

Feds delay by 1 year goal for ending chronic homelessness

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration said Monday it has pushed back by one year its goal for ending chronic homelessness among the general public. It's maintaining a goal for ending veteran homelessness by the end of this year.

The Obama administration had set a goal of ending chronic homelessness for 2016, but Housing and Urban Development Department officials said during a budget briefing the goal had been pushed back to 2017 because of budget constraints. Tens of thousands of people still fit the definition of chronically homeless, which means they've been without housing for more than a year or have experienced four bouts of homelessness in a three-year period.

Officials initially said the goal for ending veterans homelessness had been pushed back a year, but then corrected that description to say they still hope to end homelessness among veterans this year. However, the results won't be known until surveys are taken in early 2016.

"We're going to push as hard as we can until the end of 2015 to make this a reality," said Assistant Veterans Affairs Secretary Helen Tierney.

Tierney called the goal to end chronic homelessness "audacious," but conceded that success "is not absolute zero." The VA uses the term "ending homelessness" to convey the urgency of the task, she and other officials said.

HUD officials said veteran homelessness has dropped by about a third since 2010. Still, a survey conducted early last year estimated there are about 50,000 homeless veterans in the United States.

Meanwhile, the number of chronically homeless among the general public has dropped about 10 percent over a similar time frame, HUD officials said.