

ORANGE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE

VETERANS COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 16, 2023

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.



Committee Chair: Eric Richardson, Volunteers of America

MINUTES

Welcome and Introductions – Eric Richardson, Chair

Public Comments – Members of the public may address the Veterans Committee on items listed within this agenda or matters not appearing on the agenda so long as the subject matter is within the jurisdiction of the Veterans Committee. Members of the public may address the Veterans Committee with public comments on agenda items after the Veterans Committee member discussion. Comments will be limited to three minutes. If there are more than five public speakers, this time will be reduced to two minutes. In order to address the Veterans Committee, members of the public are to complete a Speaker Request Form prior to the beginning of each agenda item. Staff will call your name in the order received.

1. Veterans Committee Orientation – Eric Richardson, Chair, and Sarah Jones, Continuum of Care (CoC) Manager, Office of Care Coordination

a. Membership involved in Veterans Committee

Chair Eric Richardson provided background on the Veterans Committee membership, which include:

- Chair, CoC Board Member: Eric Richardson
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA): Melanie Martins
- Orange County Veterans & Military Families Collaborative (OCVMFC): Jeffery Pagano
- Veteran with current or past lived experience of homelessness: Audel Gonzalez
- Orange County Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) service provider agency: Michael Ruiz from Volunteers of America Los Angeles (VOALA)
- United Way Welcome Home OC Program: Becks Heyhoe
- Orange County housing providers and/or Public Housing Authorities: To be determined
- Health care provider that serves veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness: Sarah Nance from CalOptima Health
- Employment-focused agency that serves veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness: Jade Smith from Tierney Center for Veteran Services

Public Comment:

- Larisa Owen suggested including a representative for an Advocate for Family Members in the Veterans Committee membership.

- George Dixon noted that there were not any County of Orange (County) representatives in the Veterans Committee membership.

b. Meeting structure

- The Veterans Committee meetings are scheduled to occur the third Thursday of every odd month, from 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. The Veterans Committee may meet in person or virtually, depending on the desire of the group and availability of public meeting spaces.

c. Review current data related to veterans experiencing homelessness in Orange County

Jasmin Miranda from the Office of Care Coordination presented the following Coordinated Entry System (CES) data:

- There are currently 235 veterans on the Veteran Registry.
- In the last 12 months, 242 veterans have been housed in permanent, stable housing.
- Of the 235 veterans on the Veteran Registry, 169 veterans are experiencing unsheltered homelessness, 60 veterans are experiencing sheltered homelessness, and 6 veterans have been in an institutional setting less than 90 days.

Melanie Martins from VA provided the following Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Data:

- 115 veterans have a VASH voucher and are searching for housing.
- 12-16 orientations are being completed per week to voucher additional veterans.
- Two project-based VASH developments opening within the next four to five months which include Homekey Program locations – Tahiti in the City of Stanton with 10 VASH units and North Harbor in the City of Anaheim with 34 VASH units.
- Three additional project-based VASH developments will open between the end of 2023 and beginning of 2024.

Public Comment:

- Larisa Owen inquired on the identification process of veterans experiencing homelessness and suggested to include asking questions such as “Are you a family member of a veteran?” to ensure families of veterans are outreached.
- Joseph Latham shared the difficulties of obtaining data because many student veterans at risk of homelessness are ineligible for programs because a veteran’s G.I. Bill often puts them over income for program eligibility.
- Audel Gonzalez expressed that often apartment complexes do not consider G.I. Bill as income, which places a barrier for veterans in attempting to obtain housing.

2. Discuss Vision and Purpose of the Veterans Committee – Eric Richardson, Chair

a. Overview of Veterans Committee Charter and CoC Board Leadership Vision

- Chair Eric Richardson provided an overview of the Veterans Committee Charter and CoC Board Leadership Vision. The Veterans Committee will function as an advisory group to the CoC Board and align its efforts to those of the Orange County CoC Board Vision. The Veterans Committee aligns with the intent of ensuring that the CoC is actively working to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness for veterans, and measuring progress on these efforts. The Veterans Committee will provide leadership on the issue of veteran homelessness and

coordinate efforts to better serve veterans and their families in becoming permanently housed and achieving housing stability.

b. Discussion related to vision and purpose of the Veterans Committee

- Chair Eric Richardson noted that the following meetings may need to be more than an hour long.
- Melanie Martins suggested the creation of a hotspot map to better understand locations of veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Melanie Martins stated by using Point In Time data and by having a hotspot map, there would be better ideas on where to conduct street outreach for veterans.

Public Comment:

- A member of the public suggested the need for comprehensive training regarding veterans for outside veteran agencies, as well as clearer communication on the identification of veterans.
- Larisa Owen emphasized the need for properly identifying veterans and family members of veteran households.
- Max Madrid shared frequently seeing situations where veterans would like to go back home, but their family members are unwelcoming. Max Madrid also noted how the City of Santa Ana and City of Stanton have project -based VASH developments opening soon.
- Monica Garcia expressed many veterans are perceived to be opposed to going into shelter.
- A member of the public emphasized the need for further analysis as to how shelter opportunities are presented to veterans and other populations due to the stigma of shelter. They emphasized the need to change the communication as to how shelter opportunities are promoted.

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 18, 2023, from 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.