



Case Study:

HOPE Connections

Ending Veteran homelessness in Northwest Louisiana

In 2014, several federal agencies launched the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness. This inter-agency initiative called on cities, counties, and states to take action to prevent and end Veteran homelessness in their communities. Effectively, ending Veteran homelessness meant reaching the point where there were no Veterans sleeping on the street and every Veteran had access to permanent housing.

When the program launched in 2014, Executive Director Christa Pizzaglia saw an opportunity for her organization HOPE Connections, the HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) for Northwest Louisiana. Having used WellSky Community Services to wage a largely successful 100,000 Homes Campaign, Christa and her team couldn't help but envision how the same could be done for this initiative.

Determined to respond, Christa met with the mayor of Shreveport to discuss the initiative and help formalize the community's commitment to address this challenge head-on.

"Our experience with the capabilities and flexibility of WellSky Community Services, as well as the convenience of having the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) built into the system, gave us the tools to venture into uncharted territory and meet the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness with confidence," said Christa.

And so it began

With HOPE Connections leading the charge, the community set out to build a plan. It was clear this would be a team effort that would require the collaboration of the CoC and several of the community's Veterans service





providers. The collaboration would grow to include the Overton Brooks VA Medical Center Homeless Program, Volunteers of America North Louisiana, The Salvation Army of Northwest Louisiana, and the Elle Foundation. These organizations had ties to the CoC and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). due to existing homeless programs.

Teamwork makes the dream work

As with any project, formulating a technical strategy brought about changes and challenges, especially concerning processes, data, privacy, and workflows within WellSky Community Services.

The team brought in expert consultants from OrgCode and the 100,000 Homes Campaign to help form a cohesive strategy and a housing-first collaborative process. With the aid of these two consultancies, HOPE Connections and local Veterans service providers worked diligently to gather consensus and create a standardized process for the assessment and prioritization of homeless Veterans. This limited the burden of data entry, while still collecting key pieces of information to make the process work.

A well-oiled machine

Data entered in WellSky Community Services is crucial to successfully end Veteran homelessness. The system's robust and configurable capabilities allowed the community to:

- Capture important client information
- Record critical custom assessment information
- Assess the client's vulnerability using the built-in VI-SPDAT tool
- Create formal referral records
- Track follow-through and enrollment into housing programs

“The process has become so efficient that in most cases a homeless Veteran encountered by an outreach worker can be placed into Emergency Shelter or Safe Haven on the same day while they wait for housing placement.”

Christa Pizzaglia, Executive Director,
HOPE Connections

To ensure continued collaboration and visibility, HOPE Connections used the data entered into WellSky Community Services to generate a Veterans By-Name List report.

Weekly face-to-face meetings between HOPE Connections and the community's Veterans service providers took place to review the By-Name List, make clinical judgments, discuss housing placement recommendations, and provide client updates. This gave all of the providers visibility into the activity and encouraged collaboration toward one goal, according

to Christa.

Conclusion

The community has met the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness with great success. In fall 2016, Veteran homelessness in Northwest Louisiana was officially declared ended by the United States Interagency Council - that year's Point In Time counts indicated 0 unsheltered homeless Veterans.

The community's collaboration to end Veteran homelessness is still thriving to this day. As of 2018, the number of unsheltered homeless Veterans was down 87% compared to before the initiative. HOPE Connections is one of several communities using WellSky's Community Services to successfully achieve the goal of ending Veteran homelessness.

About HOPE Connections

HOPE Connections serves as the backbone agency of the local Collective Impact movement to end homelessness in Northwest Louisiana. HOPE functions as the Continuum of Care for HUD's competitive grant process and oversees the region's use of HMIS.

The vision of HOPE Connections is that no individual or family has to experience homelessness in Northwest Louisiana, and their mission is to guide and foster a comprehensive, coordinated homeless services system for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness.



About the author

Joey Flannery has over 12 years of experience in the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) area with the WellSky Community Services in Customer Support and Product Management. He is a certified Professional Scrum Product Owner and Professional Scrum Master with over 13 years of SaaS experience

specializing in agile methodologies, customer engagement, product innovation and user experience.



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