



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
**DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH**
hope. recovery. wellbeing.



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L.A. County Department of Mental Health Releases Inaugural Veteran Peer Access Network Report

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) today released its inaugural annual report on the Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN), a program that utilizes peer-to-peer engagement and grassroots partnerships to help the nation’s largest Veteran community. In 2021, VPAN served more than 2,500 Veterans through direct support and linkage to a wide range of benefit programs, including help with housing, getting benefits, employment, finances and family caregiving.

“The VPAN report summarizes many of our extraordinary achievements and provides some insights into the remarkable men and women who are the network’s voice and face,” said LACDMH Director Jonathan E. Sherin, M.D, Ph.D. “It is a particular privilege to acknowledge the work and sacrifice of the Veteran peers who have put together this very special, impactful program that will grow and serve for generations to come.”

VPAN was created in 2019 as a community-driven model to address the needs of the military and Veteran community, utilizing peer support at rally points throughout the County to connect those seeking help with “battle buddies” who not only provide service navigation but also empathy through shared life experiences and challenges. Life experiences such as coming to terms with the Afghanistan troop withdrawal, navigating multiple complex systems to receive benefits and supports, encountering stigmas/barriers while reintegrating to civilian life and coping with social isolation, which became more acute with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, are examples of the challenges Veterans face and attempt to overcome with their battle buddies.

Additionally, VPAN brings together the numerous military- and Veteran-serving government agencies, community-based organizations and private entities to form a robust, coordinated network that can handle a broad range of help requests, including support with housing, health care, benefits enrollment, discharge classification upgrades, financial assistance and getting mental health / substance use disorder services.

The annual report states that VPAN overall received and responded to more than 7,000 calls, 5,800 service requests and 2,700 referrals in 2021. This data and highlights are broken down more specifically for each of L.A. County’s five supervisorial districts. The report also features success stories and anecdotes from those working in or served by VPAN.

“I never met someone who handled this task with such confidence and pulled me out of a swamp that fast. Thank you for the moral support and giving me my dignity back,” said Connie,

a Veteran who was experiencing homelessness, in praising VPAN's peer support specialist for their help in getting her housed.

The complete 2021 VPAN Report is available [here](#). To learn more about VPAN, visit <https://dmh.lacounty.gov/veterans>. Veteran and military community members seeking support can reach VPAN by calling (800) 854-7771 ext. 3 or by emailing veterans@dmh.lacounty.gov.

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About The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH)

As the nation's largest public mental health department, we ensure access to care and treatment for our most vulnerable residents in a region with more than 10 million people. With an annual budget approaching \$3B and a committed staff of 6,000, LACDMH embodies a "heart-forward" approach to supporting hope, recovery and wellbeing across the County. For more information, visit dmh.lacounty.gov or follow @LACDMH on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).