

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-739](#), a report to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

## Why GAO Did This Study

Title V of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act enacted in 1987 created a program to assist the homeless, in part, by identifying unused federal real property and making it available to homeless assistance providers.

GAO was asked to review the implementation of Title V of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This report examines: (1) the identification and transfer of federal real property to homeless assistance providers and (2) the benefits and challenges homeless assistance providers and national advocacy organizations reported in identifying, acquiring, and using federal real property, and the potential actions that could help to address these challenges. GAO obtained information and data from HUD and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on the properties reported since the program's inception and interviewed officials from GSA, HHS, and HUD. GAO also obtained views on the program from officials at (1) nine federal agencies, representing a range of size in their real property portfolios; (2) eleven homeless assistance providers (including eight that received property), representing a range of locations, size of property, and services provided; and (3) national homeless-advocacy organizations.

## What GAO Recommends

Congress should consider changing (1) the scope of properties to be reported to HUD with respect to the types of properties that may be less likely to be useful to assist the homeless and (2) the frequency of *Federal Register* reporting.

View [GAO-14-739](#). For more information, contact David J. Wise at (202) 512-2834 or [wised@gao.gov](mailto:wised@gao.gov).

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## FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY

### More Useful Information to Providers Could Improve the Homeless Assistance Program

## What GAO Found

Since inception in 1987, the nationwide Title V homeless-assistance program has transferred 122 properties from federal agencies to homeless assistance providers. Of these properties, 81 are currently being used to provide a range of homeless assistance services nationwide. Such services include transitional housing, referral services, and emergency shelter. However, few of the properties that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has listed as suitable and available since the program's inception received applications from homeless assistance providers. In most cases, the properties may not have actually been practical for homeless service providers to use. For example, in 2013 about 80 percent of these properties were for off-site use only—meaning that a provider would need to physically move the property in order to use it. HUD officials told us that they would prefer that agencies not be required to report certain types of properties at all, such as those for off-site use only. The current statutory requirement for agencies to report all properties that fall within four broad categories—excess, surplus, underutilized, and unutilized—may not be effective for certain types of properties. Such exclusion could allow HUD officials to focus on the suitable and available properties that may be more likely to assist the homeless.

Of the 11 homeless assistance providers we interviewed, the eight case study providers that acquired property cited benefits from the Title V homeless assistance program, such as expanding services and obtaining real property at no cost. These benefits notwithstanding, the providers identified challenges, such as identifying available properties. These findings are consistent with reports from national homeless advocacy organizations. HUD reports properties in the *Federal Register* multiple times a year as required. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), which plays a coordination role, provides a link on its website to the HUD reports. Nonetheless, according to national homeless advocates, many homeless assistance providers remain unaware of the availability of properties because the *Federal Register* is not user-friendly. Further, HUD lists many of the same properties more than once in the *Federal Register*, as required, even though they may not be useful to homeless assistance providers. In the past, some in Congress and the executive branch have raised issues about reporting requirements; the basic issue has been that some requirements result in reports that may be burdensome to produce, or not very useful. Modifying reporting requirements to reduce the frequency of reporting related to properties that are less likely to be useful to homeless providers could help, while also allowing HUD to continue to fulfill its responsibilities.