Hunterdon County Homeless Assessment Report

2013

I. Introduction

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Interim rules. These interim regulations require a high level of planning and coordination among all Continuums of Care (CoCs) throughout the Country. As with any planning process, data analysis of the needs and outcomes of the current system is essential to facilitate meaningful planning.

In order to assist the Continuums of Care throughout New Jersey with this data analysis, this report uses information from the New Jersey Homeless Information System (HMIS) to provide a snapshot of the characteristics of homeless households in Hunterdon County. This report can serve as the foundation of a more in depth review of the population and its needs. Communities in New Jersey are well positioned to move towards data driven planning with the wealth of information available through HMIS.

II. Data Source

This Homeless Assessment Report for Hunterdon County analyzed data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administered by New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA), the HMIS Lead Agency. In New Jersey, NJHMFA utilized software developed by Foothold Technology as the primary HMIS system for the state. The projects included in this report were all Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing and Safe Haven projects (if available in the community) that were classified as "Homeless Only".

The Homeless Assessment Report is based on information about unduplicated homeless families and individuals who used available emergency shelter, transitional housing and safe haven projects during the yearlong reporting period January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013, as reported in HMIS.

For purposes of this report, families included any persons that presented together at the HMIS participating project and would choose to be permanently housed together if that was an option. This can include, households with adults and children under the age of 18, households made of all adults, or unaccompanied youth (under age 18) that present together.
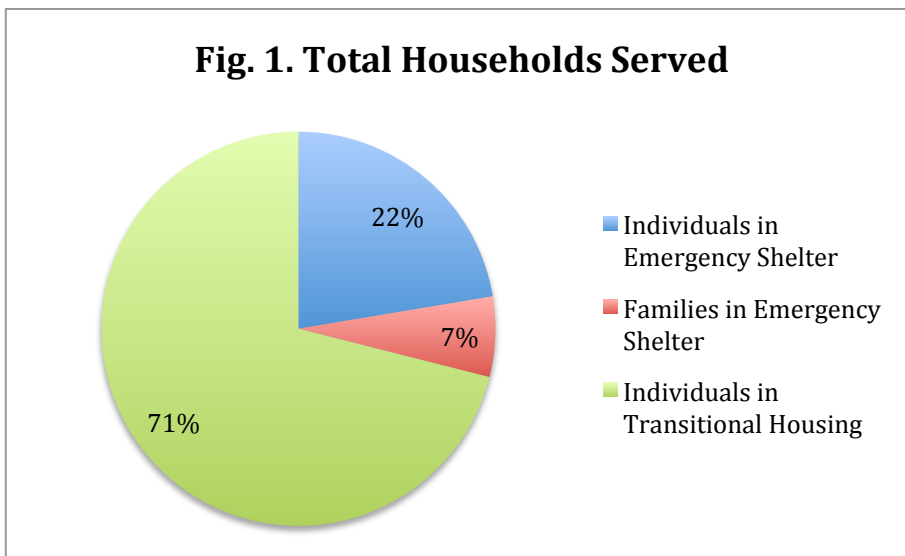
III. Findings for Total Population Served

Key Findings:
- A total of 228 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelters and transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013 period
- There were 32 households identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period
- 78% of all adults served either as individuals or as part of a family identified having a disabling condition
- 45% of the total population served was over the age of 50
- 38% of households moved on to permanent destinations after discharge

Total Homeless Population. A total of 228 households composed of 254 persons were housed in Hunterdon County HMIS participating emergency shelters or transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013 reporting period. Out of the households served in 2013, the large majority, 93% (213) were individuals, while the remaining 7% (15 households) were f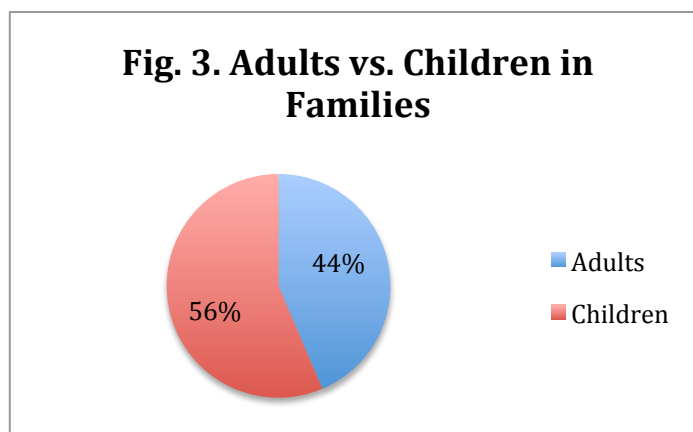amilies. As shown in Figure 1, the most served population was individuals in transitional housing, which made up 71% of the total population served. The 254 persons served throughout Hunterdon County HMIS projects made up 1% of New Jersey's total homeless population served in HMIS projects in 2013.
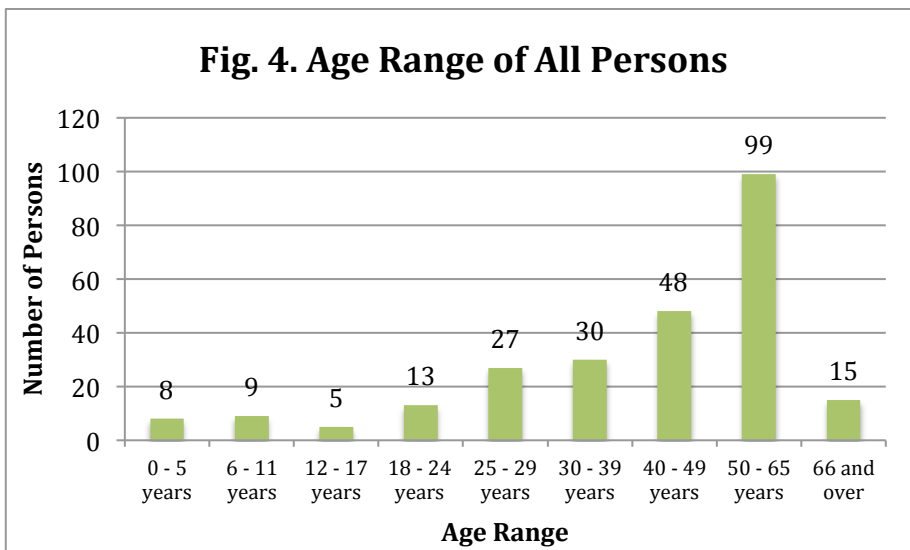
Fig. 1. Total Households Served

- 22% Individuals in Emergency Shelter
- 7% Families in Emergency Shelter
- 71% Individuals in Transitional Housing

Figure 2. Total Persons Served		
	Hunterdon County	**New Jersey**
Total Persons Served	254	23,949
Emergency Shelter	92	19,208
Individuals	51	12,639
Families	41	6,569
Transitional Housing	162	4,455
Individuals	162	2,176
Families	0	2,279

Family Composition. Of the 15 family households served throughout Hunterdon County in 2013, 14 (93%) were households with adults and children under 18, the remaining household was an adult only household. As shown in Figure 3, children represented 56% of the persons included in adult and children families. The average size of a homeless family in 2013 was 3 and the average age of a child served was 8 years old.

Fig. 3. Adults vs. Children in Families

- 44% Adults
- 56% Children

Demographics. Of the total homeless population that was served in Hunterdon County during 2013, the largest percent, 39%, of persons were between the ages of 50 and 65. As Figure 4 shows, the next highest age range served was persons between 40 and 49 (19%), showing that 64% of the population served during 2013 was over the age of 40.

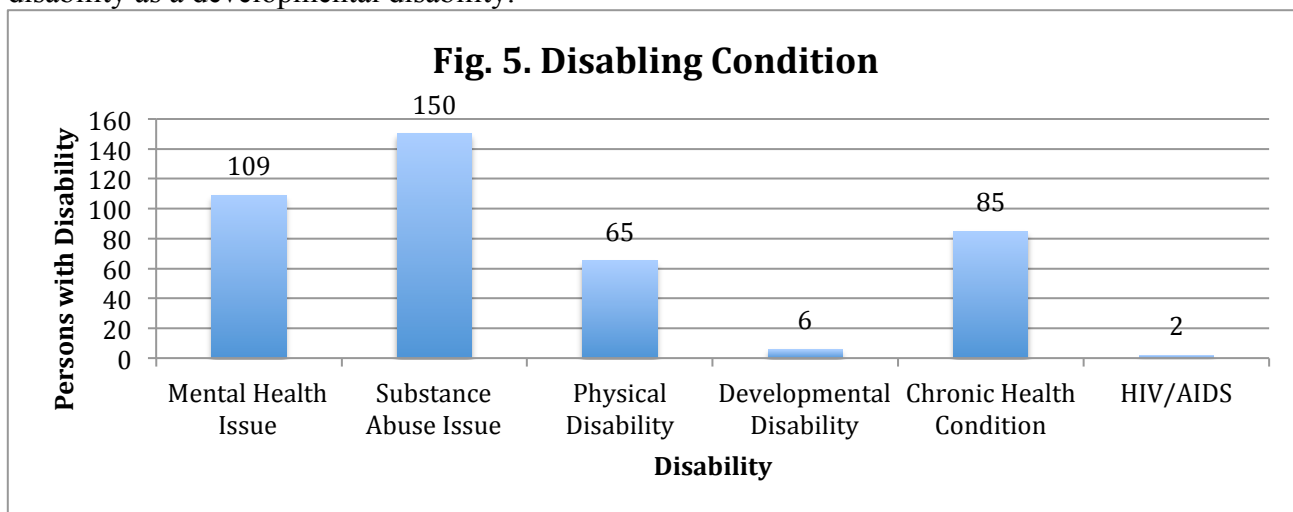**Fig. 4. Age Range of All Persons**

Similar to the 2012 numbers, more than half (70%) of the homeless persons served in Hunterdon County HMIS participating projects were male, with women representing 30% of the population.

In addition, 61% of the homeless persons served during 2013 identified their race as White, making that the largest racial subgroup. The next largest was Black or African American (32%), followed by Multi-Racial with 3%. With regards to ethnicity, only 7% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.
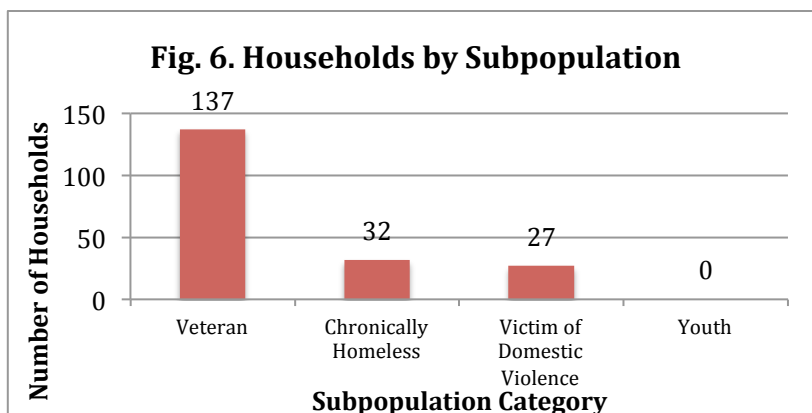
Disabling Conditions. Among all persons served throughout Hunterdon County's HMIS emergency shelter and transitional housing projects, 72% identified having a disabling condition, this number includes 78% of adults and 14% of children.

Among disabled adults, 83% reported substance abuse issues making this the most prevalent disability; representing 65% of the total adult homeless population. 60% of disabled adults also reported a mental health issue. The 3 disabled children served in Hunterdon County identified their disability as a developmental disability.

Fig. 5. Disabling Condition
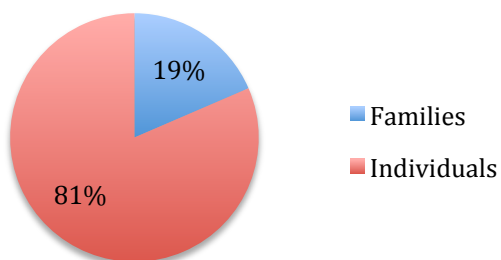
Subpopulation Characteristics.
In its plan, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has prioritized ending youth, veteran and chronic homelessness across the Country. In 2013, Hunterdon County served a total of 32 households that were identified as chronically homeless in emergency shelter or transitional housing projects. 59% of the chronic households served were individuals in transitional housing projects, the remaining 41% were individuals in emergency shelters.

Fig. 6. Households by Subpopulation

There were no youth only households (households without someone over the age of 18) served in Hunterdon County HMIS participating projects during 2013. .

As far as veterans served, Hunterdon County served a total of 137 veterans throughout 2013. All of the veterans served were individuals and only 7% were female. 65% of the veterans served were served in transitional housing projects. 88% of veterans reported having some kind of disability, with the most common disability reported being substance abuse issues (72%).
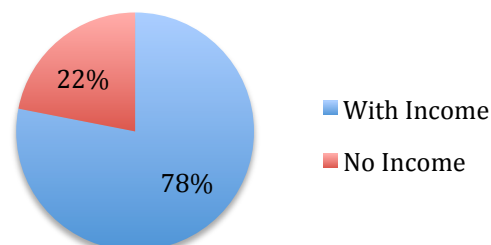
Fig. 7. Household Type Among Victims of Domestic Violence

In addition to the chronic, youth and veteran populations, there were 27 homeless households that reported having a victim of domestic violence. 81% of these households were individuals, while the remaining 5 were families. 70% reported that the last episode of domestic violence occurred over a year ago, while 4% reported it happening within the past 3 months. The majority of the domestic violence victims (70%) were served in transitional housing projects. As a note, while there are victims of domestic violence being served in HMIS participating agencies, due to federal regulations, Domestic Violence specific projects are not able to enter data into HMIS, so the number of victims served in those projects are not included in this report.
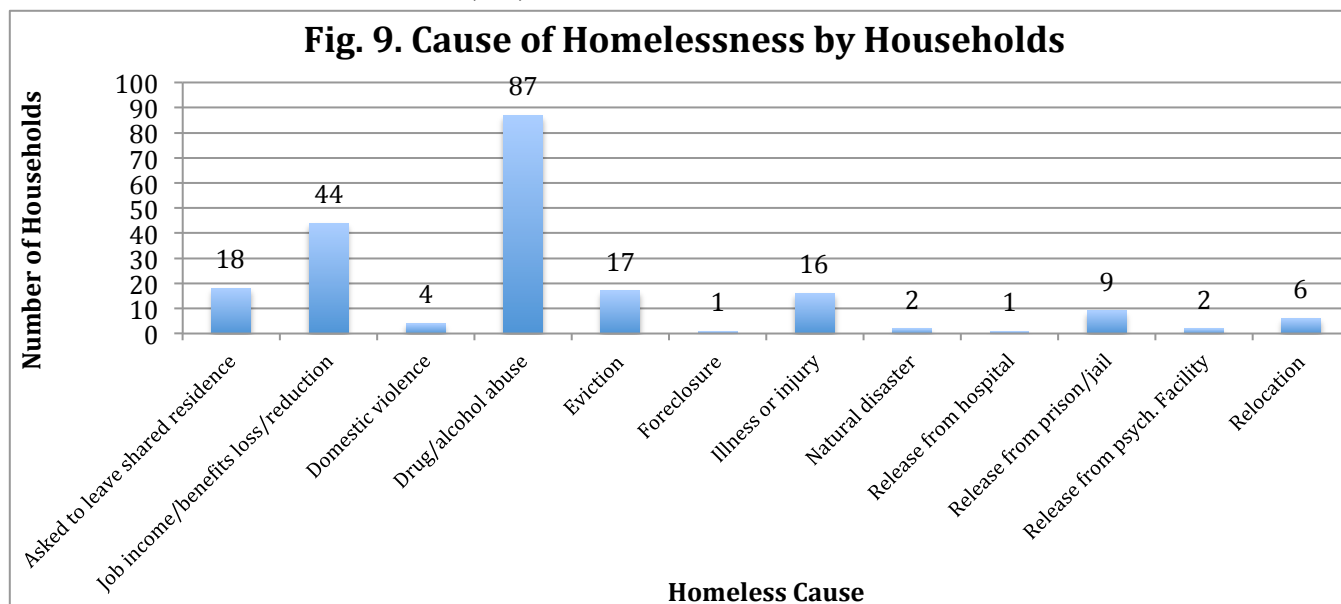
Income and Benefits. Among all homeless households served in emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during 2013, 22% had no source of income, while 33% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common sources of cash income, other than earned income, among households was SSDI and VA Service-Connected Disability with 15% each. The average monthly income for households in emergency shelter was $901, while it was $870 for households served in transitional housing projects.

Fig. 8. Percentage of Households with Income

While 22% of households had no source of income, 32% of households were not receiving some kind of non-cash benefit. VA Medical Services was the top reported non-cash benefit, which was reported by 47% of the households. Another 14% of households were connected to Food Stamps and Medicaid benefits.
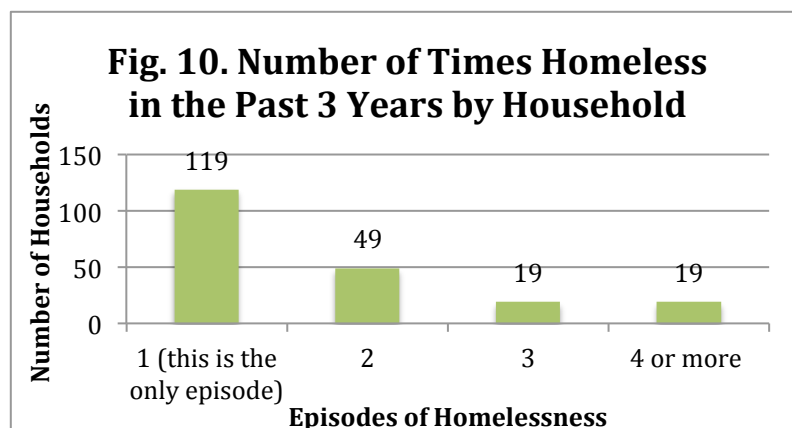
Cause of Homelessness and Residence Prior to Project Entry. When asked what the primary factor was that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to drug or alcohol abuse (38%) than any other cause. As Figure 9 shows, the next most common factors were job income or benefits loss/reduction (19%) followed by being asked to leave a shared residence (8%).

Fig. 9. Cause of Homelessness by Households

These causes of homelessness coincide with the common response for residence prior to project entry with 29% of households residing in a substance abuse treatment facility prior to project entry. The next most common response was staying with friends or family (19%) followed by emergency shelter (15%).
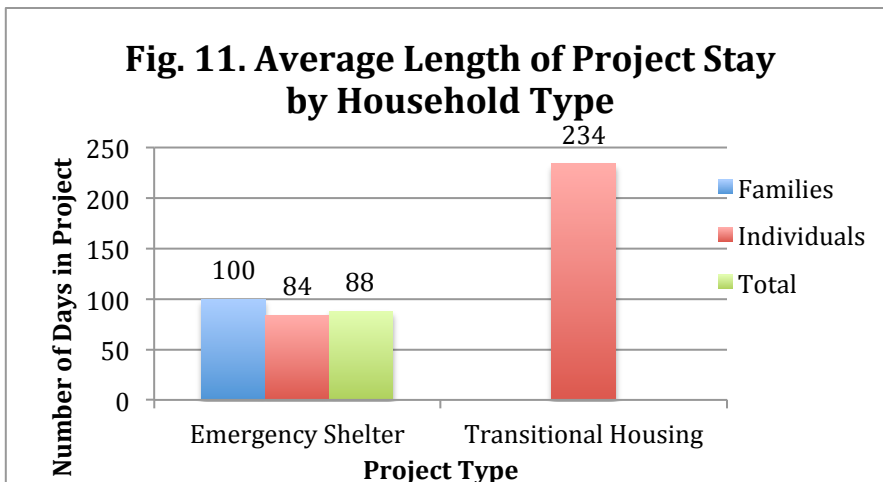
Length of Stay at Prior Residence and Episodes of Homelessness. 34% of households served during 2013 had resided in their last residence for more than 3 months but less than one year before entering the emergency shelter or transitional housing project. Another 25% were in their prior residence for one to three months, while only 5% were there one week or less. Similarly, only 8% of

Fig. 10. Number of Times Homeless in the Past 3 Years by Household

households experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years, while the majority of households (52%) were experiencing their first episode of homelessness, as seen in Figure 10.
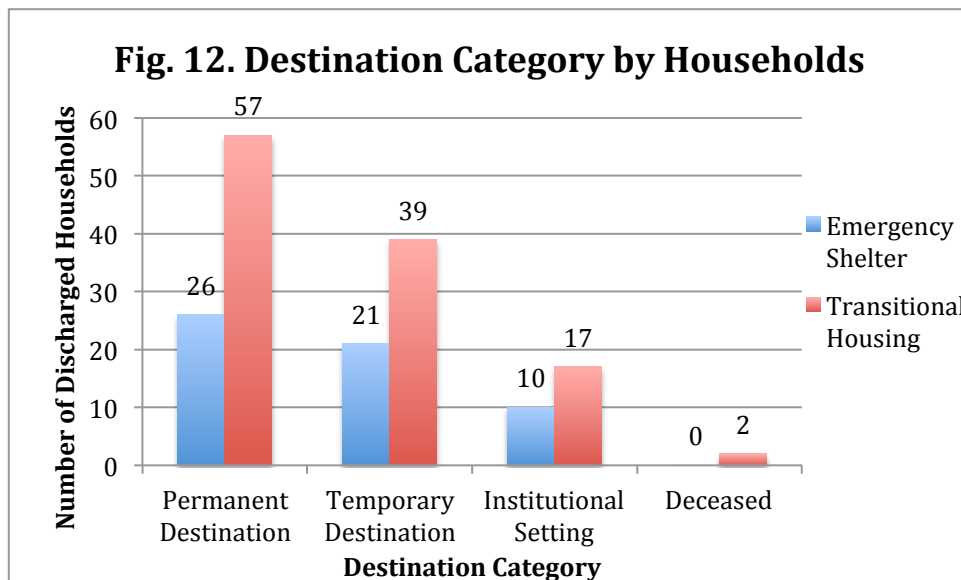
Average Length of Project Stay. When looking at total length of project stay for emergency shelter projects, families seemed to have longer stays than individuals in these projects. During their project stay it was found that families stayed an average of 15 days longer than individuals. When looking at transitional housing projects, the average length of stay for individuals was 234 days or a little over 7 months before being discharged.

Fig. 11. Average Length of Project Stay by Household Type

Reason and Destination at Discharge. A total of 218 households were discharged from emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the 2013 reporting period. 45% of these households were discharged from projects after completing the program while 18% were discharged from the project due to non-compliance.

Fig. 12. Destination Category by Households

38% of households discharged in 2013 moved on to permanent destinations upon discharge from the project. A permanent destination includes a unit owned or rented by a client, permanent housing project, or living with a family member or friend permanently. The most common permanent destination was rental by client with 31% of total households moving into a rental upon discharge. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. 40% of households moved on to a temporary destination at discharge, which could include an emergency shelter, hotel or motel, place not meant for habitation, staying with a family member or friend temporarily, safe haven, or transitional housing for homeless persons. The most common form of temporary housing as a destination was a transitional housing project, which involved 13% of the total households. An institutional destination, which was the destination of 12% of households, includes hospitals (psychiatric or non-psychiatric), a halfway house, jail or prison, foster care, long-term care facility or a substance abuse treatment facility. Psychiatric hospital was the most commonly recorded institutional destination, with 5% of the total households being discharged to psychiatric hospitals after project discharge.

Appendix A: HMIS Projects Included in Report

I. Emergency Shelter Projects

Agency	Project Name
Interfaith Hospitality	IHN-Homeless Shelter
NJDMAVA – Veteran's Haven North	NJDMAVA – Veteran's Haven North SHIELD – Emergency Shelter and Treatment

II. Transitional Housing Projects

Agency	Project Name
Anderson House	AH Transitional Housing Anderson House
	AH Transitional Housing Blue Hill
	AH Transitional Housing Jerica Hill
Freedom House	Grantham House
NJDMAVA – Veteran's Haven North	NJDMAVA – Veteran's Haven North