

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS AND  
KATHRYN BARGER**

**FEBRUARY 6, 2018**

**Countywide Peer Network for Veterans' Services and Housing**

It is estimated that roughly 10,000 service members transition home to Los Angeles County (County) annually. According to a recent study conducted by the University of Southern California, roughly 40% of veterans report not knowing whom to approach for assistance, or where to get access to help after separating from the military, and over 50% of post-9/11 veterans describe having no idea where to start looking for assistance. This lack of information, combined with complex, culturally uninformed and difficult to access systems for obtaining assistance, can lead at-risk veterans toward trajectories of financial despair, family discord, isolation, substance misuse, homelessness and/or involvement with the justice system.

The County, in partnership with other public and private entities, has invested heavily in programs to subsidize housing and services for veterans struggling with homelessness and/or veterans caught up in the justice system. Despite these efforts, however, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority found a 57% increase in

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veteran homelessness in the 2017 Point-in-Time nightly Homeless Count, and the number of incarcerated veterans is known to be elevated in the County and across the country. The reasons for these statistics are multidimensional and multifactorial, including the dynamic interplay between the scarcity of affordable housing, rising rents and stagnant incomes.

It has been repeatedly suggested that the creation of a network of veteran peers, employed and acting as “access agents” across sectors and spanning organizations in the County, could be developed to prevent veterans from becoming homeless or incarcerated in the first place. It has been shown that trained veteran peers serving as “battle buddies at home” can help those who have already fallen on hard times to move from the streets and the jails, into supportive, stable housing environments. By carefully selecting and coordinating organizations to employ veterans serving as access agents, a cross-sector coalition of peers could be activated across the County to improve timely navigation of resources and seamless access to care.

**WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

Direct the Chief Executive Officer and Health Agency Department Directors, in coordination with the Acting Director of the Community Development Commission and the Director of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, and in consultation with the Director of the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs and relevant non-profit stakeholders, as deemed necessary, to report back in writing in 90 days on a plan to

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establish a veteran peer access network in Los Angeles County as well as recommendations for an enriched set of resources including health care, mental health care, substance use treatment, legal services and housing, to which this network of veteran peers will have seamless access. The written report also shall include details on:

1. Establishing a Health Agency lead and platform for convening stakeholders, coordinating activities, and conducting a landscape analysis to determine the next steps for building a veteran peer access network that would span host organizations across public and private sectors; and
2. Identifying principals, including public and private providers as well as veterans and stakeholders with relevant capacity and/or subject matter expertise and experience, to serve on an ad hoc steering committee.

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(DW/EW/KK)