

## Number of San Bernardino County homeless vets drops

By Joe Nelson , The Sun

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Since January, San Bernardino County has cut its homeless veteran population by nearly 56 percent, from 401 counted in January to 177, according to the latest figures presented by those working with county officials and the community on the project.

“This past week we housed 16 veteran families. We are working diligently. We have every confidence we will be able to get this takedown number to zero by the end of the year,” said Karen Young-Lowe, CEO of LightHouse Social Service Centers in Colton, a nonprofit providing support and transitional housing programs to veterans and their families. She is also a member of the Homeless Veterans Community Planning Group, a working group of homeless service providers, including VA staff, and serves as a liaison for that group to the Advisory Board on Ending Homelessness for Veterans, a community board chaired by county CEO Greg Devereaux.

In July, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved implementing a strategy to secure permanent housing for the county’s 401 homeless veterans. It entailed the formation of a strategy group composed of nine local agencies or county offices including the county CEO, Sheriff’s Department, Department of Behavioral Health and Housing Authority.

The county has been working with the Homeless Veterans Community Planning Group to find more housing navigators to work directly with landlords in helping find permanent housing for homeless veterans and walking them through the procedures involved. Two additional full-time housing navigators have been buttoned down to assist in those efforts through January, bringing the total number of housing navigators to five, said Philip Mangano, president and CEO of the American Round Table to Abolish Homelessness.

“These two were brought on just to ramp up the resources,” said Mangano, who is also the former executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness under former President George W. Bush.

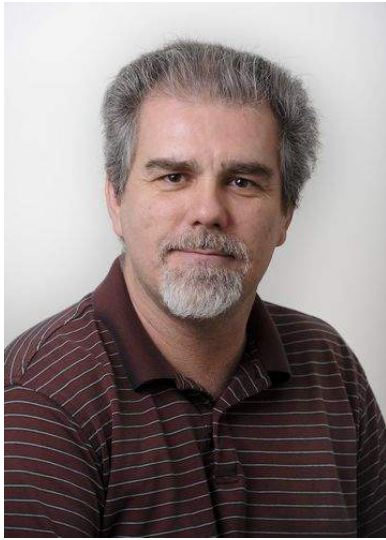
In addition, a proposal could go to the Board of Supervisors on Aug. 20 recommending a motel voucher program for homeless veterans to provide them temporary housing while they await placement into permanent housing, Young-Lowe said.

The Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino(CQ) is also providing space at one of its apartment complexes in Barstow for homeless veterans, and 30 beds should be ready there by the end of the month or early November, Young-Lowe said.

The Advisory Board on Ending Homelessness for Veterans meets again on Thursday at the County Government Center in San Bernardino.

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