Mayors Challenge Survey Responses

Prepared by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), Strategic Decision Support, Research and Evaluation Division

Purpose

A workgroup consisting of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services, Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation, and Texas Veterans Commission (called "the workgroup" within this appendix) worked together on one of the study requirements which required that the study provide information on the status of homeless Veterans in Texas.

To address this requirement, the workgroup gathered information from Texas cities that agreed to participate in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s Mayors Challenge 2015 as described in Appendix H.

Methodology

HHSC Strategic Decision Support aided the workgroup in designing a survey instrument to assess local efforts to end Veteran homelessness in Texas. The survey was sent to one contact person, generally a city government employee, in each of the eight Texas cities participating in the Challenge.[1] Participating cities include Austin, Crystal City, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Plano, San Antonio, and Waco. City government employees in each city were notified about the upcoming survey by phone and mail in early 2016. In late February 2016, each city was sent a link to complete the survey online.

This report presents the results of the Mayors Challenge survey. In total, seven of eight cities completed the survey.[2] The results below detail the state of Veteran services in each city, how each city has approached the Mayors Challenge, and how each city has fared in its efforts to achieve HUD-defined benchmarks.

[1] Of note, the HUD website lists 11 cities as participating in the Mayors Challenge. After contacting each city in preparation for the survey however, three cities indicated that they never undertook activities as part of the Mayors Challenge. The survey was sent to the remaining eight cities.

[2] Crystal City, TX did not complete the Mayors Challenge survey.

Findings

Cities Participating in Survey

City	Respondent	Respondent Phone	Respondent Email
San Antonio	Nancy Williams	210-207-5288	nancy.williams@sanantonio.gov
Houston	Marc Eichenbaum	832-393-0959	marc.eichenbaum@houstontx.gov
Fort Worth	Sonia M. Singleton	817-392-5774	sonia.singleton@fortworthtexas.gov
Austin	Niki Paul	512-571-3945	nikipaul@austinecho.org
Plano	Jesse Madsen	972-941-7322	jessema@plano.gov
El Paso	Connie Jimenez	915-212-1653	jimenezcp@elpasotexas.gov
Waco	Teri R. Holtkamp	254-750-5656	TeriH@wacotx.gov

City Active Lists* (Active lists are also called "by-name" lists, and are a list of persons experiencing homelessness.)

City	Active List	Frequency of Updates	# on Active List	# "Missing" on Active List
San Antonio	Yes	Weekly	52	0
Houston	Yes	Daily	-	-
Fort Worth	No	-	-	-
Austin	Yes	Weekly	181	79
Plano	No	-	-	-
El Paso	Yes	Weekly	70	Don't track
Waco	Yes	Bi-monthly	12	3

Total Yes **5**

*Active lists are also called "by-name" lists, and are a list of persons experiencing homelessness. If a person is missing from the active list, this means that the person could not be found when conducting outreach.

Target Efforts to Provide Immediate Shelter to Homeless Veterans

City	Achieved target of providing immediate shelter to homeless Veterans	Date target was achieved (*or will be achieved*)	How Target was Achieved
San Antonio	Yes	January 2015	Convening a weekly working group of Veteran and homeless service providers. Assessing and prioritizing homeless Veterans by vulnerability to create a target take down list. Reprioritizing grant and general fund resources to support the initiative. Implementing a Housing Navigator Support System and identifying permanent supportive and/or affordable housing. COSA SAPD implemented a Homeless Comprehensive Plan that blends law enforcement and homeless services solutions.
Houston	Yes	2014	No details provided in the survey.
Fort Worth	No	January 31, 2017	No details provided in the survey.
Austin	Yes	October 2015	The Austin stakeholders working to end homelessness have utilized many promising practices shared by other successful communities as well as guidance from USICH, HUD and the VA. The Austin initiative has been working diligently to achieve the criteria and benchmarks set forth from USICH.
Plano	Don't know		No details provided in the survey.
El Paso	Don't know		No details provided in the survey.
Waco	Yes	March 2015	Commitment of the Mayors initiative To End Veteran Homelessness, working Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Veterans Administration and read only access for the VA HMIS license. Local Shelters commitment to prioritizing homeless veterans and implementation of coordinated entry/access to link veterans to services and outreach personnel. Additional services were added such as SSVF to already existing VASH programs. New Shelter opened located closer to main hospital in Bell County. Local VA implemented follow-up calls with the institution of the active list and also added bi-weekly outreach to encampments to reach those disengaged to other services in the area.

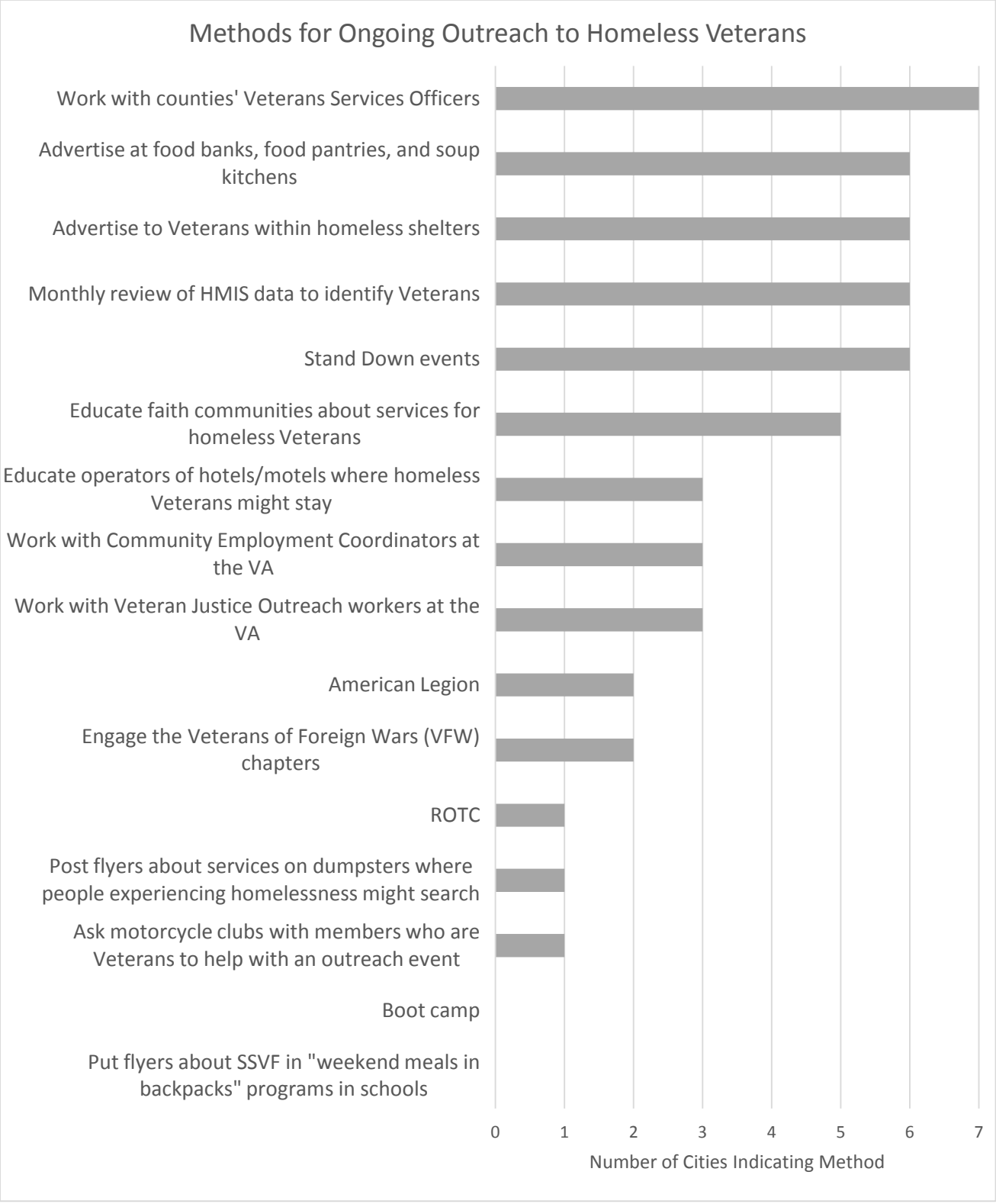
Total Yes 4

Methods for Making Initial Contact with Homeless Veterans

City	Stand Down Events*	Point in Time Counts	Boot Camp	Other Methods
San Antonio	Yes	Yes	No	Outreach programs, SAPD IMPACT Team, Non-profits
Houston	Yes	Yes	No	Outreach Street Teams and Shelter Outreach
Fort Worth	Yes	Yes	No	Veterans Homeless Coalition; outreach teams
Austin	Yes	Yes	No	3 Intensive Veteran Outreach Initiatives (May, September and October 2015); Ongoing street outreach from community programs such as VA-HCHV, VA-HUD-VASH, SSVF (Caritas and Front Steps); ATCIC-PATH Outreach Team and other points of contact through the City of Austin and Travis County offices.
Plano	No	Yes	No	Referrals to county veterans service officer
El Paso	Yes	Yes	No	No detail provided in survey.
Waco	Yes	Yes	No	Work with outreach teams that include MHMR PATH teams, The Salvation Army, The Meyers Center and well outreach staff at the McLennan Co. Jail, shelter contacts, coordinated access makes referrals
Total Yes	**6**	**7**	**0**	

* Stand Downs are typically one- to three-day events providing services to homeless Veterans such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, Veterans Affairs and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other necessary services, such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment.

Methods for Ongoing Outreach to Homeless Veterans about Services



Methods for Ongoing Outreach to Homeless Veterans about Services (Cont.)

City	Other Ongoing Outreach Methods to Homeless Veterans
San Antonio	Outreach in Haven for Hope Homeless Campus & other shelters/Housing Navigation
Houston	Outreach Street Teams, Shelter Outreach, VA Drop-In Center
Fort Worth	No response in survey.
Austin	We review HMIS veteran data on a weekly basis; Other Veteran Service Providers (Texas Center Point, Texas Veterans Commission, etc); Non-veteran CoC providers, Coordinated Assessment); the PATH Outreach, Street Medicine Team, VASH, HCHV and SSVF provide ongoing outreach.
Plano	No response in survey.
El Paso	No response in survey.
Waco	All outreach teams have been asked to add to their questioning if persons are a veteran or have served time in the military. This includes outreach teams from local churches providing a meal, as well as other non-veteran agencies such as Family Abuse Center, Heart of Texas MHMR, Police, Code enforcement, The Salvation Army and Mission.

Average Number of Days to Permanent Housing

City	Average number of days between identification and permanent housing
San Antonio	< 90 days
Houston	90 days
Fort Worth	90 days
Austin	80-100 days
Plano	-
El Paso	90 days
Waco	70 days

Date Mayors Challenge Began and Frequency of Stakeholder Meetings

City	Date Mayors Challenge Began	Frequency of Stakeholder Meetings
San Antonio	January 2015	Weekly
Houston	March 2014	Weekly
Fort Worth	Unknown	Bi-monthly
Austin	November 2014	-
Plano	August 2015	Not Applicable
El Paso	Winter 2015	Monthly
Waco	2015	*

* Waco had already begun their process of identifying the most vulnerable using the training and tools from the 100,000 Homes campaign in 2013-14 (described in greater detail in Appendix H). Waco also began its pilot for HUD's Coordinated Entry/Access in late 2014 early 2015. With those two tools Waco was able to add Veterans as a priority as soon as the initiative was suggested. Waco launched its Coordinated Access Program fully in October of 2015. This allowed Waco to continue to identify veterans through this service as well as using the Vulnerability Index ("VI") – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool ("SPDAT") intake tool from the 100,000 Homes toolkit. Those tools along with Waco's Memorandum ("MOU") with Homeless Management Information System ("HMIS") and the VA, and the coordination and education to others about the services offered, have played a major role in ensuring veterans do not fall through the cracks in Waco.

Coordinated Assessments and Agency Leads

City	Implemented a coordinated assessment (i.e., no-wrong door) approach to the challenge	Agencies leads in implementation
San Antonio	Yes	City of San Antonio Key Partners: South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless Family Endeavors American GI Forum-NVOP SAMMinistries Veteran Affairs Crosspoint Haven for Hope Center for Health Care Services
Houston	Yes	Coalition for the Homeless of Houston-Harris County
Fort Worth	Yes	-
Austin	Yes	City of Austin-Mayor's Office Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (local CoC) Central Texas VA Medical Center (VASH and HCHV) Caritas of Austin-SSVF Front Steps-SSVF Salvation Army-SSVF Goodwill of Central Texas-SSVF
Plano	No	
El Paso	Yes	The County of El Paso American GI Forum El Paso Coalition for the Homeless Opportunity Center for the Homeless Veterans Administration
Waco	Yes	Our Continuum of Care (CoC) stakeholders, CoC Lead agency, and HMIS agent (City of Waco) and Texas Homeless Network for Technical Assistance all collaborated to make the implementation possible.

Total Yes 6

Cost of Mayors Challenge

City	Cost to city of Mayors Challenge initiative	In-kind or financial resources used to support Mayors Challenge initiative
San Antonio	$12.7 million in funds to support the Mayors Challenge Initiative	City General Funds $506,486; USAA Foundation Grant $2,075,500; VA Federal (SSVF) $4,000,000; VA Federal VASH $3,620,916; VA Federal VA GPD $422,146; VA Federal VA HCC $826,000; VA Federal CoC $1,263,453; Grand Total $12,714,501
Houston	No additional cost	-
Fort Worth	The City of Fort Worth sets aside more than $2 million per year for homeless issues.	The City of Fort Worth sets aside more than $2 million per year for homeless issues.
Austin	The City of Austin has not contributed any public funds, however the Mayor's Initiative has raised $393,000 of private funds to be used in Austin to address barriers, provide new opportunities and support the effort to end Veteran homelessness.	1) Cap Metro donated 400 day transportation passes for outreach engagement 2) Central Texas Veterans Coalition-Created Furniture program to help Veterans moving into new housing have basic furniture needs met 3) SSVF funds (Caritas of Austin and Front Steps are current lead grantees in the area) 4) Additional HUD-VASH vouchers 5) Texas Veteran Commission grant funds (for rental barriers) 6) Total of 900 Volunteer hours (for Veteran Outreach Initiative) 7) CoC lead agency staff spearheaded the Austin Homeless Veterans Initiative in conjunction with Mayor Adler's staff and have met at minimum on a weekly basis since January 2015. 8) Austin Apartment Association created campaign media and dedicated staff to encourage landlord/property management participation 9) HEB-donated $1,000 in-kind groceries for Veteran Outreach 10) Austin Board of Realtors contributed $16,000 for general support to end Veteran homelessness (used to support hotel stays for Veterans engaged during Outreach events) 12) Intel created 125 hygiene kits for Veteran Outreach events.
Plano	Unknown	Allocation of local housing authority's vouchers for veteran homeless
El Paso	20 hours per month	Administrative support

City	Cost to city of Mayors Challenge initiative	In-kind or financial resources used to support Mayors Challenge initiative
Waco	Not available.	City funded staff for HMIS, CoC, VA, Multiple non-profits as well as Technical assistance from Texas Homeless Network.

VA 25 Cities Initiative

City	Participation in VA 25 Cities Initiative	Date VA 25 Cities initiative began
San Antonio	No	No response in survey.
Houston	Yes	March 2014
Fort Worth	No	No response in survey.
Austin	No	No response in survey.
Plano	No	No response in survey.
El Paso	No	No response in survey.
Waco	No	No response in survey.
Total Yes	**1**	

Participation in Other Programs/Initiatives/Activities to Reduce Veteran Homelessness

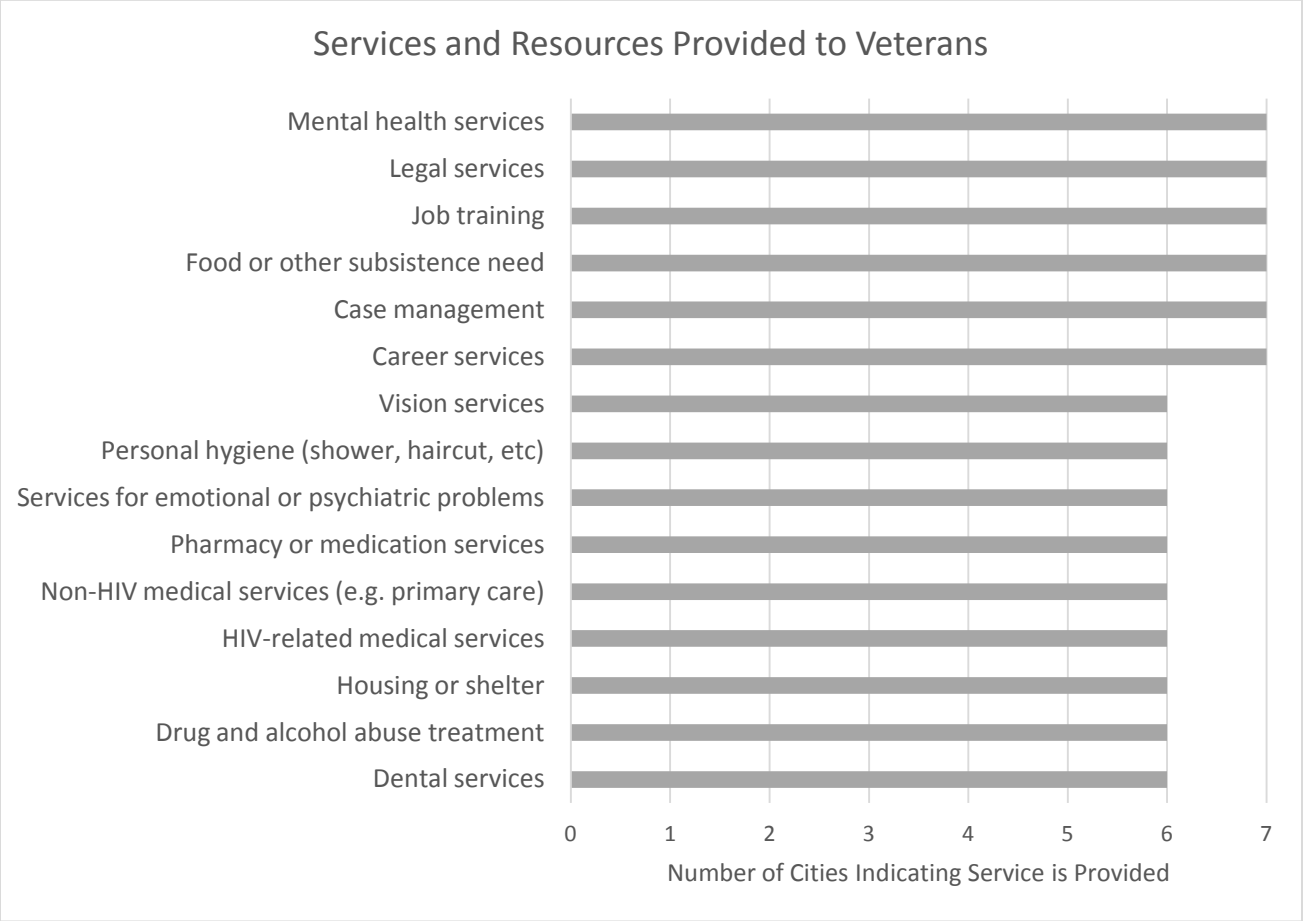
City	Participation in other programs/initiatives/activities to address Veteran homelessness besides Mayors Challenge and VA 25 Cities	Description of additional programs/initiatives/activities
San Antonio	Yes	Community Solutions Housing Zero:2016 American GI Forum Stand Down
Houston	No	No response in survey.
Fort Worth	Yes	Work with 2 local agencies that target veterans.
Austin	Yes	2012-100 Days Challenge November 2011-100,000 Homes Campaign Registry Week
Plano	Yes	Allocation of local housing authority's vouchers for veteran homeless, hosted a VASH landlord fair

City	Participation in other programs/initiatives/activities to address Veteran homelessness besides Mayors Challenge and VA 25 Cities	Description of additional programs/initiatives/activities
El Paso	Yes	Point-In-Time VA Challenge meeting, Free Public Transportation for Veterans (being presented to City Council to implement)
Waco	No	No response in survey.
Total Yes	**5**	

Approaches Used to Measure Progress in Addressing Veteran Homelessness

City	Point in Time counts	Counts during Stand Down events	Street outreach	Other
San Antonio	Yes	Yes	Yes	USICH Benchmarks, HMIS Data
Houston	Yes	No	Yes	HMIS, Coordinated Access
Fort Worth	Yes	No	Yes	No response in survey.
Austin	Yes	Yes	Yes	USICH Criteria and Benchmarks
Plano	Yes	No	No	No response in survey.
El Paso	Yes	No	Yes	Weekly meetings to measure progress
Waco	Yes	Yes	Yes	HMIS/VA list/Coordinated Access
Total Yes	**7**	**3**	**6**	

Services and Resources Provided to Veterans



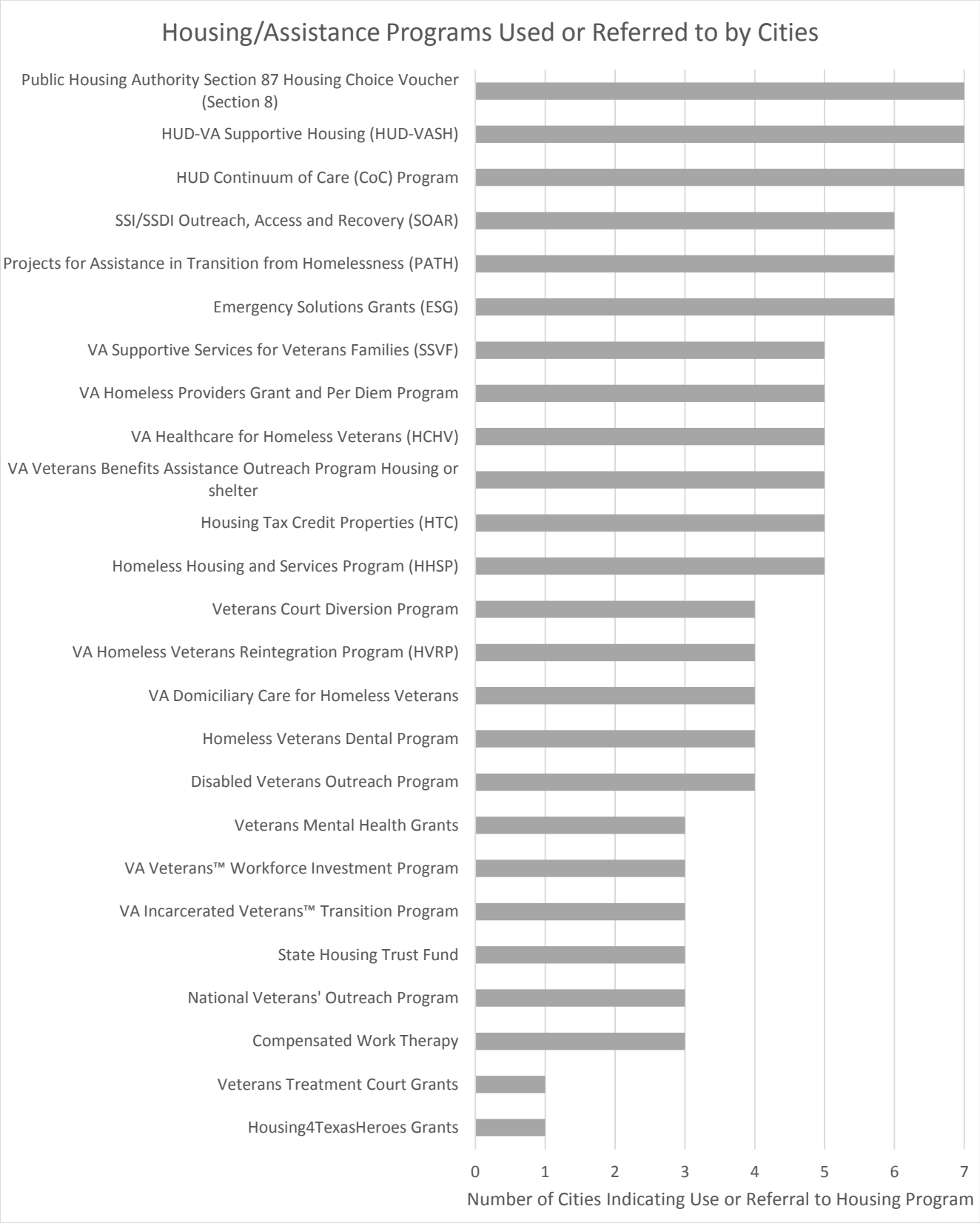
Note: Only Plano indicated that not all services were provided. Additional services mentioned by cities include transportation, benefits, and MOU with VA and HMIS.

Housing/Shelter Programs Provided

City	Emergency shelter	Housing First	Permanent Supportive Housing	Rapid Re-housing	Safe Haven	Transitional Housing	Other
San Antonio	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Single Room Occupancy (SRO)
Houston	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No response in survey.
Fort Worth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No response in survey.
Austin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No response in survey.
Plano	No	No	No	No	No	No	No response in survey.
El Paso	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No response in

City	Emergency shelter	Housing First	Permanent Supportive Housing	Rapid Re-housing	Safe Haven	Transitional Housing	Other
							survey.
Waco	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Veteran Administrated supportive housing (VASH), SSVF family housing for veterans
Total Yes	**6**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**4**	**6**	

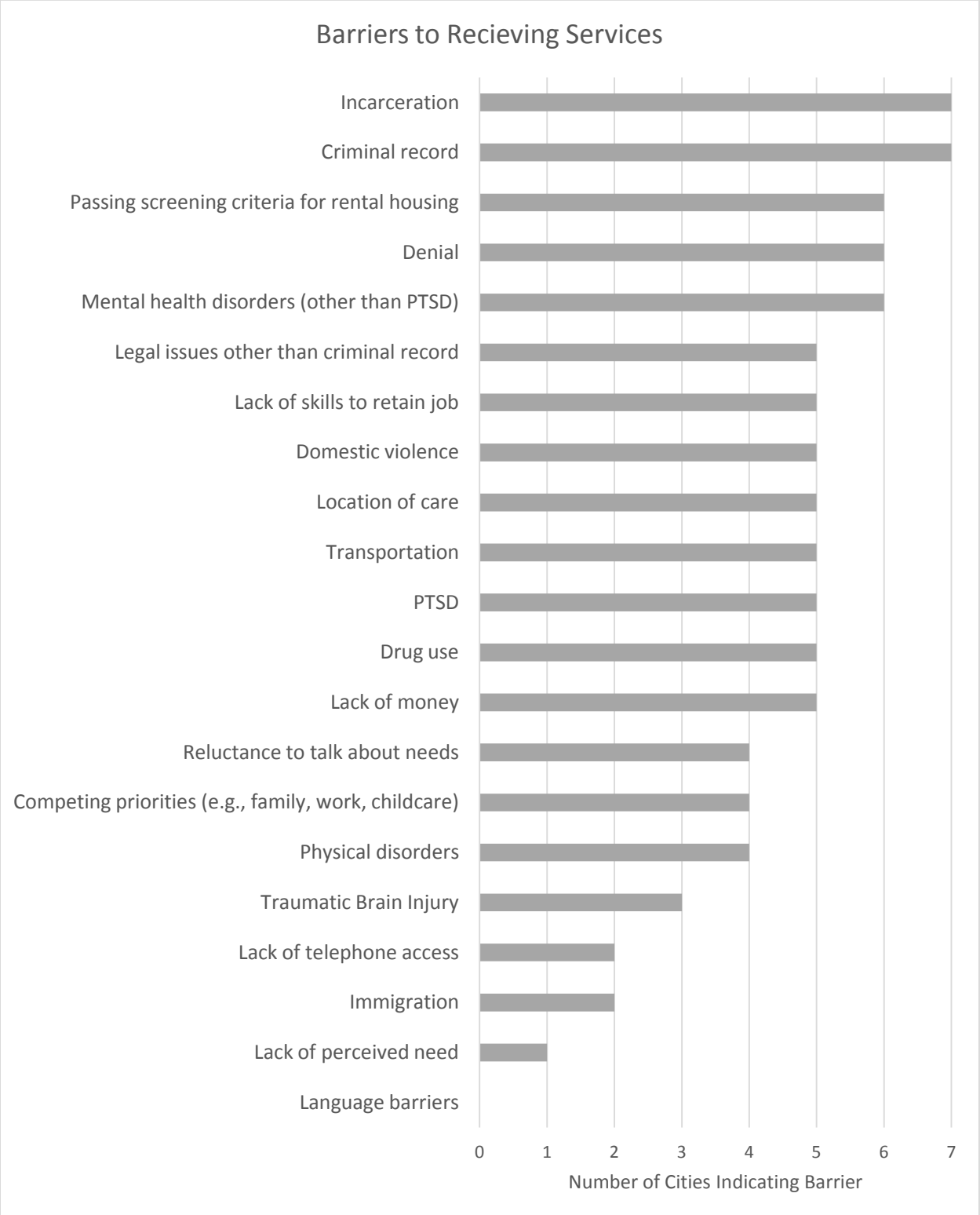
Housing/Assistance Programs Used or Referred to by Cities



Discharge Status

City	Do you take Veteran discharge status into account when allocating city-controlled homeless services?	When Veterans did not qualify for U.S. Veteran Affairs assistance because of discharge status or other issues, how were those Veterans served?
San Antonio	No, there are no restrictions on city services based on discharge status.	Veterans are provided services through: City General Funds, CoC Funded Projects, USAA Foundation Grant
Houston	No, there are no restrictions on city services based on discharge status.	Assessed for housing through our Coordinated Access program and placed into PSH with Continuum of Care funds and other federal funds.
Fort Worth	Yes, there are some city homeless services for those who were not honorably discharged, but they are more restricted than those for Veterans honorably discharged.	Use of the Community Services Block Grant and Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program through the Community Action Partners program have been primary resources.
Austin	Other: There are currently no veteran specific-City funded projects. However, Veterans are served through the various CoC and City provided programs as deemed eligible and available.	Initially, all Veterans are assessed through the ECHO Coordinated Assessment and entered into HMIS. The CoC Housing Navigator and/or program staff verify Veteran status prior to program referral and enrollment. If a Veteran is identified as ineligible for VA assistance, the Veteran is referred the non-Veteran CoC housing that they are otherwise eligible for. The Austin/Travis County CoC implemented a "Veteran Preference" for non-Veteran specific housing interventions to expedite the housing placements for all Vets-not just those eligible for VA care.
Plano	No, there are no restrictions on city services based on discharge status.	Served through continuum-of-care homeless services
El Paso	No, there are no restrictions on city services based on discharge status.	If not eligible for veterans assistance they apply through the County of El Paso General Assistance program
Waco	No, there are no restrictions on city services based on discharge status.	Those veterans are immediately linked to all other services and agencies through coordinated access that meet their need.
Total Yes	**1**	

Veteran Barriers to Receiving Services



Note: Additional responses include "Sex offender record" and "Many of the above are barriers to housing, and housing is a service. A huge barrier is finding landlords who will rent to anyone who has criminal background, evictions, and many times just back child support can cause issues."

City	Single greatest barrier to receiving services
San Antonio	Criminal record
Houston	-
Fort Worth	PTSD
Austin	Passing screening criteria for rental housing
Plano	Passing screening criteria for rental housing
El Paso	Criminal record
Waco	Other: Landlords willing to rent a safe affordable place to live knowing barriers exist.