

North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care

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NC Balance of State CoC Framework to End Veteran Homelessness

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Background

Veteran homelessness has long been a national priority, and various resources have been allocated specifically to ending Veteran homelessness. Between 2010 and 2022, Veteran homelessness decreased by over 55% nationwide. However, A US Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that, since 2016, progress towards ending Veteran homelessness has stalled. In 2020, 37,252 Veterans were counted as experiencing homelessness on a single night. As a result, the Secretaries of HUD and VA created a joint statement on ending Veteran homelessness. The statement outlines the following commitments:

- Make ending Veteran homelessness a top priority
- Lead with an evidence-based Housing First approach
- Reach underserved Veterans
- Ensure the delivery of quality supportive services
- Increase the supply of and access to affordable housing

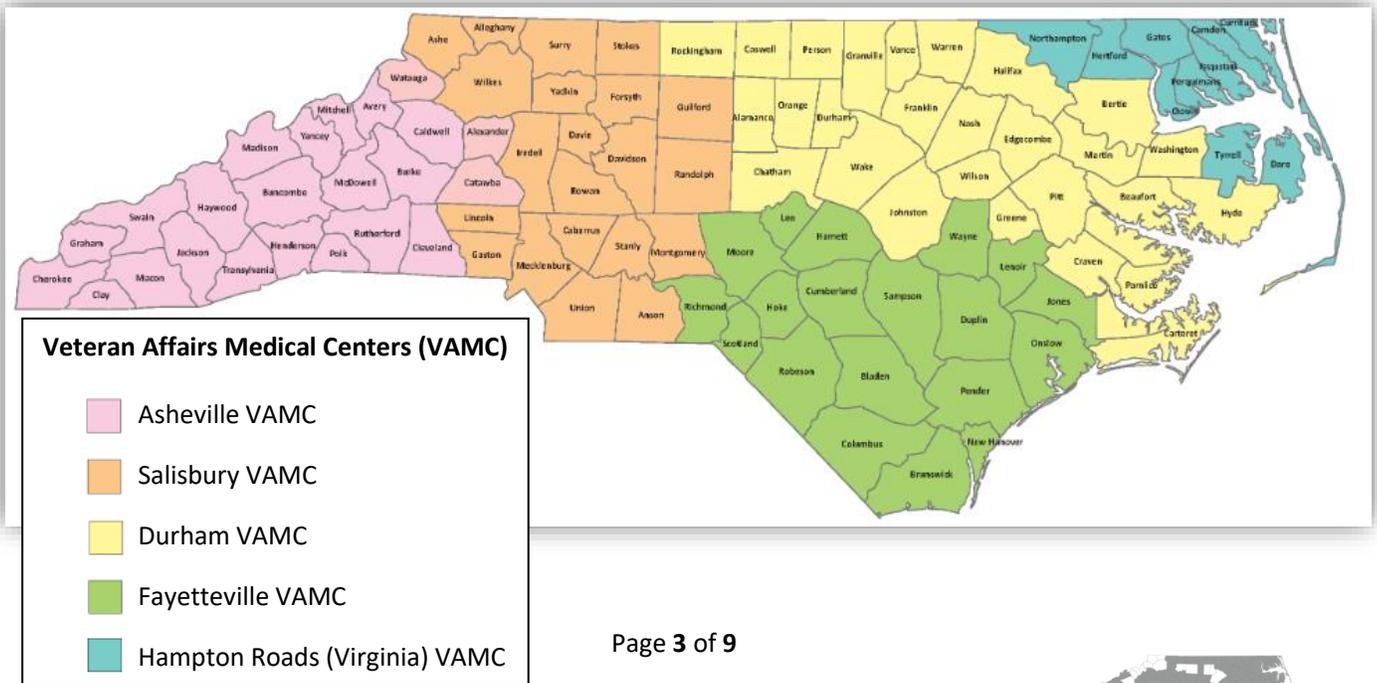
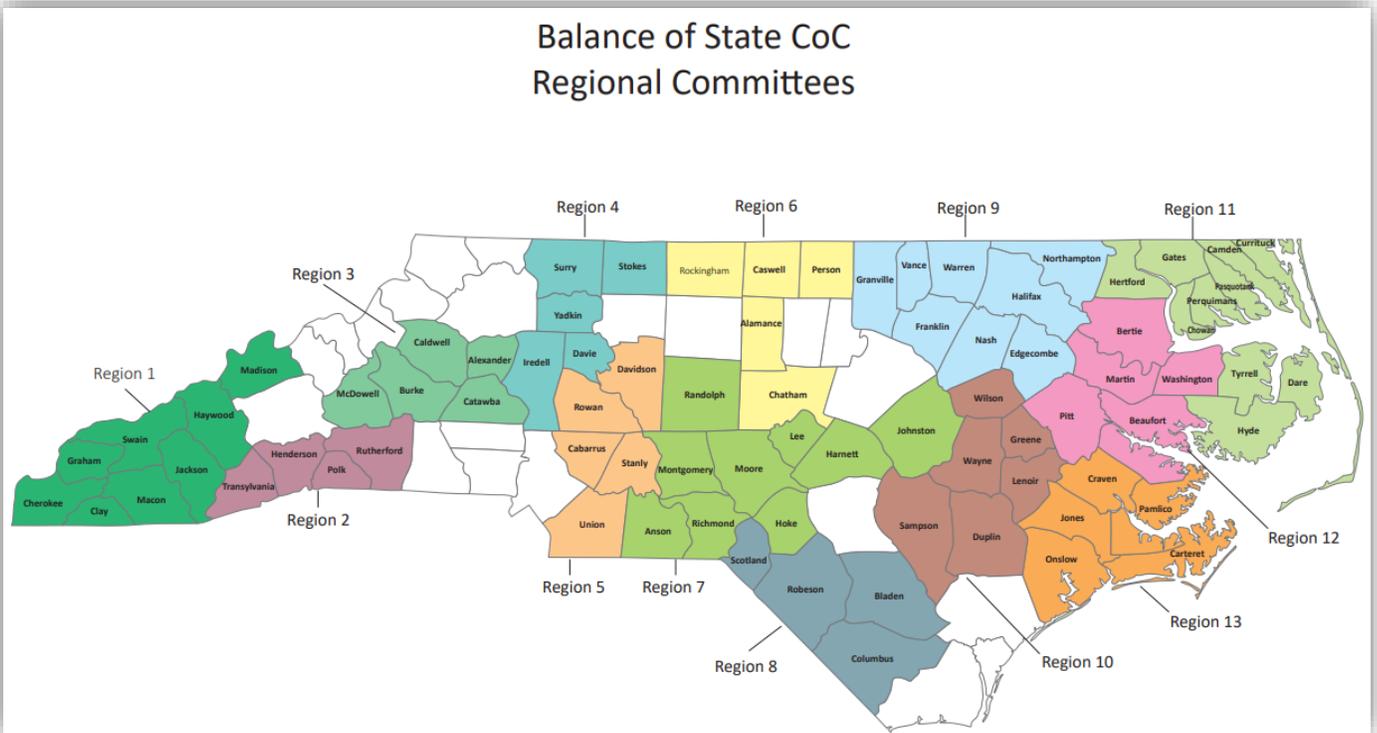
Consistent with national trends, Veteran homelessness has been a persistent issue across North Carolina. In 2016, the North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care (NC BoS CoC) formed the Veteran Subcommittee to specifically address Veteran homelessness across its 79 rural and suburban counties. The purpose of the subcommittee is to design, implement, and evaluate the system to address Veteran homelessness in the NC BoS CoC. Efforts began strongly at its inception. The CoC had a strong, committed set of partners that developed the CoC's initial plan, taking ownership of key roles to ensure all Veterans experiencing homelessness connected to the system of care and available resources. However, after updates to Veteran resources allocations that changed providers and geographic coverage areas, multiple hurricanes, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the CoC's Veteran plan became outdated, and the states of emergency meant other efforts took precedence.

In early 2023, the NC BoS CoC re-established the Veteran Subcommittee. Subcommittee members include Supportive Services for Veterans and Their Families (SSVF) providers, Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Medical Center staff, Department of Housing and Urban Development Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD VASH) staff, other Veteran service agencies, and Veterans with lived expertise of homelessness. Overall, the subcommittee's goal is to ensure every Veteran experiencing homelessness in the NC BoS CoC is quickly connected to permanent housing and appropriate services to maintain housing. Together, the subcommittee members created the following framework, which outlines key system components to be implemented on a regional and service providers level across the NC BoS CoC.

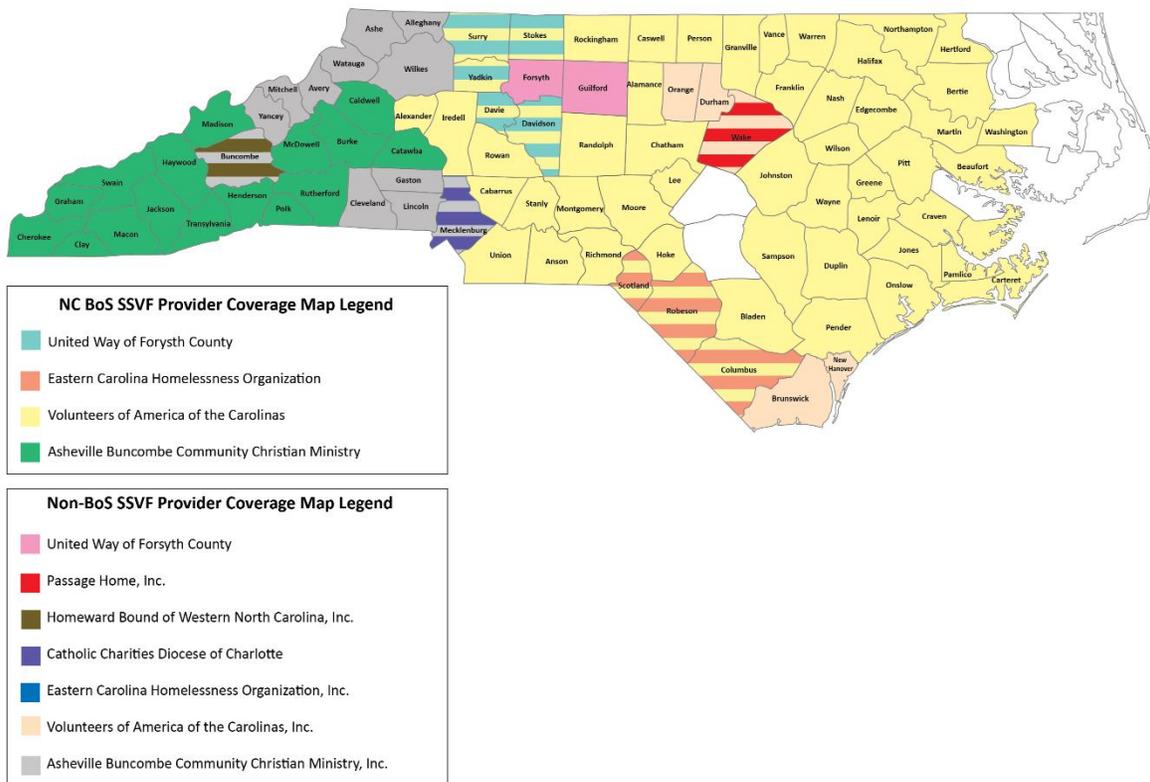


Veteran Framework

The NC BoS CoC consists of 79 counties divided into 13 Regional Committees. The Framework to End Veteran Homelessness relies heavily on each region to provide consistent services to Veterans facing homelessness. Each region operates its own Veteran system, with the understanding that many services, especially those within the various VA Medical Centers, often cross these boundaries. See the below maps for reference.



NC Balance of State CoC Supportive Services for Veteran Families Provider Coverage Map



Below are the 6 core components that make up the NC BoS CoC Framework to End Veteran Homelessness. Each serves as a vital piece as the CoC works to end Veteran homelessness across its 79 counties.

1. System Flow

Ensuring Veterans facing homelessness across the NC BoS CoC have a clear and accessible path toward permanent housing. The following are guiding principles to improve system flow:

Housing First – All Veterans, regardless of barriers, are ready for housing now. They should be housed without preconditions, such as lack of income or required sobriety.

Person-Centered – Each Veteran household has unique needs, and providers should meet them where they are, both physically and emotionally. Providers should reference the [Client Bill of Rights](#) to better understand this principle.



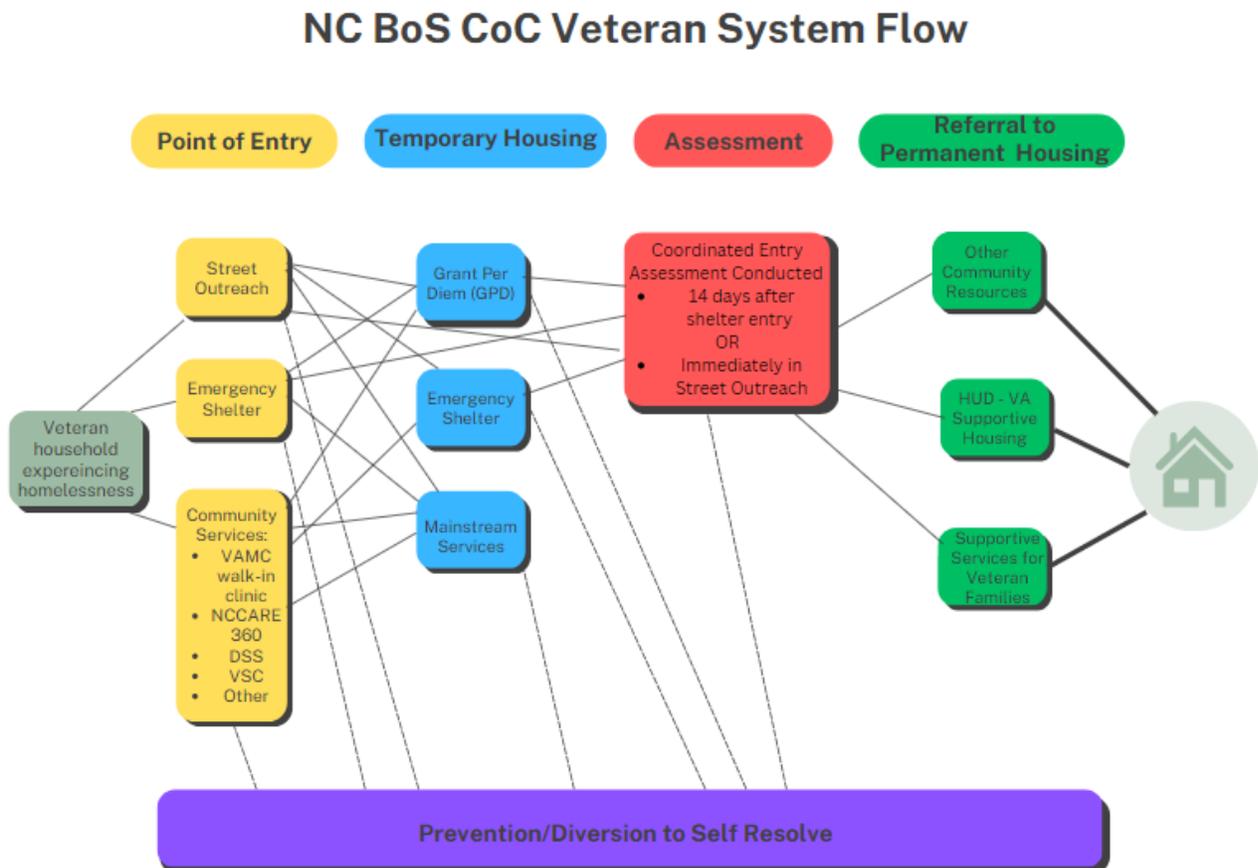
Prevention and Diversion Services – Housing problem solving conversations should happen throughout the Veteran household’s journey from homelessness to becoming housed to ensure safe and affordable housing is quickly identified to meet the household’s needs.

Points of Entry – The NC BoS CoC system structure relies on a “no wrong door” approach. Regardless of where a Veteran household enters the system, they should be met with equitable services.

Standard Coordinated Entry Assessment – Use of a standard coordinated entry assessment tool is vital to create an objective, equitable systems approach to end Veteran Homelessness.

Prioritization of the Most Vulnerable – Limited resources should first be directed toward Veteran households facing the most barriers to housing and highest acuity.

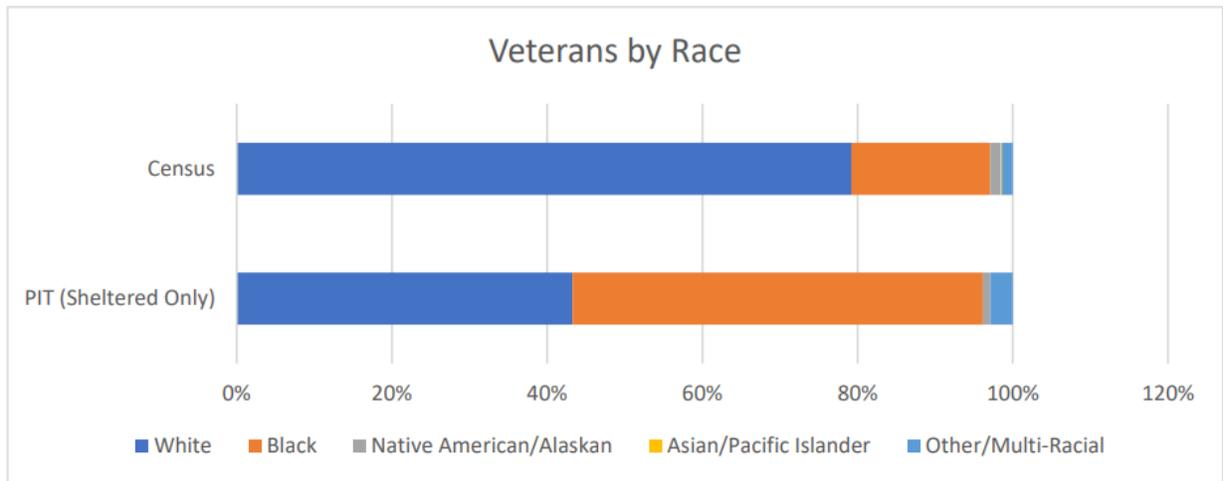
The following graph shows the basic system flow Veterans experience in the NC BoS CoC.



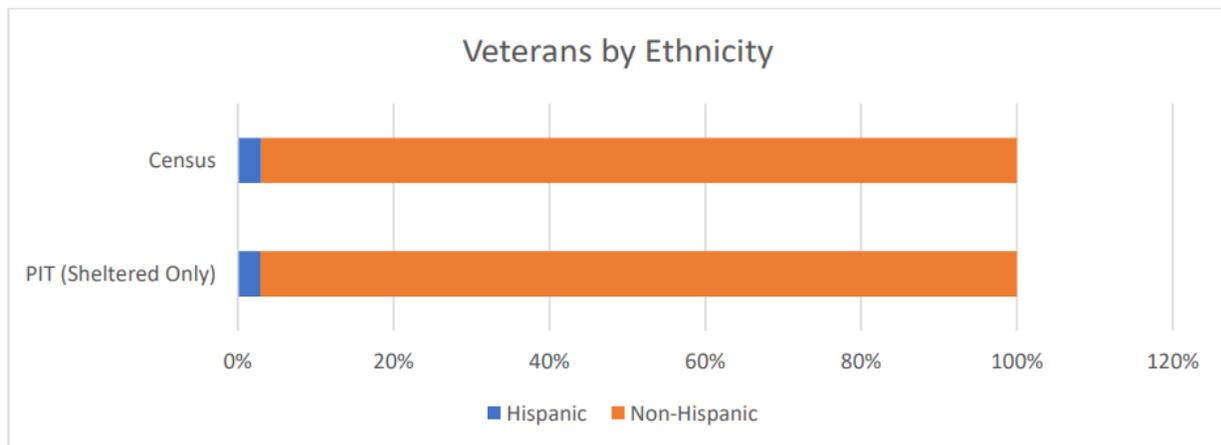
2. Centering Equity

Centering Equity is a key component to the NC BoS CoC Framework to End Veteran Homelessness due to the importance of elevating historical racism and systems built on white supremacy. We must better understand how these systems disproportionately impact BIPOC Veterans and strategize approaches to create lasting change.

In the 2022 Point-in-Time (PIT) count, the CoC counted 104 Veterans as experiencing homelessness, 7% of the overall homeless population. The 2022 NC BoS CoC Racial Equity Assessment revealed that while only 18% of Veterans in the North Carolina BoS CoC Census identified as Black/African American, 53% of Veterans counted in the 2022 PIT Count identified as Black/African American.



The same percentage of Veterans identifying as Hispanic report experiencing homelessness versus the total population of Veterans in NC BoS CoC (3% versus 3%).



Providers should take the following steps to create a more equitable response to Veteran homelessness:

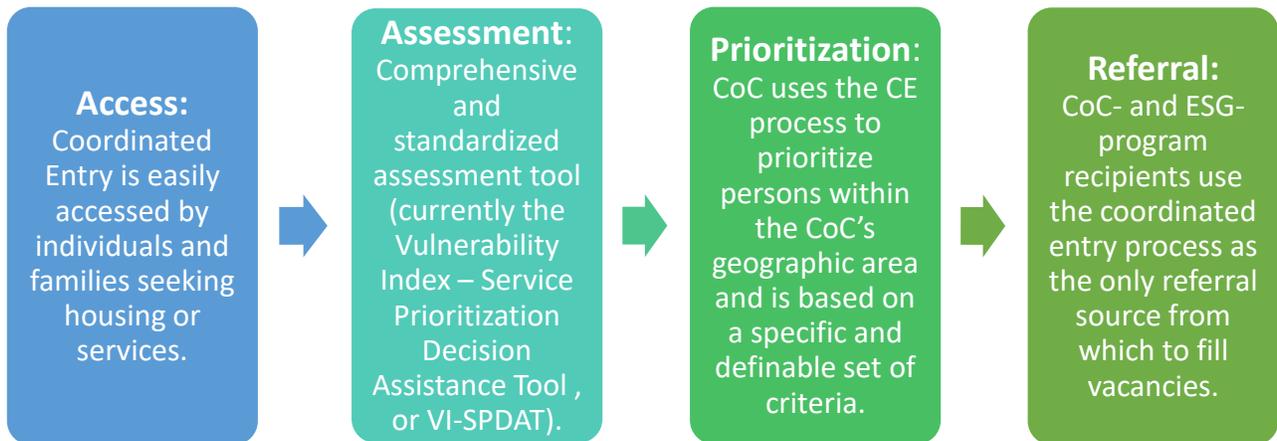
- Enhance Prevention & Diversion Efforts to decrease the number of BIPOC Veterans entering the homeless response system.
- Attend ongoing DEI training sessions.
- Participate in the NC BoS CoC Racial Equity Dialogue Series.
- Engage in agency-wide DEI efforts.
- Enhance case management and system navigation services.
- Increase and improve street outreach efforts to reach hard to serve Veterans.

The NC BoS CoC and the Veteran Subcommittee should take the following steps to create a more equitable response to Veteran homelessness:

- Create a reimagined Coordinated Entry Assessment Tool.
- Generate equity goals to monitor and evaluate ongoing progress.
- Improve authentic engagement with Veterans with lived expertise and incorporate them into governance and decision-making.

3. Coordinated Entry Integration

All Veterans experiencing homelessness in the NC BoS CoC should be served through their regional Coordinated Entry (CE) system to be swiftly housed. Four elements are essential to the coordinated entry system.



For full integration, regional CE systems should incorporate the following Veteran-specific practices:

- Regularly hold case conferencing meetings inclusive of Veteran-specific conversations and resources.
- Run and provide Veteran by-name list data at every meeting.
- Swiftly connect Veterans deemed ineligible for Veteran-specific resources to civilian resources.



4. Provider Coordination: Roles & Expectations

It's important for each partner providing services to Veterans to agree to a standard and specific set of roles & expectations to be effective.

Veteran Service Providers (includes SSVF, HUD-VASH, GPD, HCHV, VAMC Outreach, etc.) will:

- Attend case conferencing meetings.
- Communicate regularly with other providers serving Veterans experiencing homelessness.
- Educate selves and other community providers regarding other Veteran resources and programs.
- Complete CE Assessments and make referrals to the regional by-name list, as needed.
- Report housing outcomes for referred households to the CE Lead at case conferencing meetings.

Regional CE Leads will:

- Facilitate Veteran-specific case conferencing monthly.
- Run the Veteran BNL in preparation for each case conferencing meeting.
- Facilitate referrals of eligible Veterans to SSVF and HUD-VASH.

5. Addressing System Gaps

Currently, the NC BoS CoC homeless response system has various gaps to overcome to better serve Veterans experiencing homelessness. Below are the main themes of such gaps, as well as approaches the CoC should take to address them.

Build trust and communication between providers

- Intentionally increase opportunities for collaboration.
- Facilitate open and honest conversations with providers.
- Engage additional Veteran providers to join the NC BoS Veteran Subcommittee.

Expand program knowledge

- Create program overview one-pagers to increase knowledge of programs and available services.
- Provide resources and program coverage areas on the NCCEH website.

Share Data

- Develop a strategy to increase communication and data sharing between the NC BoS CoC and HUD-VASH.
- Consistently communicate housing outcomes for referred households to regional CE Leads.

Conduct system analysis, evaluation, and accountability



- Regularly monitor the Key Performance Indicators listed below.
- Work with Regional SSVF and HUD-VASH directors to ensure grantee compliance.

6. Key Performance Indicators & Data Analysis

Systems must regularly analyze performance to measure success toward established goals. Below are key performance indicators the NC BoS CoC Veteran Subcommittee will monitor on a quarterly basis. Baseline data is provided to measure change overtime.

1. Overall Veteran representation

2023 Point in Time Count: 191 total Veterans experiencing homelessness across the NC BoS; 136 sheltered, 55 unsheltered.

Goal: 20% decrease of overall Veteran homelessness and unsheltered Veteran homelessness from 2023-2025.

2. Length of time homeless

2022 HMIS Data: Veterans enrolled in ES, TH, RRH, and PSH projects spent an average of 123 days homeless.

Goal: Decrease average days Veterans experience homelessness to 115 days by 2025.

3. Race/Ethnicity demographics and outcomes

2022 HMIS Data: 51% of Veterans served in ES, TH, RRH, and PSH projects were Black/African American; 39% permanently housed were Black/African American.

Goal: Increase permanent housing placements for Black/African America Veterans to 50% by 2025.

4. Exits to permanent housing

2022 HMIS Data: percentage of Veterans served in ES, TH, RRH, and PSH projects permanently housed was 41%.

Goal: Increase percentage of Veterans permanently housed to 55% by 2025.

5. Returns to homelessness

2021 HMIS Data: the percentage of Veterans returning to homelessness within 1 year after a permanent housing exit was 4%.

Goal: Decrease the percentage of Veterans returning to homelessness within 1 year to 2% by 2025.

