



Ending Homelessness for Veterans

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Housing as a Human Right: Exploring Partnerships, Innovation, and Equity

October 6, 2022

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Ending Homelessness Among Veterans: Oct. 2022

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VA RESPONSE TO VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

A Massive Transformation of the VA Approach to Services

- from **VA-Centric Service** to **Outreach** on the Streets
- from **Treatment-Focused** to **Prevention & “Housing 1st”**
- from **Residential Tx and Transitional Housing** to **Permanent Housing**



HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM

The PIT Count (a “Point in Time”)

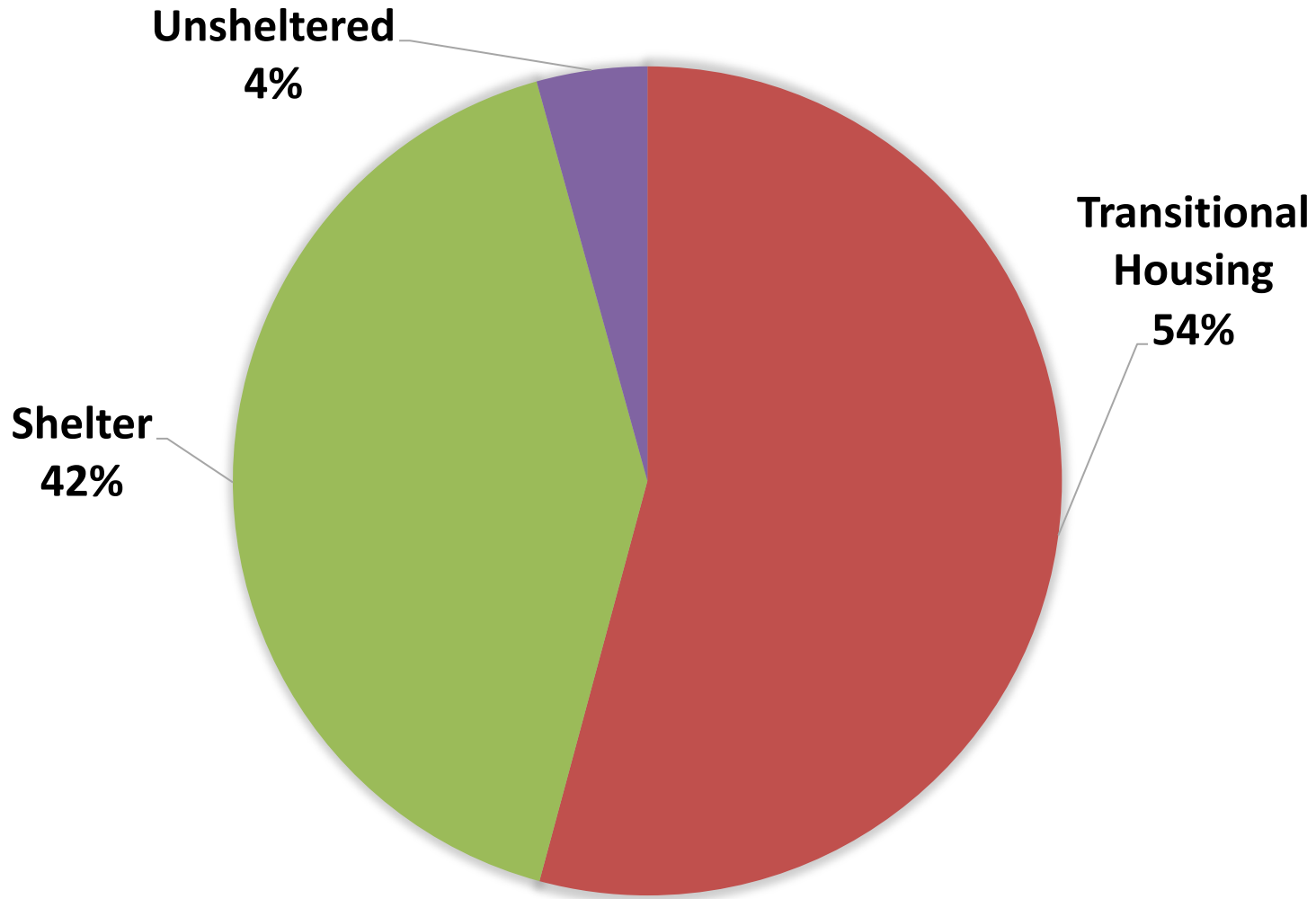
- The entire country counts homeless people once each year.
- Veterans are identified during the count.

PIT Count in NJ	Pre-COVID (3-yr average)		Count in 2021*	
Sheltered	491		419	
Unsheltered	81	14%	19*	4%
Total	572		438	

- The count of “unsheltered” Veterans was significantly affected by the pandemic in 2021 and is likely to be an underestimate.*



HOUSING STATUS DURING PIT COUNT '21





VA CATCHMENT AREAS IN NEW JERSEY

- **VA-New Jersey HCS**
 - Ocean County & North
- **Philadelphia VA**
 - Burlington
 - Camden
 - Gloucester
- **Delaware VA**
 - Atlantic
 - Cape May
 - Cumberland
 - Salem

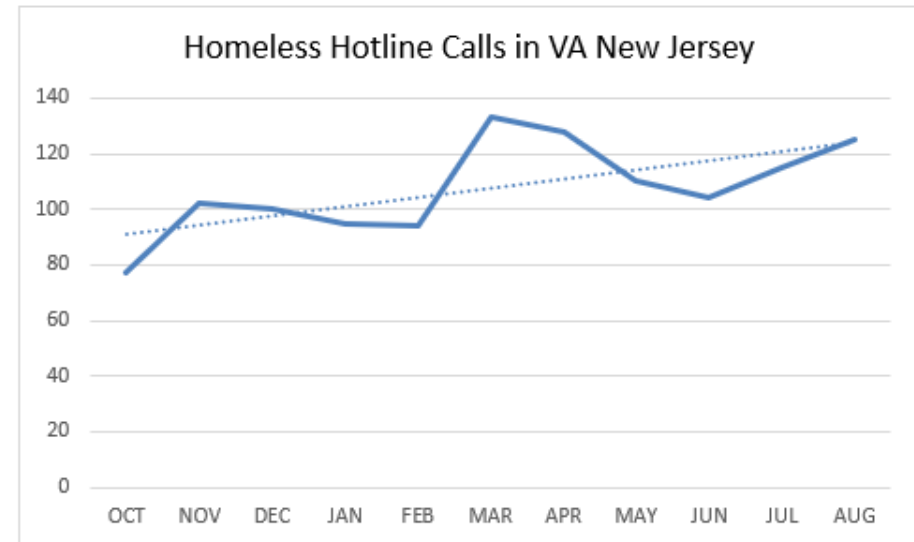




VA RESPONSE TO VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Number of Homeless Veterans Served by VA-NJ

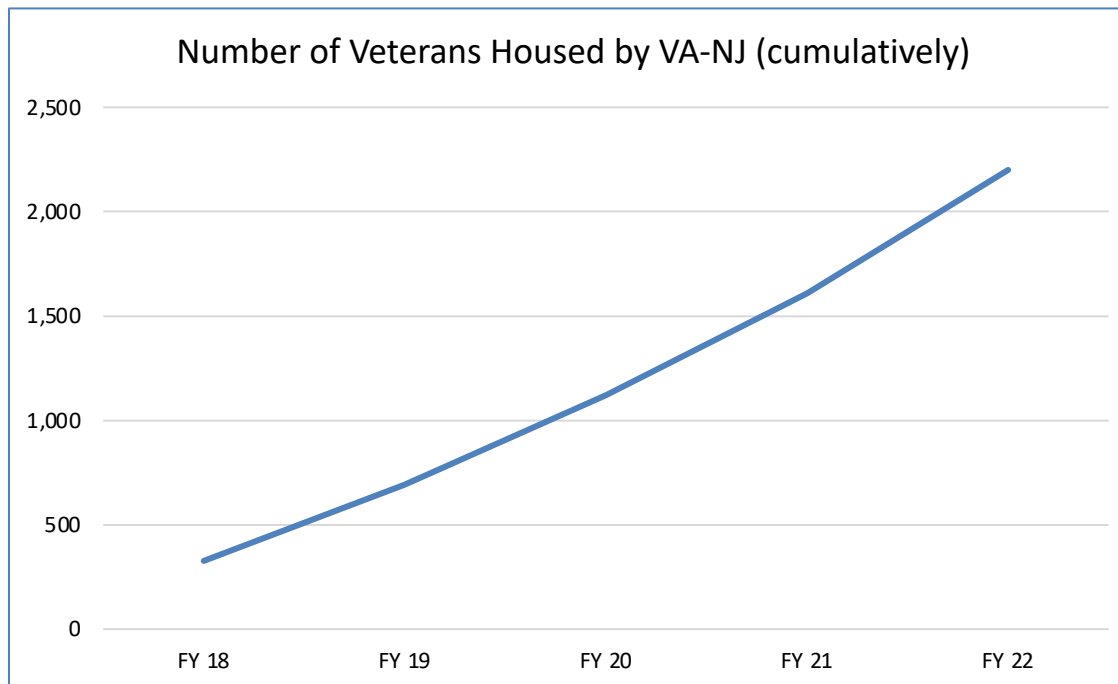
- Outreach Calls (most are from “at risk” veterans).
 - Averaging 108 calls per month (top 20% in the country)
 - But calls have increased from 70 in October to 125 last month (up 62%).
 - Prior to the pandemic, we were in the top 12%.
 - So, the number of calls in other states rose even higher.





Number of Homeless Veterans Served by VA-NJ

- Number placed in Permanent Housing
 - 2,200 Veterans have been housed by VA-NJ in the past 5 years (averaging 440 Veterans per year).





WHO ARE THESE VETERANS

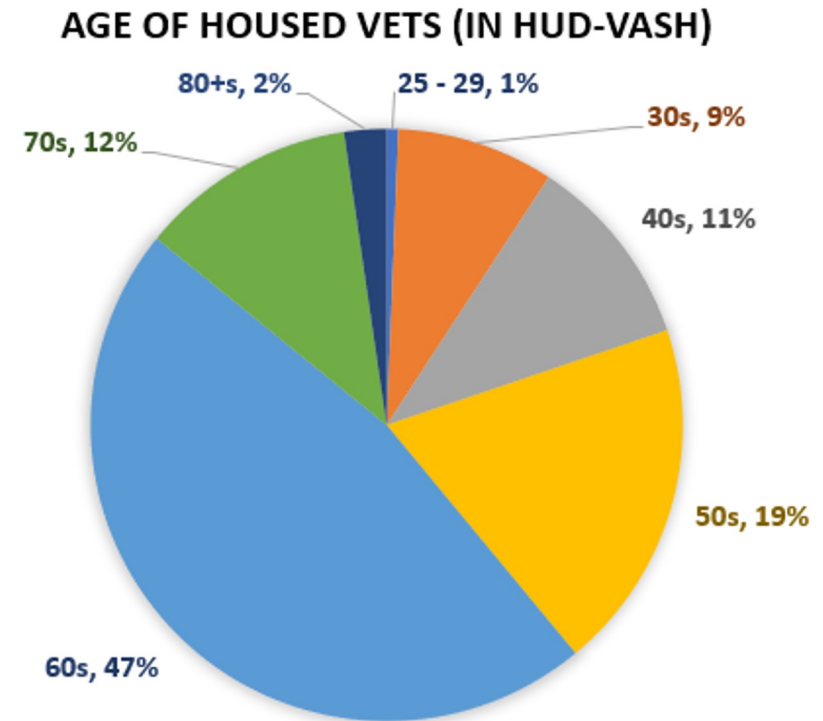
Mostly Men (86% male)

- 14% are women (but only 10% of Veterans are women).

Mostly Single Veterans, without children (also 86%).

Older than You May Think

- Over 60% are over 60 yrs. old.
- Only 10% are under 40.





WHO ARE THESE VETERANS

Disproportionately African American (from PIT)

- 50% of all homeless people in NJ are African Americans vs. only 15% of the population of New Jersey.
- 56% of Homeless Veterans in NJ are African American vs. only 12% of all Veterans in New Jersey.

But the VA is Reaching these Veterans

- The number served closely matches the number of homeless African American Veterans in the PIT Count.
- 60% of the homeless Veterans served by the VA are African American, compared to 56% of the PIT Count.



WHO ARE THESE VETERANS

Prone to Significant Medical Problems

- They are at a much higher risk for hospitalization.
- 75% have a 2/3 chance of being hospitalized.

Mental Health

- 97% have a psychiatric diagnosis.
- 29% have a serious mental illness.

Substance Abuse

- 60% have an alcohol use disorder.
- 61% have a drug use disorder.

Lengthy Unemployment (average more than 3 years)



WHAT WE'RE DOING TO END HOMELESSNESS

Housing First Model

- Provide housing first, then offer services, as needed vs. requiring successful participation/completion of treatment before housing is offered.

Implementation of Housing 1st at the VA

- Shifting from a “Sequence of Care” to an “Array of Services”
Traditionally Veterans moved from Emergency Housing, to Residential Tx, Transitional Housing, and only then to Permanent Housing.
- Now we start where they are...
 - vs. everyone starts at the beginning.
- We get Veterans housed from every level of care
 - 46% are housed directly from emergency housing.



WHAT WE'RE DOING TO END HOMELESSNESS

1. **Outreach** (on the streets and into prisons and jails)
2. **Emergency Housing** (30 beds at Valor in Newark)
3. **Residential Treatment** (85 beds at the Dom at Lyons)
4. **Vocational Rehabilitation** (serving over 100 Veterans)
5. **Transitional Housing** (178 = 95 HVP, 75 VHN, 8 BC)
6. **Permanent Housing** (over 1,300 housing vouchers)



WHAT WE'RE DOING TO END HOMELESSNESS

HUD-VASH Housing Vouchers at VA-NJ

- Section 8 Voucher (Vet pays only 30% of their gross income)
- 34 VA Case Managers traveling into the community to meet with Veterans at their homes.
 - Searching for Housing
 - Securing Financial Assistance
 - Obtaining Furniture and Household Supplies
 - Connecting to Community Resources (food, utilities, transportation)
 - Facilitating Treatment (Medical & Behavioral Health)
 - Supporting Continuity of Housing



WHAT WE'RE DOING TO END HOMELESSNESS

Community Partnerships

- SSVF Providers (Supportive Services for Veteran Families)
 - Homeless Prevention (emergency funds)
 - Rapid Rehousing and Case Management
 - Healthcare Navigation and Legal Services
- HUD and Housing Authorities (for HUD-VASH)
- Continuums of Care (and their Veteran Subcommittees)
- Nonprofits and Veteran Service Organizations
- Housing Providers and Developers



HOW WE'RE DOING

Ending Homelessness

- “Functional Zero” means we can house every Veteran who becomes homeless during a particular year.
- We house over 440 Veterans per year and 2,200 in the past five years (in VA-NJ).
- We have excess capacity for emergency housing, residential treatment and transitional housing.

Occupancy Rates (average for FY 22)

- 69% Emergency Housing (but now at 93%)
- 62% Homeless Domiciliary
- 50% Transitional Housing



HOW WE'RE DOING

The Vast Majority of Veterans Maintain their Housing

- **Only 1%** of the 1,255 Veterans living in HUD-VASH **experienced a “negative exit”** in the past year (i.e., being evicted, leaving unhappy with the program, or leaving for an unknown reason).
- **HUD-VASH has been a tremendous success**, demonstrating that Housing 1st really works!



CHALLENGES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Eligibility for VA Services

- Expanding eligibility for Transitional Housing and HUD-VASH to include Veterans who don't qualify for VA healthcare (requiring more coordination of care).
- Increasing the income limits for SSVF, so we can help Veterans who would not have qualified in the past.

Limited Affordable Housing in New Jersey

- SSVF providing "Housing Navigators."
- Project-Based Vouchers for special populations (e.g., those who need assisted living).



CHALLENGES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Need for “Veteran-Friendly” Landlords to address Several Challenges:

- Criminal Backgrounds
- Poor Credit Histories
- History of Evictions

Additional Staff Allocated to the VA and SSVF

- Housing Navigators
- Substance Abuse Professionals
- Medical Staff (RNs and Nurse Practitioners)



CHALLENGES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Together, We Can House Every Homeless Veteran

- Building Connections: Among Service Providers and with Housing Developers and Providers.
- Sharing Creative Ideas and Resources
- Finding Homeless Veterans on the Streets and Getting them Housed
- Engaging them in Needed Services
- Collaborating in the Ongoing Care of these Veterans



VA-NJ CONTACT INFORMATION

- VA Website: www.va.gov/homeless
- National Call Center: 877-4AID-VET or 877-424-3838
- Homeless Domiciliary (908) 647-0180, ext 21-4217
- HUD-VASH (908) 647-0180, ext 21-6642 or 21-6654
- Vic Carlson, Psy.D. Chief of Homeless Services
victor.carlson@va.gov (908) 647-0180, ext 21-4166



SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES

SSVF Provider	NJ Counties Covered	Contact Number
Catholic Charities Dioceses of Camden	Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem	(856) 691-1841
Catholic Family and Community Services	Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Union	(855) 767-8387
Community Hope	Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union, Ocean, Burlington and Warren	(855) 483-8466
Soldier On	Mercer, Burlington, Middlesex, Ocean, Monmouth, Bergen, Hudson, Essex, and Somerset	(866) 406-8449
Veterans Multi-Service Center	Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cumberland, Gloucester, Cape May and Salem	(215) 923-2600



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VHA - BIG PICTURE & GOOD NEWS

- Since 2008, more than 107,000 HUD-VASH vouchers have been allocated. Currently, a little over 80,000 of these vouchers are under lease
- SSVF budget of \$731 Million in FY 23- 261 grantees to promote rapid rehousing and support prevention efforts
- Over 400 Transitional housing grants - 12,000 beds and an annual budget of \$270 million
- Since 2010, more than 940,000 Veterans and their family members have been permanently housed, rapidly rehoused, or prevented from falling into homelessness

VHA - GOOD NEWS (CONT'D)...

- Significant progress has been made to prevent and end Veteran homelessness. The number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in the United States has declined by nearly half since 2010.
- Currently, [83 communities and 3 states](#) have announced that they ended veteran homelessness (meaning that systems can ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time). Nationally, veteran homelessness decreased 47 percent since the point at which it peaked in 2009.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Still more than 30,000 Veterans who are homeless and unsheltered rates are climbing
- More than 17,00 HUD VASH vouchers not being utilized
- Inflation, unemployment rates, COVID lack of MH resources all impacting progress
- For Veterans housed by VA Homeless programs, nearly 13% return to homelessness within 2 years.
- 75% of all homeless Veterans had underlying health conditions that put them at high risk for COVID-19. For Veterans in congregate settings, the risk of infection was increased further due to the nature of disease transmission in shared living environments.
- The housing affordability crisis has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic along with increases in unemployment. VAMCs report a lack of affordable housing stock in many communities and limited financial resources to provide landlord incentives as the largest impact on securing and sustaining housing for Veterans.

NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES UNDERSERVED, MARGINALIZED & AT-RISK VETERANS

Homelessness - Contributing Factors

- Substance use & mental illness.
- Poverty & inflation -Lack of income or low income.
- Lack of social support.
- Aging and access to medical complications
- Lack of affordable housing
- Social determinates impact housing access and stability



TRENDS IN HOMELESSNESS

AHAR and VA show increased rates of aging veterans falling into homelessness

Program	Over 55	Uniques	%
SSVF	15,898	29,818	53%
HUD-VASH	47,783	68,870	69%

RENTAL RATE INCREASES



New Jersey (NJ) has the 6th highest rent in the country out of 56 states and territories. The Fair Market Rent in New Jersey is **\$1,407** for a 2-bedroom apartment in [Atlantic City-Hammonton, NJ MSA](#).

[National Rent Index](#) that rents, on a national scale, hit an all-time high in May, with one-bedroom apartments up 12.8% year over year and two-bedroom apartments up 13.9% year over year.



More housing inventory would help offset the existing supply-demand imbalance in the market, and experts point to supply as a must-have to help housing affordability.

SUMMARY

- Need for more affordable housing - Project and Tenant based
- You don't end homelessness without housing and services to maintain housing
- Housing provides a stable launchpad from which people can get and keep a job, address healthcare and nutrition needs, and find purposeful roles in the community
- Better align homeless Veterans to VA services beyond Homeless Program and Mental Health
- Promote social connectedness and community inclusion

SUMMARY

- **Housing is healthcare** and we must address social determinates and implement more robust strategies to prevent while we also improve health outcomes
- To end homelessness, a **community-wide coordinated approach** to delivering services, housing, and programs is needed. Need private sector support and input
- Partnership and innovations are needed to **expand housing stock** and ensure access to healthcare which is essential to sustainment
- VA and community (developers) and providers need to **think out of the box** to meet the changing challenges and contributing factors to homelessness
- Housing a Veteran through VA programs means guaranteed income and support from VA...

More importantly, it means changing—and possibly saving—a life.



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Hoboken, NJ

- Post 104 Sandy Devastation
- Phase 1: New Post + 6 Veterans Units
- SNTF Funding
- Designed for future expansion



Post 104 - BEFORE



Phase 1 Grand Opening Event

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Hoboken, NJ

- Phase 2: 18 Units
- Phase 2: Event Space / Post Expan.
- City Land Donation
- Awaiting final funding commitment



Consultant: Monarch Housing / Architect: Kitchen & Associates

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South Amboy, NJ

- Underutilized Legion Property
- Local Support & Land Donation
- 10 units + New Post
- Offices for AL HQ
- Pending Approvals



Proposed Veterans Housing & Post

American Legion State-wide strategy to increase community based housing options for Veterans



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Camp Salute

Clayton, NJ

- 76 Total Units
- Large-Family Units
- 9% LIHTC funding
- Large Clubhouse for Veterans Services



Developer: Conifer / Architect: Kitchen & Associates / Services: People for People

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Dover (Morris), NJ

- 70 Total Units
- 50% Veterans Preference
- 9% LIHTC funding
- Transit-Oriented Location



Developer: Penrose LLC / Architect: Kitchen & Associates

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Warner Robins, GA

- 180 Total Units
- Veterans Preference – All Units
- 9% LIHTC funding
- Adjacent to Warner Robins AFB & VA Vocational Training Center



Developer: Pennrose LLC / Architect: Kitchen & Associates

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Q&A

Thank you for attending the panel!

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