
A Study Of Increased Homelessness Within The Veteran Population

The issue of homelessness has over time formed a basis of national discussions. In fact, it has been regarded as highly controversial since the periods that the Napoleonic War took place (Literature review: UK veterans and homelessness. 2017). Currently, the media has been awash with reports of veterans that find themselves in dire situations of having not a roof above them. It is in particular to the wars that have taken place in Iraq and Afghanistan and have consequently brought about a comparatively renewed attention regarding the veterans' needs(Perl, 2015). Due to the rising numbers of the veteran population emanating from these wars, there is also an important concern that the homelessness amongst this population could further increase. Apart from the recent conflicts, other homeless veterans served in the Second World War, cold war, Panama and the military efforts against drug cultivation in South America. It is on this basis, therefore, that the following article will discuss homelessness in the veteran populations. It will mention the reasons that qualify it as a social problem, its elements and solutions and lastly the role of an MSW (master of social work) in addressing the problem.

Homelessness amongst veterans is a considerable social problem because the current United States society has witnessed their surging numbers in the recent past. In fact, by 2012, the population of the homeless veterans was believed to account for about eleven percent of the entire homeless populations in America. The social problem has been scaled to greater heights by the increasing numbers of the veterans returning home particularly from the Afghanistan and the Iraq war as already mentioned above. For instance, in 2010, research has shown that there were almost seventy-six thousand homeless veterans with most of them sleeping in transitional houses, streets, abandoned buildings and also emergency makeshifts. It is evident that the situations of the homeless veterans make them become a considerable social problem that needs address by the government.

Several elements comprise homelessness among the veterans. Wenzel et al., (1993) mention that a primary one is the fact that they do not possess any permanent form of housing in their control. It is as a result that they live in the places described above. Homeless veterans can be categorized into two categories namely street homeless and the chronically homeless. The first element i.e. the street homeless is the veterans who, in most instances, spend most of their times in the streets. The chronically homeless veterans, on the other hand, are those that were disabled during the conflicts and have consistently been homeless for periods stretching for more than a year. Besides, McGuire (2007) notes that a greater percentage of these veterans are males who hail from disadvantaged backgrounds. Another vital element of this social

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problem is that fifty-six percent of this population comprises African Americans or the Hispanic communities. It is in spite of the fact that these are the minority communities of the United States.

Ending homelessness amongst the veterans should be a priority for the United States government. The latter can attain this through the vital input of the Department of Veteran Affairs that has been tasked with their management. Some of the manners that can be used in addressing this problem encompass allocating federal investments based on the needs of the homeless veterans. The allocation through this criteria should also include resources which have the potential of assisting the veterans to become stably housed. Strategic planning, as well as, local leadership is also crucial in ending this social problem. Effective collaboration among various councils and nongovernmental organizations in the country can assist in abetting the challenge. (Ending Homelessness among Veterans: A Report by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2013)

There is also need to provide supportive housing that would otherwise create a permanent subsidization of rent payable by these veterans. It should be in particular to the chronically homeless ones i.e. those having disabilities. Lastly, rehabilitation programs can be provided to the homeless veterans using transitional assistance and complimentary treatment. These will immeasurable assist in the recovery of the veterans. (Gamache, Rosenheck, & Tessler, 2001)

Masters of Social Work (MSW) have pivotal roles to play in addressing the social problem of homelessness amongst the veterans. The first role would be to track the number of existing homeless veterans available in the US and the substantial progress that are consistently being made in the reduction of these figures. Through this, they can discern the necessary inputs required to be applied so that the homeless veterans are liberated. Lastly, since the social workers have been trained to tackle such social problems, they have a deeper comprehension of the requirements of the veterans which will make them comfortable in their subsequent lives.

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