

DRAFT

CITY OF MERCED

"Gateway to Yosemite"



City of Merced Housing Division

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June 6, 2016

Honorable Robert A. McDonald
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

Julián Castro
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Matthew Doherty
Executive Director
U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

Dear Sirs:

The City of Merced is pleased to join nearly 1,000 other jurisdictions throughout the country who are committed to ending homelessness among veterans in their community as outlined in *Opening Doors*, the nation's first comprehensive federal strategy to prevent and end homelessness.

The Merced County 2016 Homeless Count and Survey revealed that there were 25 homeless veterans on January 28. The previous year, the homeless count noted that there were 88 homeless veterans which represents a 71.5% decrease.

The Housing Authority of the County of Merced (HACM) recently received 11 more U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program vouchers. This brings the total number of vouchers received by HACM to 66. In addition, the WestCare Foundation's San Joaquin Valley Veterans (SJVV) program administers the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program for homeless and at risk of becoming homeless veterans.

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The City of Merced has established a partnership with the Merced City and County Continuum of Care (CoC) which consists of a wide-range of public and private organizations, including veteran service providers, in order to finish the job of preventing and ending homelessness among local veterans. The partnership focuses on the “No More Homeless Vets in Merced Task Force (Task Force).”

The primary responsibility of the Task Force is to identify and permanently house all homeless veterans by the end of 2016 by implementing the best practices of Housing First and Rapid Rehousing through the HUD-VASH, SSVF, and other programs operated by the CoC. Any veterans encountered during the 2017 homeless count and survey will be immediately engaged so that they will be able to end their experience of homelessness.

The City of Merced and the CoC will continue to implement the best practices in order to rapidly rehouse any veterans who become homeless after the 2017 homeless count and survey. The goal will be to rehouse them within 30 days as encouraged by the VA, HUD, and ICH.

Thus, it is with great pleasure that I submit to you, on behalf of the City Council and our residents, our city’s commitment to end veteran homelessness in writing. Please know that the Mayor and Council will distribute a press release to the general public as noted and encouraged by the VA, HUD, and ICH within the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness web site. Should you or your staff have any questions or comments, please contact me at (209) 385-6834.

Sincerely,

Stan Thurston
Mayor, City of Merced

Cc: Steve S. Carrigan, City Manager
Joe Colletti, Urban Initiatives
Carol Bowman, Director United Way
Frank Quintero, Director of Economic Development
Mark Hamilton, Housing Program Supervisor