

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

November 19, 2019

Countywide Mental Health Services for Veterans

Over 290,000 veterans currently reside in Los Angeles County (County). This number increases by approximately 10,000 each year as service members leave active duty and return home. Many returning service members struggle with having limited resources and securing their basic needs, including access to adequate housing, medical and mental health care, and employment. Despite incredible sacrifice and service to their country, it is estimated that approximately 40,000 veterans are ineligible for healthcare and other benefits through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

To address the needs of vulnerable veterans and their families, in February 2018, the Board of Supervisors (Board) (MRT/KB) directed County departments to report back with recommendations to establish a Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN) that would empower veterans to help fellow veterans, as well as create an enriched set of resources seamlessly accessible to the VPAN, including health and mental health care, substance abuse treatment, legal services and housing. Subsequently, in May 2018, the Board (MRT/KB) directed the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to work with other stakeholders, including the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, to implement the recommendations. The VPAN is currently in the implementation phase, and new services, training, and technology solutions tailored to meet the unique needs of veterans and their families are underway.

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Building partnerships with organizations that have expertise in providing services and supports to veterans in the County is key to the success of the VPAN. DMH seeks to build a partnership with Southern California Grantmakers (SCG) to leverage their expertise in the local veterans' landscape. For five years, SCG has convened a group of veteran-focused foundations, which provided expert input into the design of the VPAN. In addition, SCG, through a fiscal sponsor agreement with the County, is the private sector home of the Center for Strategic Partnership. SCG is well-positioned to support DMH in bringing these essential services and supports to veterans in the County.

To ensure an expeditious program expansion for the development and implementation of the VPAN, subsequent resource allocation, and ongoing support from the Board, there is a profound need to continue fostering collaborative public-private veteran-focused partnerships to drive innovation and influence in the veterans' community. Focal points of this cross-sector collaboration will be building suitable feedback processes to analyze VPAN data, demanding accountability to inform conveners/funders, and driving ongoing investments strategically.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Instruct the Director of the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to hire 40 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff to provide direct support and services to veterans and/or family members. The requested FTEs will be tasked to expand veteran services throughout Los Angeles County (County) through the development of North and South County Veteran Services Teams. These teams will serve as community navigators and/or access agents for veterans and their families, providing support in the areas of homelessness and mental health to ensure expedient access to treatment and services. In addition to peer support, DMH will hire 12 new staff to provide clinical and administrative support for the Veteran Peer Access Network initiative. Special hiring consideration for all VPAN positions will be given to veterans with lived experience. The total estimated cost of this action is \$6,468,200 for salaries

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and services and supplies, annually, and will allow DMH to hire a total of 52 items for the advancement of services for veterans throughout the County.

2. Approve interim ordinance authority, pursuant to Section 6.06.020 of the County Code for DMH to recruit and hire for these 52 positions, subject to allocation by the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) Classification Division, and with delegated authority to the Director of DMH, or designee, to hire necessary personnel for the expansion of these support services.
3. Authorize the Director of DMH to execute an agreement with Southern California Grant Makers (SCG) to create a public-private partnership focused on the implementation of services to veterans using a peer-to-peer model. The total term of agreement between the County and SCG will be for three fiscal years. The total estimated cost of the agreement is \$13,779,645 (\$4,696,945 for Year 1, \$4,541,350 for Year 2, and \$4,541,350 for Year 3). No more than 15% of the total estimated cost of the agreement will be provided to SCG for services provided under this agreement. Activities to be executed by SCG under this agreement are to be consistent with the following:
 - a. Through an open and competitive process identify five (5) community-based organizations (CBO) to develop five (5) Veteran Services Teams (one per Supervisorial District) that will provide peer support and resource navigation to veterans. Each Veteran Services Team will consist of eight (8) team members, including one (1) program manager, two (2) squad leaders, and five (5) Battle Buddies hired by each CBO. Working closely with the directly-operated DMH veteran program staff, the CBO veteran teams will provide outreach, referral, and linkage services to veterans and their families. The estimated cost of this action is \$4,393,000 for salaries and services and supplies annually.

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- b. Providing training and certification to up to 100 peers Countywide. Training for veteran peers will focus on trauma-informed service provision and utilizing lived-experiences to support and encourage other veterans. The estimated cost of this action is \$148,350 annually.
 - c. Identify and secure a technology platform that facilitates coordination of resources and monitors access to services for veterans and their families. The estimated cost of this action is \$155,595 one-time only.
 - d. Identify and secure space Countywide to serve as rally points for veterans and their families within each Supervisorial District to provide resources and outreach services, including DMH staff, supporting these efforts.
4. Instruct the Director of the Center for Strategic Partnerships (CSP) to work with SCG's veteran-focused staff to keep the philanthropic community engaged in this effort and to bring investment opportunities to the private sector as well as to ensure that this effort is connected to CSP's related initiatives.
5. Instruct the Director of DMH to report back in writing to the Board in 90 days with a comprehensive update on the establishment of these new services and supports for veterans.

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