



November 2017



THANK A VETERAN TODAY FOR THEIR SERVICE

California is home to over 1.8 million former service members, the largest veteran population of any state in the U.S. and LA County is the most populous. Each year, 12,000 military vets settle in LA County as they transition out of the military, joining the 304,828 vets currently residing here.

As Veterans Day approaches, it is a good time to promote awareness of veteran issues, learn more about resources available to veterans and thank our military personnel for their service.

Much of our current veteran services address trauma and homelessness leading to suicide among veterans. We've heard the numbers—that 22 veterans die by suicide each day. However, in recent years that number has been dropping—now down to 20, still far too many—as more resources were devoted to services and more veterans received help. Part of what drove that change was that the VA began to change how it messaged. They learned that focusing on how many veterans

were NOT getting help, or who encountered barriers to help or felt desperate, had the unintended consequences of creating new barriers. A stereotype was being formed that all veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress or other mental health disorders. Employers were reluctant to hire veterans, creating even larger problems. Something needed to change!

The veteran component of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline was re-branded as the "Veterans Crisis Line" which has



led to a significantly increased call volume. Military spokespeople began emphasizing that help was available, confidential, and effective rather than focusing on long wait times and other problems. More stories were told that informed the public that most veterans are reliable, hard-working, and skilled—assets to any employer.

More than 2.3 MILLION calls have been answered by the Crisis Line, almost 300,000 chat sessions conducted, and nearly 376,000 referrals made to local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators. And the number of veteran suicides has declined.

Los Angeles County is reflective of national veteran demographics, with the exception of LA County having more Hispanic and Asian vets than the national average. The USC School of Social Work completed a study entitled “[The State of the American Veteran: The Los Angeles County Veterans Study](#)” in an effort to provide data-driven recommendations for serving the increasing population

of veterans in LA County. Some vets transition well into the civilian population. This report focuses on those facing challenges so that policies and programs can ensure that all vets are successful, not just a lucky few. The study surveyed 1,300 veterans in LA County and found that:

1. Many service members leaving the military are not prepared for the transition.
2. Many military veterans have a wide range of needs that cannot easily be provided by a single organization.
3. Veteran support organizations are not organized to provide holistic support to current and returning veterans.
4. Most veteran support organizations are focused on meeting acute and chronic needs such as homelessness, immediate or severe health issues, or chronic unemployment.
5. Very little attention is given to preventing these conditions or intervening early to prevent them from being chronic.

The data from this study is applicable to local communities that are developing strategies to assist vets transitioning home.

The LACDMH VALOR (Veterans and Loved Ones Recovery) Program provides services to veterans and their families regardless of VA eligibility status and military discharge. This month, the VALOR FSP/Outreach team is hosting several events, including an Annual Veteran's Day Celebration, and will continue participating in “Manchester Square,” a monthly South LA neighborhood event, coordinated by Los Angeles World Airports in an effort to help relocate 200 to 350 homeless individuals. LAX is working closely with many public and nonprofit organizations, including DMH, to help relocate hundreds of homeless people living in tents and RV's. Providers set up in Manchester Square on a monthly basis to link individuals with services.

For a “one-stop” website for answers to military life questions including information on deployment and transition from the military; family and relationships; education; employment; on and off base living; financial; legal; health and wellness visit: <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/> . To see Veteran's Day events around the state, visit: <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/home/calendar>.

Remember to thank a veteran today for their service. They served strong; they're still strong. ♦

SUPPORTING NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH



The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health celebrates Native American Heritage month throughout November, including participation in two powwows in Santa Fe Springs at Heritage Park on November 4-5, and at Southgate Park on November 11th. Both events are free and welcoming to all and will run from 1 pm-8 pm. Our Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC) group continues to meet monthly with the Native community and other community-based organizations to promote mental health issues. If you are interested in participating in this group, contact Kelly Wilkerson at KeWilkerson@dmh.lacounty.gov. The UsCC has organized an AI/AN Mental Health Conference, "Bridging the Gaps – Systems, Cultures, and Generations" that will be held on November 14, 2017, at the California Endowment from 8 am-5 pm. Contact AIANMHConference@dmh.lacounty.gov for more info.

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's directly operated American Indian

Counseling Center (AICC) began in 1987 to provide culturally-centered mental health services to the American Indian/Alaska Native population in Los Angeles County. Currently, there are 72,828 American Indian/Alaska Natives in LA County.

Since 1987, the program has made tremendous growth with additional programming and staff to provide a wide range of services. Many of the staff have Native backgrounds or receive specialized training in order to provide culturally sensitive services. LACDMH has sponsored countywide training on American Indian/Alaska Native mental health. AICC has also received specialized training on "Mending the Circle," which is a trauma-based cognitive therapy program for children.

AICC serves a variety of age groups and treatment programs, including "Birth to Five;" Specialized Foster Care; Prevention and Early Intervention; Recovery, Resilience and Reintegration; and Full Service Partnership. Currently, there are special cultural groups that address the needs

of children, youth, adult clients and community members that promote skills and services to clients. Some groups are facilitated by LACDMH practitioners-- others are specially funded with Native consultants, such as Financial Education for Families; Red Word Writing Workshop; Beading; Honoring Children through Movement Workshops in collaboration with United American Indian Involvement (UAI); and White Bison (substance abuse prevention).

Client and staff collaboratively agreed to use a beautiful logo that incorporates symbols of the Medicine Wheel for NAMI t-shirts—and won third place this year for best t-shirt at the NAMI Walk. AICC engages in numerous, ongoing outreach efforts to inform the Native community of mental health services available—by attending pow wows, Elders Gatherings, and by providing educational workshops to community-based agencies.

For more information on AICC and its programs, please contact Dr. Melanie Cain at mcain@dmh.lacounty.gov. ♦



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Life has a purpose for everything. Sometimes we will struggle, we will be down and out... but there's something after that.

- Abner, veteran

Learn more about his journey at <http://bit.ly/AbnersStory> on YouTube.

We welcome submissions of inspirational quotes, poems or passages from LACDMH employees for future editions of Mental Health News. Please send yours to pio@dmh.lacounty.gov.

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