

# ORANGE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE

## VETERANS COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 21, 2024

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.



**Committee Chair:** Becks Heyhoe, Orange County United Way

### **Committee Members:**

Audel Gonzalez, Individual

Melanie Martins, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Jeffery Pagano, Orange County Veterans and Military Families Collaborative

Eric Richardson, Volunteers of America

Jade Smith, Individual

## **MINUTES**

**Welcome and Introductions** – Becks Heyhoe, 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 agenda item presentation. Comments will be limited to three minutes. If there are more than five public speakers, this time will be reduced to two minutes.

To address the Veterans Committee during the Public Comment period, 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.

Members of the public may also submit public comment by emailing [CareCoordination@ocgov.com](mailto:CareCoordination@ocgov.com). All comments submitted via email or at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting will be distributed to the Veterans Committee members and all comments will be added to the administrative records of the meeting. Please include “Veterans Committee Meeting Comment” in the email subject line.

### Public comments:

- Melanie Martins shared that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is adopting a one team approach, where all organizations and systems work together to reduce barriers for veterans. This includes working with community partners and public housing

authorities to quickly house veterans and address any barriers that arise. The goal is to create universal applications and processes that can be used throughout Orange County.

- Santa Bob provided an update on Project Home Key, specifically the Costa Mesa motel conversion, Mesa Vista. As of today, the first twelve residents are all veterans.

## **BUSINESS CALENDAR**

- 1. Veterans Committee Reorientation and Vision Setting** – Becks Heyhoe, Chair, and Sarah Jones, CoC Manager, Office of Care Coordination
  - i. Overview of Veterans Committee Charter and CoC Board Leadership Vision
  - ii. Discussion related to goals and vision for the Veterans Committee
  - iii. Current committee member vacancies

Chair Becks Heyhoe reviewed governance charter of both the Veterans Committee and CoC Board. Chair Becks Heyhoe reviewed the CoC leadership vision and objectives. The CoC has led the collaborative effort to build and sustain a fluid system to prevent homelessness and quickly intervene with solutions to end homelessness among veterans, transitional aged youth (TAY), and families, while making significant, measurable progress for all populations experiencing homelessness.

### **Public Comments:**

- Jaime Caraballo shared that there is a gap between public homeless services and that of veteran specific services. Jaime Caraballo asked if there can be a representative on the CoC board that can connect the board to veteran services and help bridge that gap.

### **Committee Discussion:**

- Melanie Martins shared the importance of having this committee bring back to the efforts of the CoC to their respective organizations.
- Chair Becks Heyhoe asked if it would be helpful to facilitate some trainings out of this committee around the CoC and Coordinated Entry System (CES) as it pertains to veterans?
- Melanie Martins shared that it would be helpful to know about resources within the CoC that are not veteran specific to be able to share with the committee's respective organizations.
- Melanie Martins expressed the concern around senior veterans that are at risk of being homeless and the barriers that are preventing them from qualifying for services.
- Chair Becks Heyhoe shared about the importance of having a veteran specific dashboard to share information on progress to ending veteran homelessness and floated the idea that more may need to be incorporated than is shown on the current veteran CES

dashboard for example Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) projects with veteran priority vacancies.

- Chair Becks Heyhoe spoke about the importance of collaboration with the housing authorities and the work of the CoC Housing Opportunities Committee.
- Chair Becks Heyhoe went over the seat vacancies on the committee: Orange County housing providers or Public Housing Authorities and Health care agency that serves veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Jade Smith shared how she is no longer with Tierney Center and shared how she now works in mental health. Jade asked if she should represent a health care agency seat.

**2. Targeted Outreach for Veterans Update** – Michael Ruiz, Program Manager, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) OC, Volunteers of America

Melanie Martins gave an overview of target outreach for veterans. The VA developed the Veterans Collaborative Outreach Team with community partners to enhance their ability to quickly reach and provide services to unsheltered homeless Veterans in their area. Members of the team conduct weekly outreach together.

Committee Discussion:

- Chair Becks Heyhoe shared information on City Net’s unsheltered survey and suggested this survey information be provided to the committee.

**3. Continuum of Care (CoC) Update** – Sarah Jones, CoC Manager

a. Veteran Registry Data

Sarah Jones presented an update on the Veterans Registry Data. Currently, there are 232 veterans on the Veteran Registry. In the previous 12 months, 205 veterans have been housed in permanent, stable housing. Over 30 agencies including the VA Community Resource and Referral Center., outreach providers, and shelter providers, continue to meet weekly to coordinate housing and services for veterans experiencing homelessness in Orange County. In the past 12 months, there has been a 1% decrease in the number of veterans experiencing homelessness in Orange County.

b. 2024 Point In Time Count

Sarah Jones shared an overview of the 2024 Point In Time Count. Over 1,100 volunteers provided more than 4,000 hours of service for the Point In Time Count. Volunteers assembled over 6,000 hygiene kits and snack packs. The Office of Care Coordination expects the results in early May. Additional identifying information was collected for unsheltered veterans encountered. The Point in Time Count updates the Veteran Registry and provides a follow-up tool for street outreach teams. Volunteers of America

was provided survey data collected during the Point in Time Count of all those surveyed who stated they were a veteran to coordinate targeting and outreach to unsheltered veterans.

Committee Discussion:

- Chair Becks Heyhoe noted a discrepancy on the chart. The chart had 232 Homeless veterans on the Veteran Registry, but in the month prior, there was 268. If there were 268 the month prior, and the inflow for January was 17, with the outflow 17, it does not equal 232. Chair Becks Heyhoe asked for some clarification.
- Sarah Jones will inquire about this discrepancy with Coordinated Entry System (CES) team.

**4. Provider Announcements and Feedback** – Becks Heyhoe, Chair

- a. Providers and members of the public are invited to share announcements and feedback related to Veteran homelessness.
- A member of the public shared that PATH has obtained a contract with the city of Newport Beach to do outreach. They have already placed six (6) individuals with temporary and permanent housing.

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, May 16, 2024, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Orange County United Way located at 18012 Mitchell South, Irvine, CA 92614