

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND
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Improving Veteran Access to Care

According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), 20 veterans a day die by suicide, of which an estimated 14 are not under VA care. Broken down by demographic, in 2016 veterans ages 18-34 had the highest rate of suicides. The data also revealed that female veterans are 1.8 times more likely to commit suicide than female non-veterans. In addition to mental health challenges, veterans are severely impacted by homelessness. The 2018 Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's point-in-time homeless count found that veteran homelessness remained unchanged from the previous year.

In 2018, the Board directed the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to establish the Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN) to provide enriched services to the County's veterans. Our County, which has the largest population of veterans in the State of California and the nation, has two Veterans Health Administration (VHA) systems. Despite having the VA Long Beach Health Care System and the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, veterans that do not live in close proximity to these facilities have limited access to VA services. This is particularly relevant in the Antelope Valley and the San Gabriel Valley. This barrier illustrates the need for aggressive action to improve the outreach and effectiveness in the region. The County's various initiatives, led by DMH and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) are examples of our commitment to providing veterans access to resources. By reducing barriers to services for veterans and their family members, we look to reduce veteran suicide.

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MOTION

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The VA's implementation of the Mission Act (S.2372) underscores the importance of increased access to health care and resources for veterans. The County shares these goals, and is committed to working with the VA to reduce barriers through collaboration and interagency referrals. By engaging veterans in a collaborative way, we can ensure that our veterans have full access to local, state, and federal resources.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of the Department of Mental Health, in coordination with the Director of Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, to execute a Memorandum of Agreement between Los Angeles County and the Veterans Health Administration to facilitate interagency collaboration and referrals in an effort to maximize access to mental health care and other resources to reduce veteran suicide including but not limited to: navigation services, medical care, substance use treatment, education, training, employment, benefits assistance, and housing.

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