



# DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

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FROM: Jonathan E. Sherin, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director

SUBJECT: **COUNTYWIDE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR VETERANS  
(ITEM NO 9, AGENDA OF NOVEMBER 19, 2019)**

On November 19, 2019, the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to report back with a comprehensive update on the establishment of various new services and supports for Veterans as a result of the expansion of the Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN).

## **Background**

The Countywide Mental Health Services for Veterans motion was the third Board motion specific to establishing and expanding the VPAN. On February 6, 2018, the Board approved the motion, "Countywide Peer Network for Veterans' Services and Housing" to establish a 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.

In response, on May 4, 2018, DMH submitted a comprehensive report, including recommendations to enhance the VPAN. Following the report, on May 29, 2018, the Board approved the motion "Implementing Recommendations to Enhance Veteran Peer Access Network," which resulted in the establishment of the VPAN Steering Committee Advisory Group (SCAG). The SCAG first convened in August of 2018 and continues to convene monthly. The SCAG was introduced to several programs and models across the County specific to requirements and capacity, finding veterans, exploring existing solutions, technology solutions, and integrating communications and awareness. On February 7, DMH hosted an all-day human design summit consisting of over 60 local and

national experts thinking through and providing recommendations that were incorporated in the resulting VPAN action plan released in May of 2019.

On November 19, 2019, the Board further expanded its commitment to the establishment of a countywide comprehensive veteran program by directing DMH to execute the following and provide a report back in 90-days:

1. Under ordinance authority, recruit and hire 52 FTEs to establish a North and South County infrastructure. No less than forty (40) of these positions to be filled by veteran or military related family members.
2. Execute an agreement with Southern California Grantmakers (SCG) to create a public-private partnership focused on the implementation of services to veterans using a peer-to-peer model.
3. 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.

### **Implementation Update**

DMH continues to make significant progress in the implementation of the VPAN program and associated expansion of veteran's services. Since the November 19, 2019 Board motion, the Department has implemented some modifications to the program structure to allow for extended service capacity. In addition, as a response to COVID-19, we have implemented targeted services for veterans and are in the process of adding dedicated structure to support our military service community.

- 1. Hiring 52 FTEs including 40 Veteran staff to provide linkage and/or direct support and services (i.e., mental health, legal, substance addiction treatment, housing, education, employment, healthcare, social connection/recreation etc.) to veterans and/or family members.**

DMH received approval for interim ordinance authority to hire the 52 FTEs from the Chief Executive Office on December 12, 2019. Recruitment for both direct service and administrative positions began immediately following approval. To date DMH has hired eight (8) direct services staff (all veteran peers) and three (3) staff to provide administrative and clinical oversight of the VPAN program - i.e., one (1) Mental Health Clinical Supervisor, seven (7) Medical Case Workers, one (1) Management Analyst, one (1) Health Program Analyst II, and one (1) Mental Health Program Manager I.

In consideration of the importance of maintaining the full spectrum of established access services that are core to the VPAN program beyond the 3-year period outlined in the motion, DMH is allowing discretion for extension of the contract period for Community Based Organizations (CBOs) selected under the SCG contract. The change minimizes programmatic impact on the directly operated side as DMH staffing will be supplemented by veteran specialized FTEs deployed from the former Veterans and Loved Ones in Recovery (VALOR) program to assist in providing administrative and clinical oversight of the VPAN program. This move will provide the requisite North and South County infrastructure outlined in the motion and allow us to extend the length of services at the CBO level. Further, due to the COVID-19 related hiring freeze, DMH will be able to hold on further recruitment without adverse impact on VPAN implementation.

**2. Execute an agreement with Southern California Grantmakers (SCG)**

The Statement of Work for the Contract with Southern California Grantmakers was drafted to include identification of dedicated space (1 in each supervisorial district) to serve as rally points for VPAN services, provide certification training for veteran peers, and acquire a technology platform to be used to consolidate resources and track the referral process. The draft has been finalized, and the contract is projected to be fully executed no later than July 1, 2020.

**3. Instruct the Director of the Center for Strategic Partnerships (CSP) to work with SCG's veteran-focused staff**

As noted above, the final contract is anticipated to be fully executed by July 1, 2020 allowing the start of the VPAN solicitation for the CBOs to begin at that time. Concurrently, monthly meetings are being held with the VPAN Steering Committee Advisory Group and SCG's Veteran Funder Peer Group to learn about the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on veteran and military families in the region and find ways to respond within their individual grant making portfolios. This groundwork leaves CSP well positioned to engage the philanthropic community and bring veteran specific investment opportunities to the private sector. This will continue once all components of the VPAN program are fully operable, creating opportunities for future SCP initiatives.

**Next Steps**

1. Upon execution of the contract with SCG, anticipated July 1, 2020, the Department will interface with the selected CBOs to move forward with full implementation of the VPAN vision.
2. Groundwork has been laid to enhance marketing for VPAN services with the support of Cause Communications who will provide overarching oversight of the

strategic communications plan and social/digital media plan that aligns with the vision, mission, and purpose of the VPAN project with the totality of the Department's external brand. Infrastructure is being built for both plans, which includes messaging about existing VPAN services including the newly developed Veteran's warm line component of the DMH 24/7 ACCESS line and will expand to incorporate aspects of network resources as CBO's are on-boarded through SCG.

3. Establish peer support training and certification for FTEs within DMH and the CBO network, an effort that is core to the development and success of the VPAN.
4. The Countywide Engagement Division will continue to engage stakeholders from the Los Angeles Veteran Collaborative and the VPAN SCAG and rely on their experience and expertise to guide program implementation.

If you have additional questions, please contact La Tina Jackson at (818) 610-6708 or [ltjackson@dmh.lacounty.gov](mailto:ltjackson@dmh.lacounty.gov).

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