an election year, and we may see a, we're definitely going to see an administration change. So a lot of the priorities that we'll probably have will be dependent on the new [00:13:00] administration that comes in.

But just thinking or, from what you can see from your vantage point, are there things that you could share us about what you anticipate might be coming down the pike in the future for our commitment to homeless Veterans?

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** Yeah, absolutely. I would hope that no matter how the election turns out that nobody's going to say we don't want to house homeless Veterans. We do anticipate setting another ambitious permanent housing placement goal for fiscal year 2025. And we really want to look further into the future, right?

We want to see a day when there are not unsheltered homeless Veterans. We really feel like that's going to continue to be a priority for us. And make sure that our Veterans are not living on the streets, not living in encampments, but at the very least, they're living in one of our transitional housing programs and on their, on a pathway to permanent housing. So that's going to be a focus, not just in fiscal year 2025, but moving forward until we do not have any unsheltered Veterans living on the streets.

That's connected to our outreach efforts. We want to increase our outreach. We want to get Veterans connected to our transitional [00:14:00] housing programs.

And then from there, we really want to make sure that folks are on that path to permanent housing as quickly as possible. So, we do anticipate setting an ambitious goal. We're going to continue to improve the strategies that we have been working on to make that happen, and so,

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** more...

Good work to come.

Jill Albanese is the Senior Advisor to the Executive Director and Director of Clinical Operations here in the Homeless Programs Office.

Jill, my friend, congratulations on an amazing year and thank you so much again for your leadership and for the gift of your time.

**jill\_2\_10-21-2024\_130527:** Thank you for your partnership, Shawn.

**shawn-liu--he-they-\_2\_10-21-2024\_160528:** If you want to know more about the services that VA provides to Veterans experiencing homelessness and housing instability, visit us online at [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless).

And if you're a Veteran who's homeless or at risk of homelessness, reach out. Call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 877-424-3838. Trained counselors are standing by to help. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That number again is [00:15:00] 877-424-3838.

That's all for now. We hope that you found this time to be valuable and that you feel empowered in our collective work to ensure that every Veteran has a safe and stable place to call home.

Take care.