Creating Housing First Culture in a Veteran-Specific Program

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Ending Homelessness

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Agenda

Agency Overview

Veteran Homelessness

Housing Realities

Veteran-Funded Services

Cultural Tensions

Successes & Challenges

Questions

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Learning Objectives:

- Steps to develop a veteran's program in a HF non-profit
- How to maximize support by integrating veteran-specific programming & traditional wrap-around services
- Using existing supports within an agency
- Navigating two worlds: Nonprofit & Veteran Agencies
- Challenges & strategies

St. Stephen's Human Services

History

Programs

Principles

St. Stephen's Human Services

History:

1960s: Members of St. Stephen's Church began offering programs for the poor and homeless.

Early 1980s: The church, along with ten other Minneapolis churches, opened shelters. Believed to be temporary measures to a temporary crisis.

1991: St. Stephen's launched Alliance Housing, a nonprofit affordable housing developer.

2002: St. Stephen's Human Services obtained nonprofit status independent of the church.

Today: We remain an independent nonprofit agency grounded in the social justice teachings on which we were founded.

St. Stephen's Human Services

We provide emergency assistance, shelter, housing, and advocacy focused on systems change.

Serving: Single Adults, Families, Veterans

Emergency Services: Street Outreach, 2 Shelters

Housing Services: Housing First Programs, Rapid Re-housing, Homeless Prevention

Education & Advocacy: A Day in the Life, zAmya Theater Project

Supportive Services for Veteran Families: Outreach & Engagement, Prevention, Rapid Re-housing

St. Stephen's
Our Mission: Ending homelessness.

Our Vision:

We envision a community in which housing instability is rare, brief and non-recurring, ending homelessness as we know it.

Our Values:

Equity: Housing is a basic human right.

Dignity: Every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

Integrity: We expect honesty and accountability of ourselves and others.

Self-Determination: Each person has the ability to know and realize their own success.

Mutual Responsibility: Investing in our neighbors results in a healthy community for all.

Guiding Methodology:

Meet people where they are at without judgment

via

Harm Reduction

Housing First

Harm Reduction Principles

- Decision to use is accepted

- Individual is treated with dignity & has a voice

- Individual expected to take responsibility for their own behavior

- Reducing harm, not consumption

- No pre-defined outcomes

Source: National Health Care for the Homeless Council Fact Sheet

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Housing First:

People experiencing homelessness are offered permanent housing with few to no treatment preconditions, behavioral contingencies, or barriers.
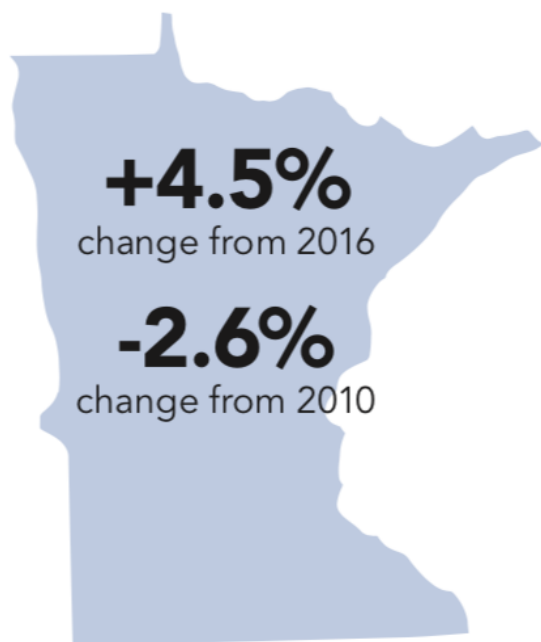
Housing First:

- Immediate access to housing
  - Funds to do so available
- House most vulnerable first
- Separation of housing & services
- Trauma-informed care
- Client choice & client driven
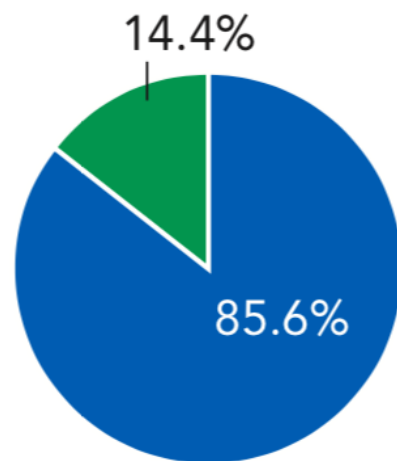- Fidelity to HF standards

Homelessness in Minnesota

MINNESOTA

+4.5%
change from 2016

-2.6%
change from 2010

Total Homeless, 2017
7,668

14 in every **10,000** people were experiencing homelessness

14.4%

85.6%

n Unsheltered (1,108)
n Sheltered (6,560)

Estimates of Homelessness

3,899 individuals

3,769 people in families with children

889 unaccompanied homeless youth

281 veterans

813 chronically homeless individuals

Veteran Homelessness

"In 1887, the Sawtelle Veterans Home was constructed to care for disabled veterans, and housed more than a thousand homeless veterans."

Veteran's Homeless

NATIONWIDE - HOW MANY VETERANS EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS?

▶ 40,056 veterans (approximately 9% of all homeless adults)

▶ Most were without children; only 2% (955) were homeless as part of a family

▶ 91% were men - 9% (3,571 veterans) were women

Source: 2017 PIT Estimates of Homelessness in the U.S.

Veteran Homelessness in Minnesota

➢ 281 Veteran's Experiencing Homelessness Statewide

➢ 110 Homeless Veterans in Minneapolis (Hennepin County) CoC

  ➢ 3 were unsheltered

Sources: HUD 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (12/17)

Veteran Homelessness - Minnesota

- ➢ Average age is 51.

  - ➢ A decade older than average age of overall homeless adult population.

  - ➢ Chronic homelessness: 6 out of 10 homeless Veterans without stable housing for a year or longer.

  - ➢ 1 out of 3 homeless at least 3 years.

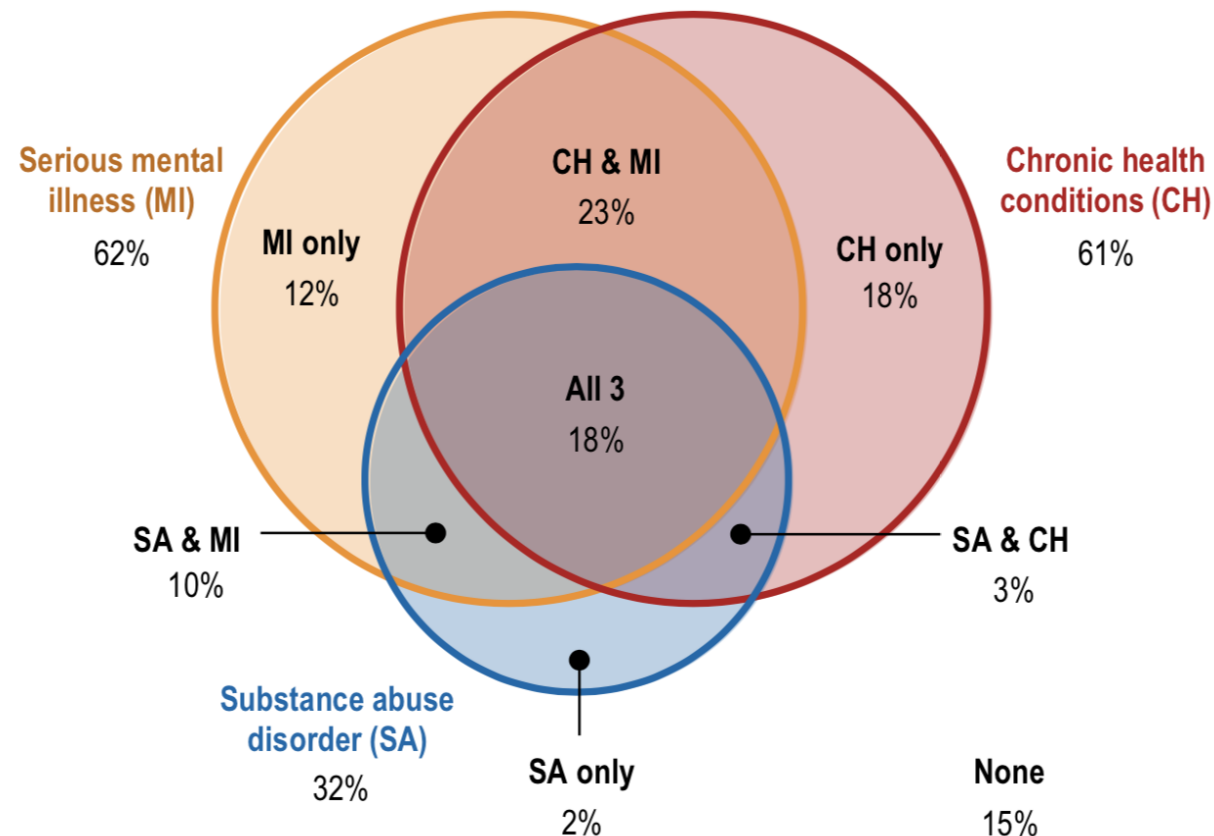Source: 2015 Wilder Research Statewide Survey of People Experiencing Homelessness

Increased Barriers

- "Combat exposure has been found to increase risk for PTSD in veterans, which, in turn, is thought to increase risk for homelessness." (Carlson et al., 2013)

- 30% of homeless Veterans reported they served in a combat zone (Wilder Study)

- 45% reported a service-related health problem (45% of these reported a service-related mental health problem) (Wilder Study)

Incidence & co-occurrence of health conditions among Minnesota homeless Veterans

Proportion with no barriers: 15%
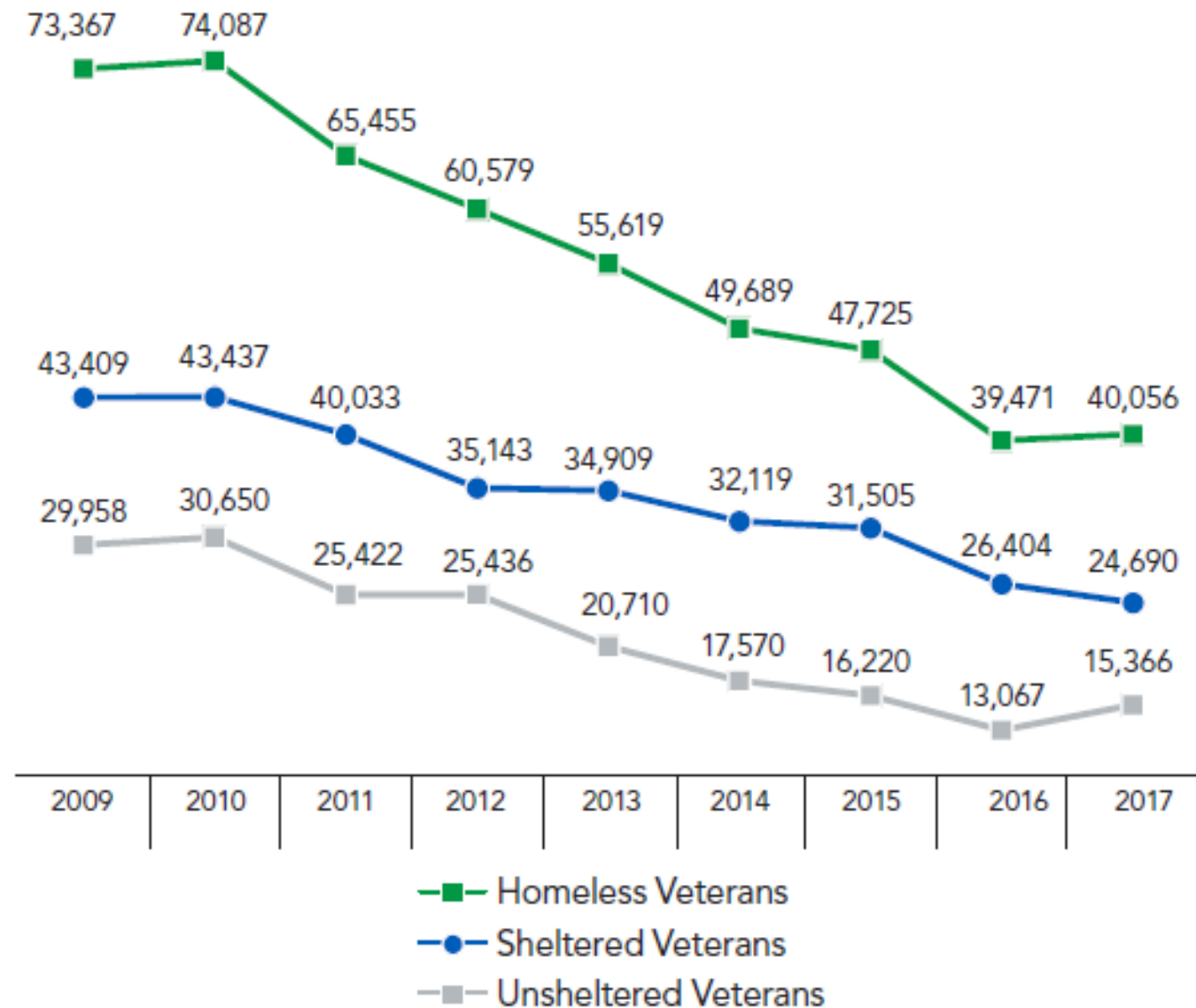Proportion with multiple barriers: 53%

Serious mental illness (MI)
62%

MI only
12%

CH & MI
23%

Chronic health conditions (CH)
61%

CH only
18%

All 3
18%

SA & MI
10%

SA & CH
3%

Substance abuse disorder (SA)
32%

SA only
2%

None
15%

Nationwide trends generally downward

EXHIBIT 5.1: **PIT Estimates of Homeless Veterans** By Sheltered Status, 2009–2017

Homeless Veterans: 73,367 74,087 65,455 60,579 55,619 49,689 47,725 39,471 40,056

Sheltered Veterans: 43,409 43,437 40,033 35,143 34,909 32,119 31,505 26,404 24,690

Unsheltered Veterans: 29,958 30,650 25,422 25,436 20,710 17,570 16,220 13,067 15,366

2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017

—■— Homeless Veterans
—●— Sheltered Veterans
—■— Unsheltered Veterans

Downward Trends in Minnesota:

Veteran homelessness has decreased by 56% since 2010, compared with a 46% reduction across the country.

"Since the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs launched the Minnesota Homeless Veteran Registry in 2014, it has housed 1,218 homeless veterans – 613 in Hennepin County. Minneapolis* and Hennepin County have the highest concentration of homeless veterans in the state."

*Numbers of homeless veterans in Minneapolis are not tracked, but it is estimated that most of the homeless veterans in Hennepin County are in Minneapolis

But this just in…

Point in Time Count January 2018:
-24 Unsheltered Veterans in CoC
-10 Chronically Homeless Veterans

2017: 3 Unsheltered (2 Chronic)

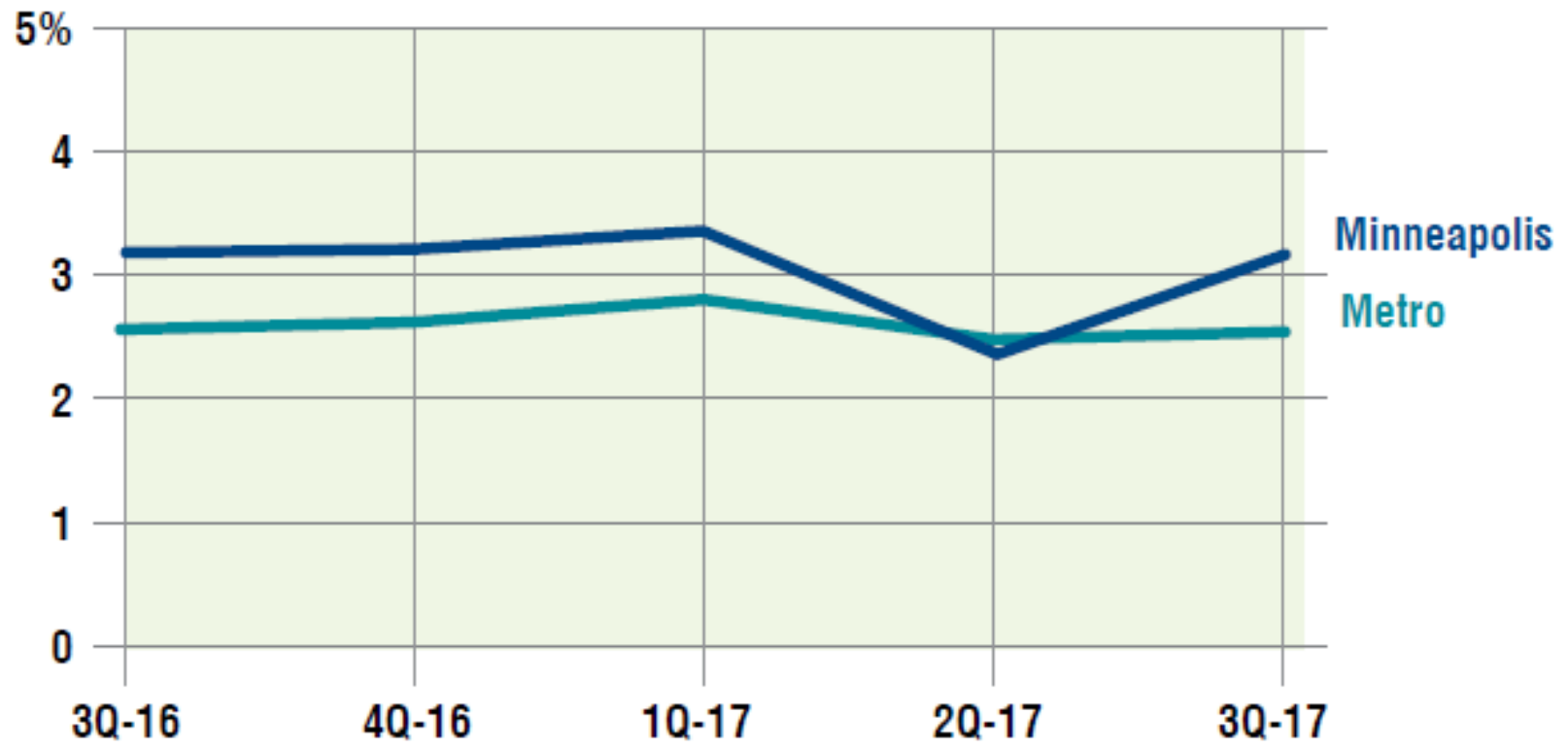2016: 11 Unsheltered

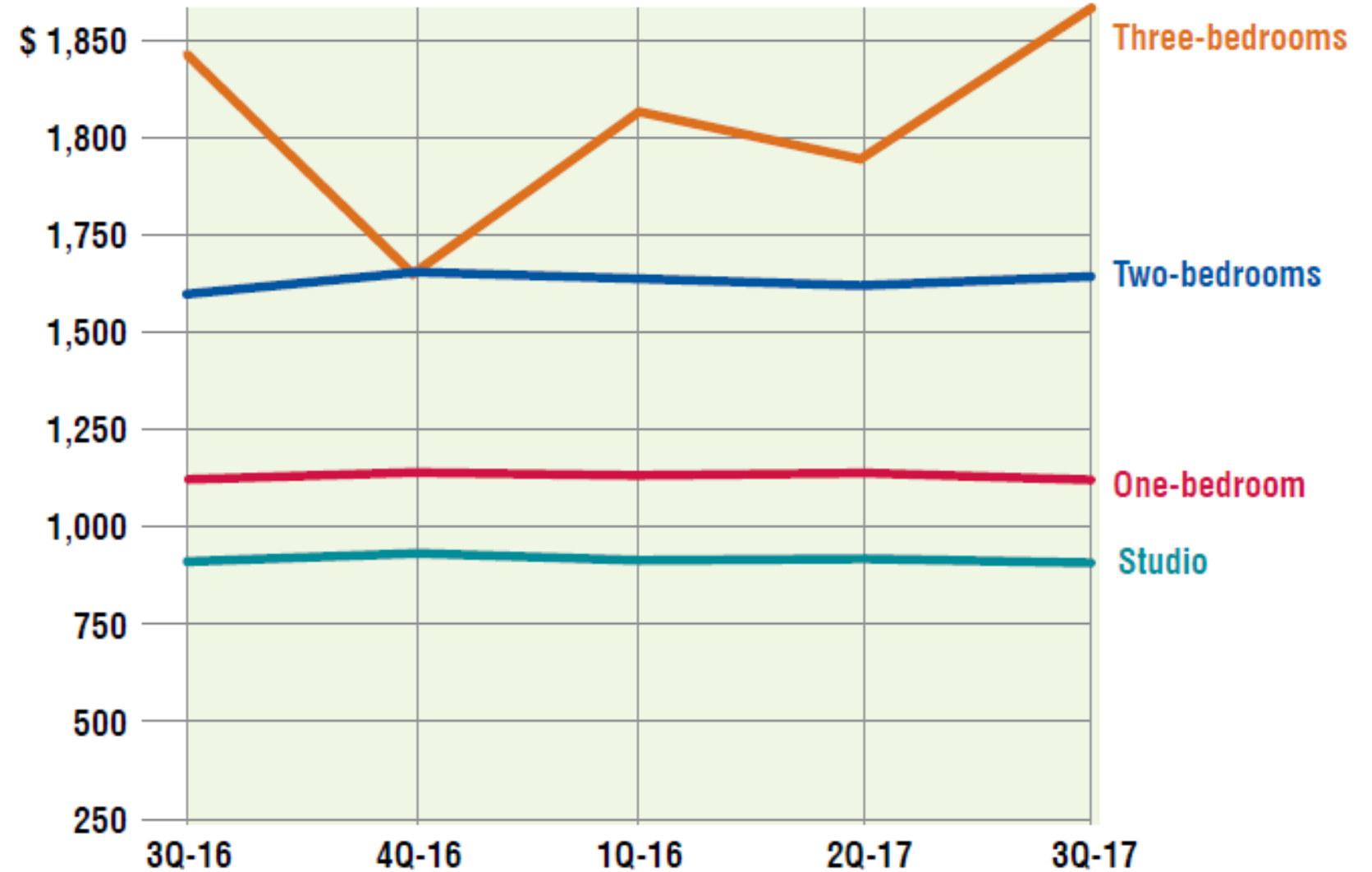# Reality check: Housing

Figure 10: RENTAL VACANCY RATES
in percent

Source: GVA Marquette Advisors Reports,
based on a sample survey of market-rate rental properties
10 units and more (subsidized and small multifamily rentals are excluded.)

Low Vacancy Rate

Figure 15: **AVERAGE UNIT MONTHLY RENT** – Minneapolis

in curren dollars by apartment type

Minneapolis Trends: A Quarterly Overview of Socioeconomic & Housing Trends in Minneapolis 3rd Qtr. 2017
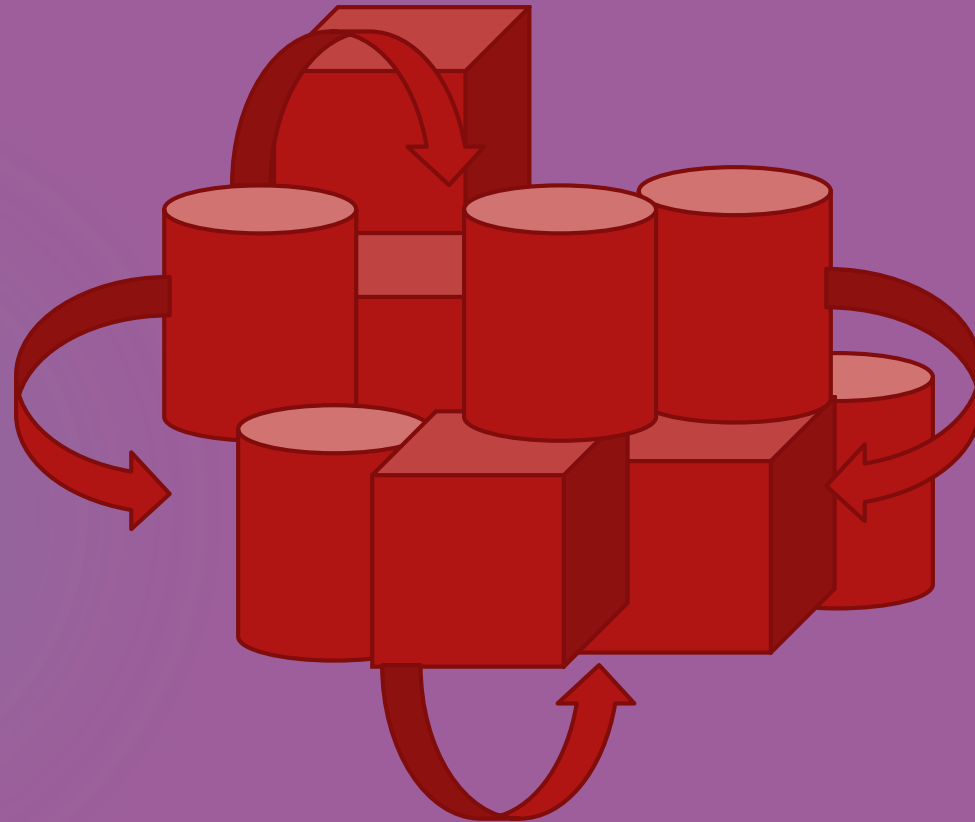
Rental Market

"Minnesota ranks No. 22 in the nation for the most expensive place to rent, making it one of the priciest states in the Midwest..."
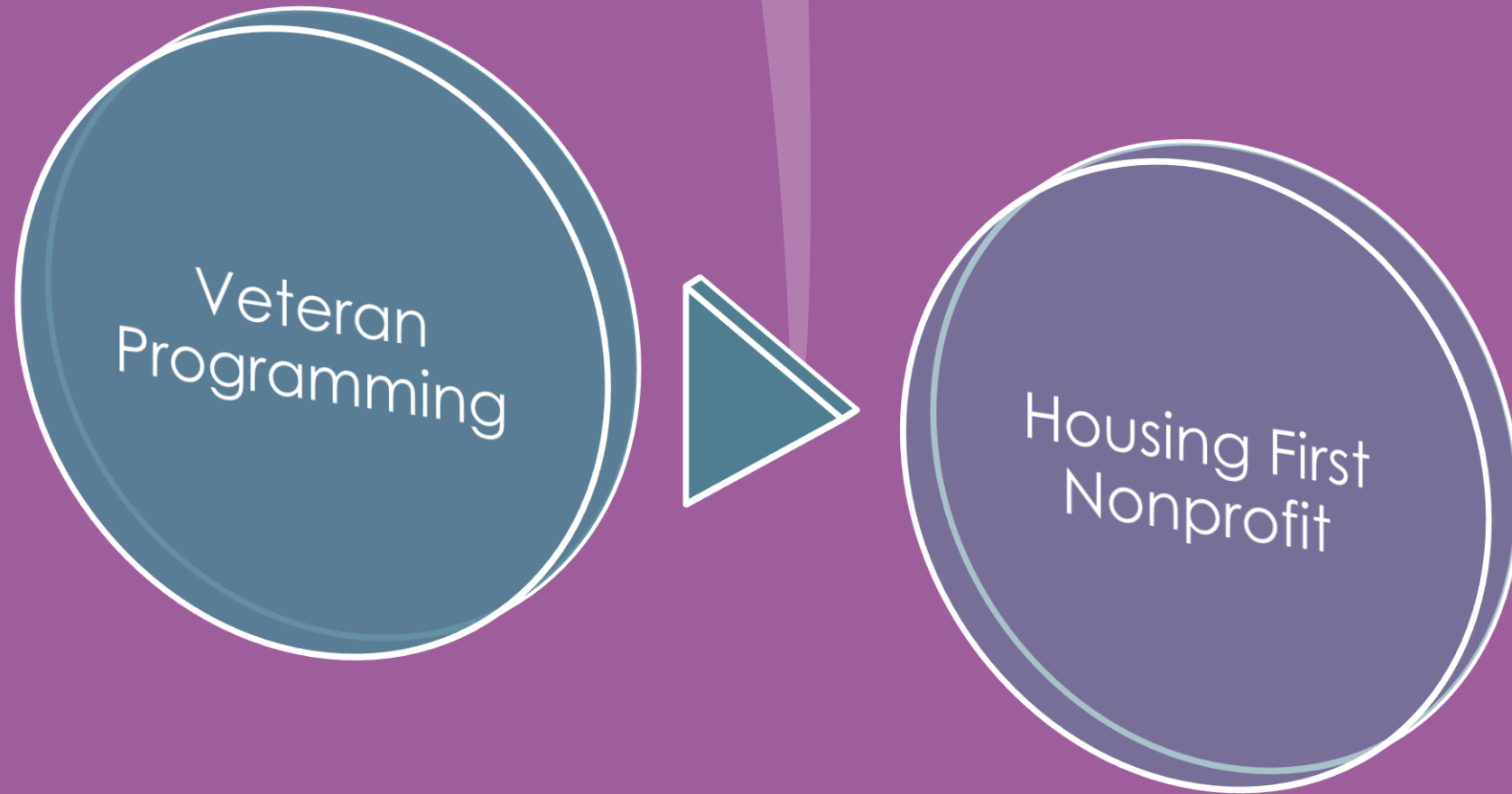
"... people who earn the state minimum wage of $9 per hour can't afford a fair-market value apartment in any Minnesota county..."

Source: Bitters, J., 2016

Building a Program

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

Services Provided 2017:

- 253 Total Veterans served

- 54 Veterans in Rapid Rehousing
  - 76% obtained housing
  - 52 days: Average time to obtain housing
  - 73% housed in 90 days

- 37 Veterans assisted by Prevention Program

So who is a veteran?

-Common Understanding

-VA Definition

-State Definition

Agency Funding Stream

VA → SSVF → MACV → St. Stephens

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)

501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization assisting veterans for over 25 years.

MISSION: Ending Veteran homelessness in Minnesota

VISION: To provide assistance throughout Minnesota to *positively motivated veterans* and their families who are homeless or experiencing other life crises. MACV accomplishes its mission by providing services directly *or in collaboration with other service agencies.*

Structuring the Program: Supportive Services for Veteran Families

3 Program Elements

- ► Outreach & Engagement
- ► Prevention
- ► Rapid Re-housing

Structuring a Program:

Challenges:

Conflation of roles

No primary point of contact (Military structure)

Strategies:

Clearly-defined roles

Process clarity – clear handoffs

Management structure

Leveraging:
Wrap-Around Services & Supports

External Wrap-Around Services
Non-Veteran

❖ Bridging: Furniture & Homewares
❖ Health Care for the Homeless
❖ PCAs
❖ County Services (CADI, Front Door, DART)
❖ Community Clinics
❖ Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County
❖ Other nonprofits providing support services
❖ Domestic Violence Resources
❖ Chemical Health Providers
❖ Food Shelves

Veteran-Specific Services

▶ MACV Job Club

▶ SOAR Advocates

▶ LSS CORE (Luther Social Services Counseling & Case Management, Outreach, Referral, & Education)

▶ VA Partnerships

▶ Minneapolis VA Community Resource & Referral Center (CRRC)

Additional Veteran Services

► Local VFW Posts

► Minnesota Homeless Veteran Registry

   ► Parallel to Coordinated Entry System

Other Veteran Options

Grant & Per Diem Program (GPD): Time-Limited Transitional Housing with Permanent Housing as a primary outcome goal
- 3 Models: Bridge Housing, Service-Intensive Transitional Housing, Transition-in-Place

HUD-VASH: collaborative program - HUD housing vouchers with VA supportive services. Helps veterans & families find & sustain permanent housing.

Challenges & Tensions

Worldviews:

MACV & Surrounding Veteran Services

✓ Byzantine & Hierarchical Structures

✓ Staff with lengthy military backgrounds

Limited Tool Kit:

Rapid Re-housing often not best fit

Decrease in veteran homelessness = more high-barrier veterans

Changing Program Requirements

- VA Eligibility
- Discharge status (BCD)
- Subject to interpretation
- Who is the decision maker?

Funding Structure Challenges

▶ Program Contract Renewals

   ▶ = Program Instability

▶ Deposit & Monthly Rent Requests

   ▶ = Conflicts with Housing First

Strategies: Keeping Housing First – <u>First!</u>

- ▶ Veteran choice at the forefront

- ▶ Educate & advocate with MACV

- ▶ Contingency planning: alternative options if SSVF does not work

- ▶ Open channels of communication within agency team
  - ▶ Supervision & team meetings to discuss challenges
  - ▶ Discussing barriers

- ▶ ALWAYS using Housing First & Harm Reduction Lens
  - ▶ Push back from this perspective
  - ▶ Support client from this perspective

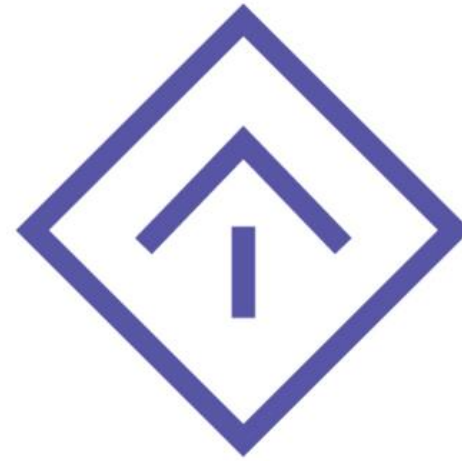ST. STePHEN'S
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Questions?

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