



## MEDIA RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### LA COUNTY LAUNCHES PILOT PROGRAM TO REDUCE VETERAN SUICIDE

*LA County Department of Military & Veterans Affairs Joins Mental Health, Public Health, and Medical Examiner/Coroner in implementing the Veteran Suicide Review Team*

LOS ANGELES, CA – On Thursday, September 29, Los Angeles County will officially launch the **Veteran Suicide Review Team (VSRT)**, a collaborative between City, County, Federal and private agencies to reduce veteran suicide in LA County.

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) will serve as lead in the project, working closely with Public Health, Los Angeles County Department of Military and Veteran Affairs (LACDMVA) and the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Medical Examiner/Coroner to implement a data-driven and a collaborative death review process to collect data, analyze veteran suicides, and identify gaps in service to enhance support structures.

The core team participating in the monthly reviews consists of multiple county agencies, VA VISN 22 and associated VA medical centers, FBI, CalVet, LA City, and suicide specific veteran community organizations who will work together to review data brought in from each of their departments to best identify trends to shape future strategy.

The LA County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the pilot program based on recommendations of a study released last year. The [study](#) revealed a 16% increase in veteran suicide from 2017 to 2018 in LA County.

Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Sheila Kuehl co-authored the [motion](#), which was adopted in February, 2022.

“Creating this team of experts to take a deep look at what can be done to mitigate veteran suicides is extremely important,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger. “The County has a big role to play when it comes to providing support services and being a resource for our veterans. I’m looking forward to hearing what the review team finds, and their actionable recommendations. It’s imperative that we step up to serve our veteran community and provide them with a security net so they can thrive.”



“It is a tragic fact that the incidence of veteran suicide continues to rise,” said LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. “It is critical that we do more to understand this phenomenon so we can better meet the needs of veterans who have mental health issues and prevent these tragic deaths. This effort will inform future policy and programming changes so we can successfully reduce the number of veterans who take their own lives.”

“The Veteran Suicide Review Team is an important step on the path to end veteran suicide in Los Angeles County,” said Dr. Lisa H. Wong, Acting Director of Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. “Working with our Co-Chairs for this pilot program—the Office of Violence and Prevention, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Desert Pacific-Healthcare Network and Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner—we will have the facts and essential data to identify trends that will inform countywide strategies for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.”

Jim Zenner, Director of the LA County Department of Military & Veterans Affairs and co-creator of the VSRT, said, “Los Angeles County is leading the way for the state of California through the commitment from our board to address veteran suicide and unprecedented collaboration at the federal, state, and local level. The Veteran Suicide Review Team will not only lead to an understanding of the surrounding circumstances of our veterans lost to suicide and the collection accurate data, it will arm our departments with knowledge we can use to more effectively target our resources to disrupt veteran suicide in our county.”

For more information: Kathleen Piché, (323) 847-6458, [kpiche@mva.lacounty.gov](mailto:kpiche@mva.lacounty.gov),

The LA County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) provides assistance to LA County veterans, active service members and their families with resources, programs, services and state and federal benefits, including: compensation and pension claims, burial benefits and services, medical and mental health referral, education and vocational rehabilitation, home loans and grants applications, employment and job placement assistance, DMV veteran designation, legal service referrals, appeal processes, incarcerated veterans and aid and attendance.

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