



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



hope



recovery



wellbeing



greater quality
of life



valued members
of the LA County
community



#YouMatter

Dear Veterans, Community Partners, and Stakeholders,

On behalf of the Los Angeles County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (MVA) and the Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN), I am proud to present the 2023 Annual Report. This report documents the outcomes, challenges, and data-driven results of VPAN’s unique, locally directed approach to veteran engagement. It also reinforces the critical role counties can play in addressing veterans’ issues through an integrated, peer-based model that complements federal and state systems and responds directly to local needs.

In 2023, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors extended VPAN through 2026, reaffirming its value as a scalable, community-centered solution. Collaborations with JVS SoCal, Goodwill SoCal, and the Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative have continued to strengthen our outreach and validate the peer approach.

VPAN remains Los Angeles County’s direct investment in a county-led strategy focused on linkage, not direct service. Our trained peer staff, who are veterans and military family members, help clients navigate to appropriate federal, state, county, and nonprofit services depending on eligibility. This approach ensures responsible stewardship of public resources and helps reduce strain on emergency and crisis systems.

A major milestone in 2023 was the VetConnect pilot, conducted in partnership with the VA and USC’s Center for Homelessness, Housing, and Health Equity Research. The pilot identified and referred 21 previously unconnected veterans to care during the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. This effort demonstrated how peers function as a critical access point to services for those who are often missed by traditional systems.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on using data to adapt and improve. Eligibility barriers, institutional mistrust, and system complexity persist, but the peer model remains an effective tool to bridge these gaps. As a county-led initiative, VPAN demonstrates how local government can play a direct and strategic role in supporting veterans through coordinated, community-based systems. The VPAN framework offers a reproducible method for outreach, navigation, and service connection that can inform efforts beyond Los Angeles County.

With respect and gratitude,



Jim Zenner
 Director
 Los Angeles County Department
 of Military and Veterans Affairs

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STRENGTHENING THE VETERAN
SERVING COMMUNITY THROUGH PEER
SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION

VPAN: Bridging Gaps with Peer Navigation

Veterans often face barriers navigating fragmented service systems. In 2023, VPAN's model of peer-based navigation increased access to housing, healthcare, employment, and education by embedding staff in communities across the County.

By focusing on navigation, not direct service, VPAN reduces eligibility friction and connects veterans through a no-wrong-door, low-barrier approach. Peers conduct warm handoffs and ongoing follow-up, helping clients engage with the VA, CalVet, and local services based on eligibility and need.

VPAN promotes responsible use of County resources by ensuring veterans access federal benefits when eligible, leading to long-term savings and more sustainable outcomes.



VPAN SD1 partnered with the Inland Valley Humane Society & SPCA to offer veterans free pet adoptions.



VPAN SD1 hosted the Welcome Home Vietnam Veteran event in Whittier, celebrating and honoring Vietnam veterans. The entire VPAN team supported the event.

Housing instability and behavioral health remain primary concerns for transitioning and unhoused veterans. VPAN peers played a central role in connecting veterans to emergency, transitional, and permanent housing solutions, and guided them to mental health services through the VA, DMH, or local providers.

Peers build trust where systems often fall short. Their shared experience helps reduce stigma, correct misinformation, and provide a sense of belonging. This has led to higher engagement, earlier intervention, and better alignment between needs and services.

Expanded partnerships in 2023 enhanced coordination with legal aid providers, workforce agencies, and housing partners. This collaborative network enabled peer staff to activate wraparound services and resolve multi-layered veteran challenges more effectively.



The VPAN SD3 team partnered with Goodwill SoCal to bring awareness to the need for wellness and self-care. The VPAN SD3 team also took the time to promote VPAN related services and more importantly, the VPAN mission.

THE PROGRAM

Community Driven Solution



Veterans often struggle with complex eligibility systems and mistrust of institutions. VPAN was created to close these gaps by embedding veteran and military family peers into field-based teams.

These peers are not service providers but navigators trained to guide clients to the right resources.

Their primary role is to link veterans to the VA when eligible, or connect them to county or nonprofit services when the VA cannot meet the need. VPAN’s success lies in its ability to leverage trust, reduce friction, and promote timely access.

It also serves as a veteran workforce development platform, employing peers with lived experience to support others, while creating meaningful careers and adding capacity to the local system. The model is driven by collaboration with Southern California Grantmakers and lead community-based organizations, each serving a Supervisorial District. Together, they implement a localized strategy to reduce barriers and ensure timely connection to care, housing, and economic opportunity.

VPAN Goals For 2023

- ↑ Develop a clear road map and “no wrong door”
- ↑ Increase Awareness
- ↓ Decrease Veteran Suicide
- ↓ Decrease Veteran Homelessness
- ↓ Decrease Veteran Under/Unemployment

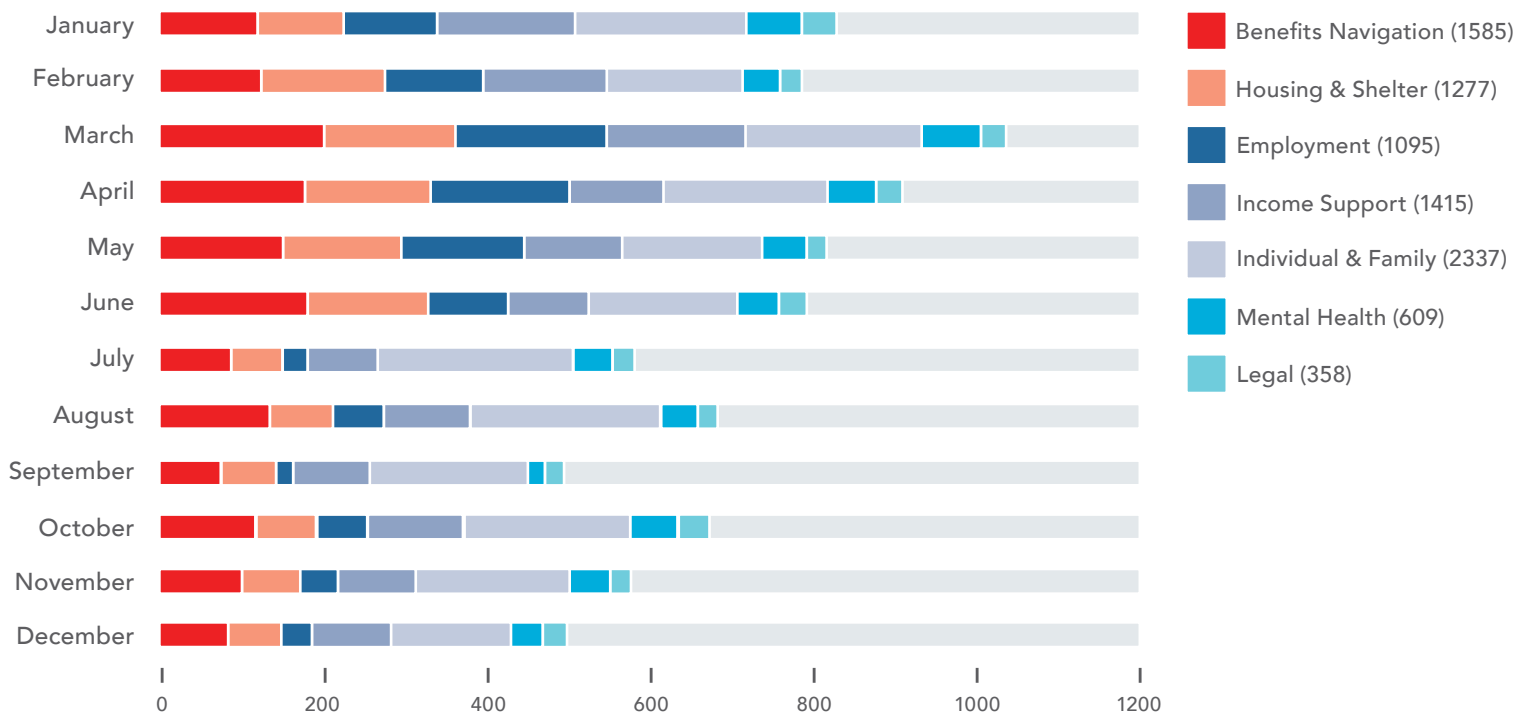
We Provide Resources for the Following Programs:

-  **Mental Health** *Treatment for trauma from combat exposure, military sexual trauma, relationship and intimacy issues*
-  **Substance Misuse Support** *Treatment for substance use disorders, including misuse of alcohol, prescription medication and other drugs*
-  **Housing** *Temporary and permanent housing for veterans and their families, help locating housing*
-  **Workforce Development and Employment** *Help with developing interview skills, resume creation, job coaching, plus volunteer and job opportunities*
-  **Healthcare** *Enrollment into VA healthcare, transportation to appointments, ensuring access to prescription medications*
-  **Education** *Support with school enrollment, vocational training, tuition assistance*
-  **Miscellaneous** *Food, childcare, transportation, financial assistance and more*
-  **Legal Services** *Help with eviction prevention, discharge upgrade, applying for VA benefits, etc.*
-  **Social Connection/Recreation** *Opportunities to connect with other veterans in a variety of settings*



VPAN was designed to leverage the value and impact of the peer-to-peer relationship among veterans. Veterans are at the heart of VPAN, serving other veterans, and their families, by helping them get connected to the support and services they need. VPAN’s main office is co-located in the L.A. County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (MVA) building, Bob Hope Patriotic Hall (BHPH) making it truly a one-stop shop for veterans’ services. The table below highlights the breadth of support VPAN has access to.

Service Type Case Numbers By Month



Service-related data for each Supervisorial District can be found on pages 18-22.

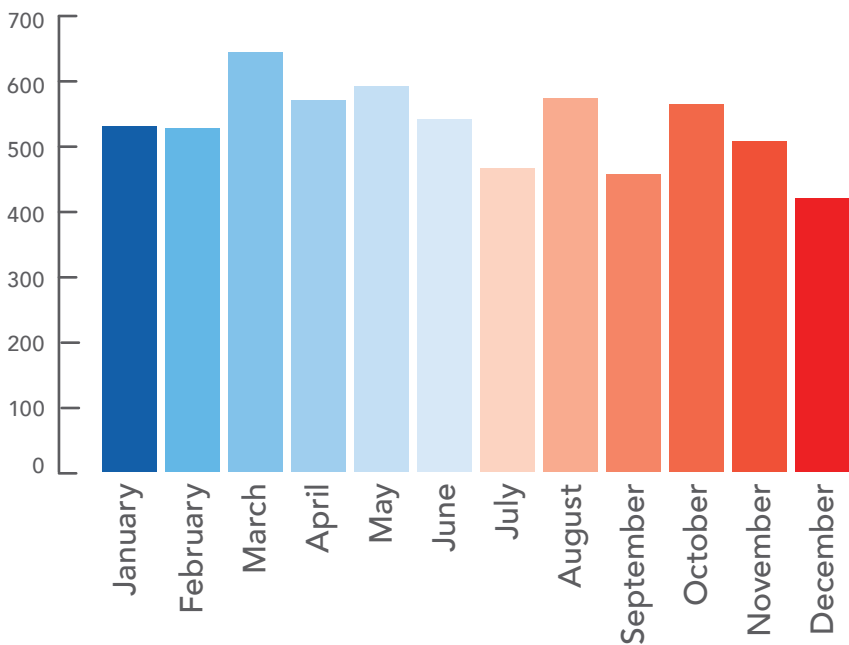
VPAN served 3,443 veterans and military family members in 2023. Of those, 62 percent were referred by external agencies, showing growing integration into the broader veterans service ecosystem. In total, VPAN staff responded to 5,529 service requests across Los Angeles County.

Top areas of need included benefits navigation, housing and shelter, employment services, income support, and mental health care. Peers did not provide these services directly, but ensured clients reached the appropriate provider and completed the process successfully.

Outreach through events, shelters, and field visits brought in new clients each month. Peer-led engagement built trust and helped reintroduce many veterans to systems they had previously disengaged from.



The VPAN SD3 team has historically kept a close relationship with California’s 29th Congressional District. For the last few years, the Former Congressmen Tony Cardenas collaborated with the VPAN team and community partners to champion the veteran cause. In this event, Congress Tony Cardenas is giving valentines cards written by children local elementary schools to the VPAN team, VFW Post 3834 Commander Raul Barragan, and Southern California Grantmakers representative.



Clients Served By Month



Once a quarter Patriotic Hall hosts the Los Angeles Veterans Orientation, or LAVO, a networking event for veterans returning to L.A. after their service. The relaxed evening, like the one here in September 2023, is fully catered and features potential employers as well as service providers.



Battle Buddy Christopher Waters (DMH VPAN) and fellow Army veteran Marshall Leonard converse in front of a new apartment complex in downtown L.A. where Waters was able to arrange permanent housing for the previously unhoused Leonard.



DMH VPAN Battle Buddies Eddie Madrid (Army vet), Sarah Vongsack (MilFam) and Pedro Arias-Perez (Army vet) table an event at the California Endowment honoring the work of their peers on the Veteran Suicide Review Team.

Of all Service Requests in 2023, these are the top 5 Needs.



1

INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY

- Caregiving Services
- Child Care



2

INCOME SUPPORT

- Veterans Pension & Disability Benefits
- Emergency / One-time Financial Assistance



3

BENEFITS NAVIGATION

- Benefits Eligibility Screening
- ID / Documentation Assistance



4

HOUSING & SHELTER

- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Emergency Housing



5

MENTAL HEALTH

- Treatment for trauma from combat exposure, military sexual trauma, relationship and intimacy issues



Number of
Veterans Served

3,443



Clients Served that
originated from a Referral
(% of Total Clients Served)

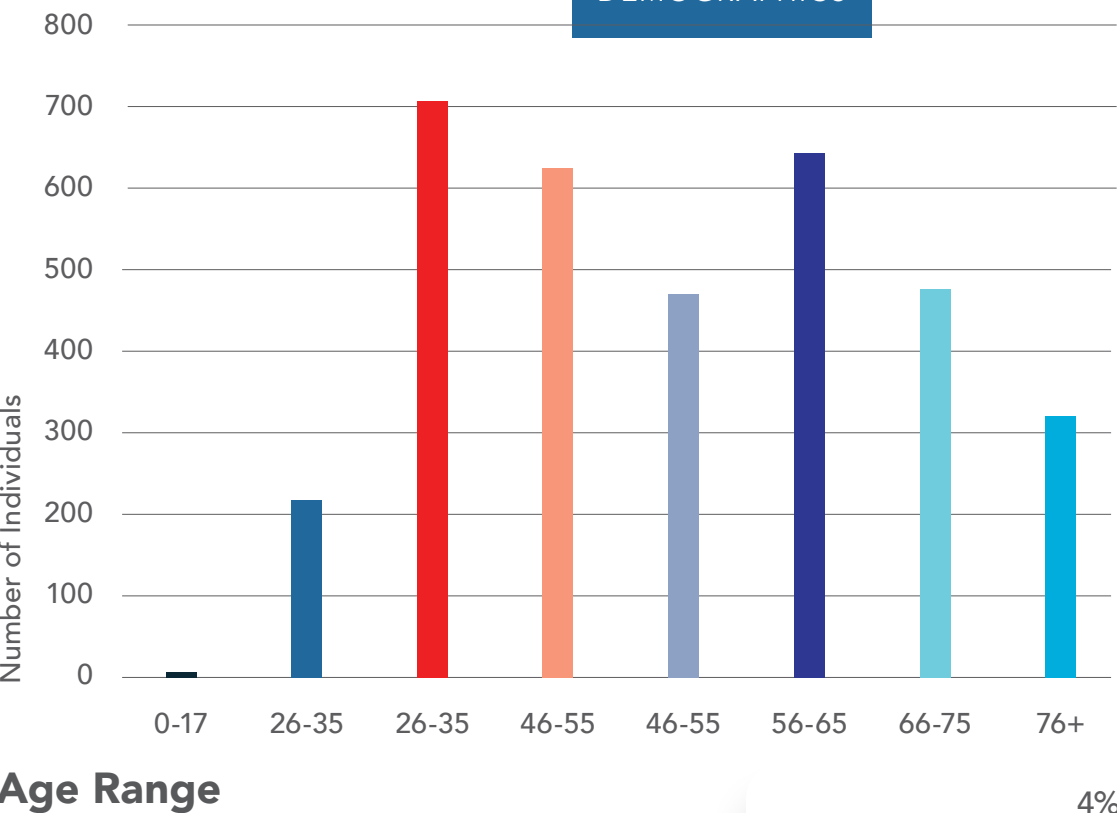
57%



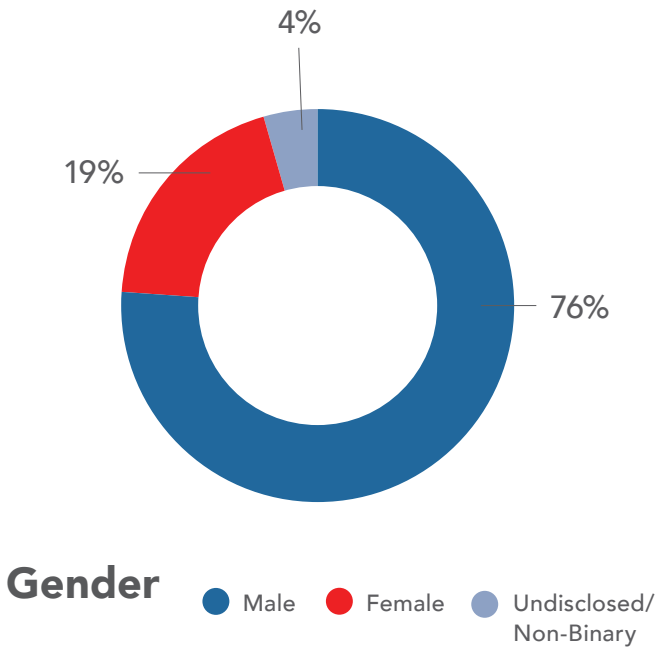
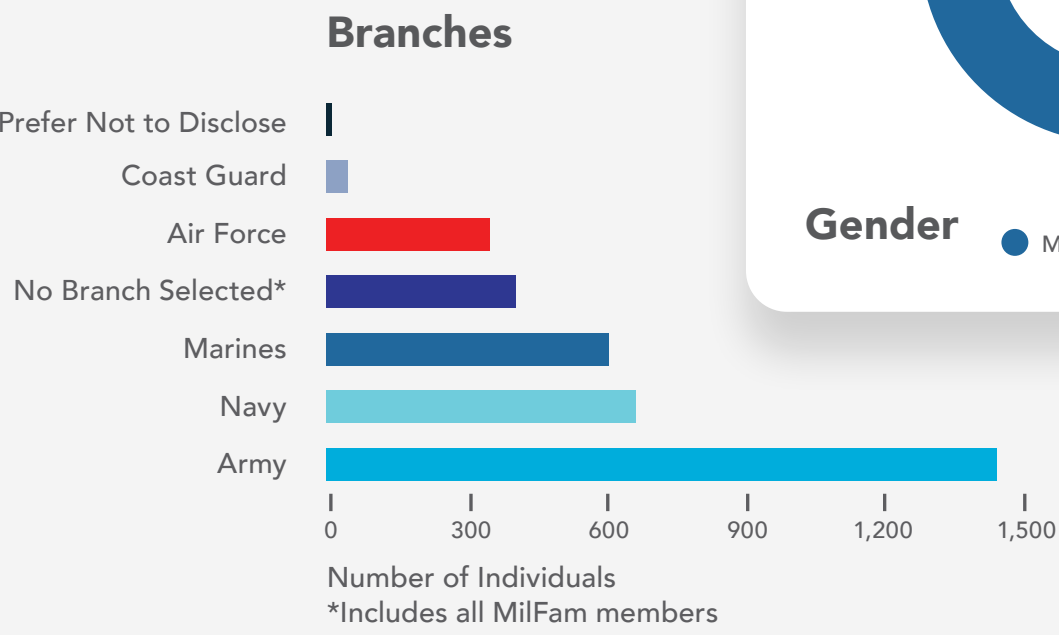
Number of
Service Requests

5,529

Who We Served in 2023



Age Range



“ Being a part of a program that not only supports the veteran but the veteran family as well is very important to me. This program also helps address the family members who can be impacted by the challenges the veterans face. Often times families - spouses and children are eligible for benefits that they may not be aware of. ”

The VPAN Model in Action | VPAN Rally Point Map



The VPAN Hub-and-Spoke Approach

VPAN’s delivery model is built around a hub-and-spoke framework. The central hub, Bob Hope Patriotic Hall, houses leadership, training, and strategic coordination. Spokes, or Rally Points, are located in each Supervisorial District. Veteran peers at each Rally Point serve as the front line of engagement. They are also co-located at Community Access Points (CAPs) to ensure visibility and immediate access. This decentralized structure allows rapid response, localized outreach, and ongoing support where veterans live and work. VPAN fills the gap between eligibility and service access by ensuring that veterans are guided to the right system at the right time.

VPAN in your Supervisorial District - A True Team Effort

Each Supervisorial District operates its own VPAN team, led by a contracted community-based organization. These teams are staffed by peer coordinators and specialists responsible for all outreach, intake, navigation, and follow-up.

MVA assigns Benefits Navigators to each district, who work in tandem with VPAN peers to ensure veterans understand and apply for the benefits they’ve earned.

VPAN HQ	Bob Hope Patriotic Hall 1816 S. Figueroa St. Los Angeles, CA 90015 vpan@dmh.lacounty.gov
DISTRICT 1	JVS SoCal 1180 Durfee Ave., South El Monte, CA 91733 vpan@jvs-socal.org Veteran Benefit Navigator: Alex Figueroa afigueroa@mva.lacounty.gov
DISTRICT 2	VOALA 700 N. Bullis Road, Compton, CA 90221 vpan@voala.org Veteran Benefit Navigator: Michele Felix mfelix@mva.lacounty.gov
DISTRICT 3	Goodwill SoCal 10324 Balboa Blvd., Granada Hills, CA 91344 vpangoodwill@goodwillsoocal.org Veteran Benefit Navigator: Hector Castillo hcastillo@mva.lacounty.gov
DISTRICT 4	Battleship Iowa 250 S. Harbor Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90731 vpan@veteranswest.org Veteran Benefit Navigator: Ken Gonzalez Jr. kgonzalessjr@mva.lacounty.gov
DISTRICT 5	JVS SoCal 237 E. Columbia Way, Lancaster, CA 93535 vpan@jvs-socal.org Veteran Benefit Navigator: Keith Niesen kniesen@mva.lacounty.gov

VPAN Partners



VPAN’s success is built on strong partnerships with public agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations. These collaborations allow for real-time problem-solving and access to a wide range of services that would be otherwise inaccessible through a single agency.

SoCal Grantmakers

The County’s original 2019 motion empowered the Department of Mental Health to work with Southern California Grantmakers (SCG), which serves as VPAN’s fiscal intermediary and backbone organization. SCG coordinates funding and strategy, aligning philanthropic and public resources to advance veteran access.

VPAN’s peer model works because it centers lived experience, is non-clinical by design, and responds to complex needs with a human-first approach.

These partnerships demonstrate how VPAN enhances, not duplicates, existing systems, functioning as a connective layer between institutions and the individuals they serve.

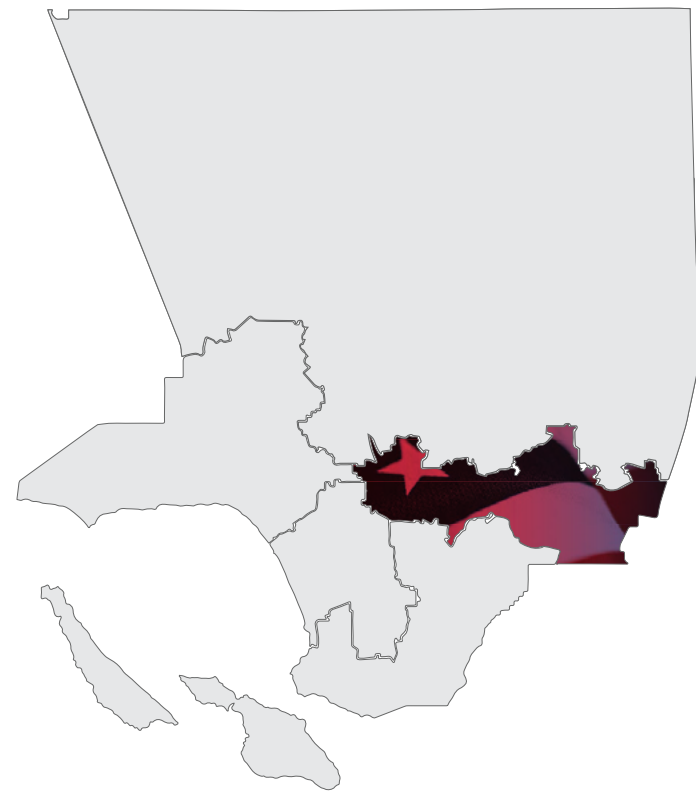
Appointed as the fiscal and strategic intermediary by the Board of Supervisors in 2019, SCG manages grantmaking, vendor selection, and program oversight. Their Veterans Funders Group has played an integral role in shaping and funding VPAN’s community-driven model. SCG selected five lead CBOs to anchor each Supervisorial District and provide locally tailored outreach and services.

Los Angeles **Veterans Collaborative**

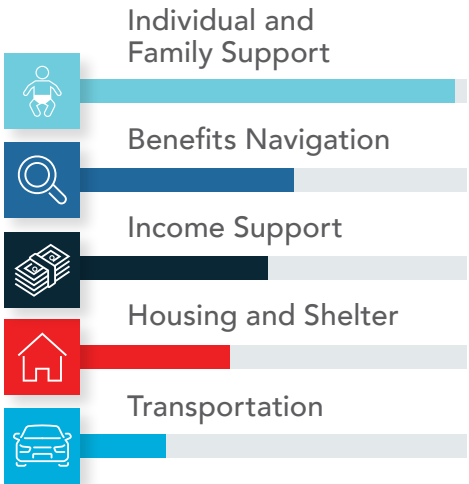
The Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative (LAVC) unites over 300 organizations and government entities to strengthen the regional veteran-serving network. LAVC’s backbone support complements VPAN’s goal of removing barriers and coordinating systems of care.



Battle Buddies and Army veterans Jose Rodriguez and Brianna Saravia (JVS-SD1) table a Veteran Access Point at the La Puente Senior Center.

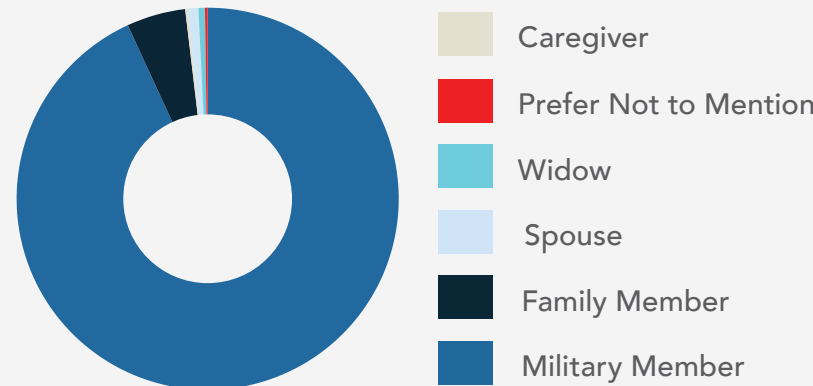


Top 5 Needs

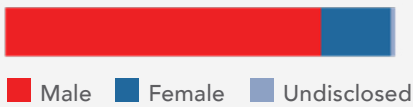


Total Clients 901
Cases 2,205
Referrals Sent 825
Time to Case Closure 14.2 days

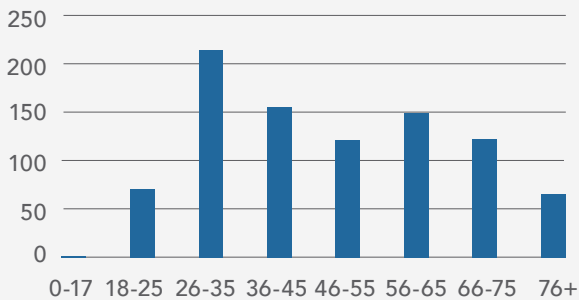
Breakdown of Clients



Gender



Age

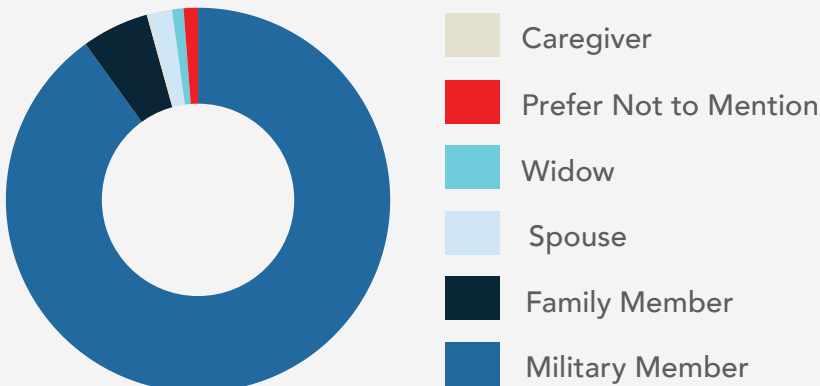


Top 5 Needs

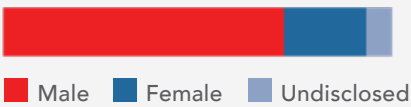


Total Clients 410
Cases 986
Referrals Sent 443
Time to Case Closure 40 days

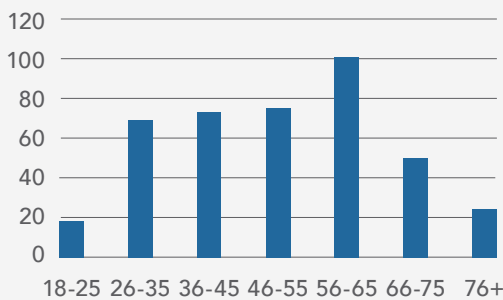
Breakdown of Clients



Gender

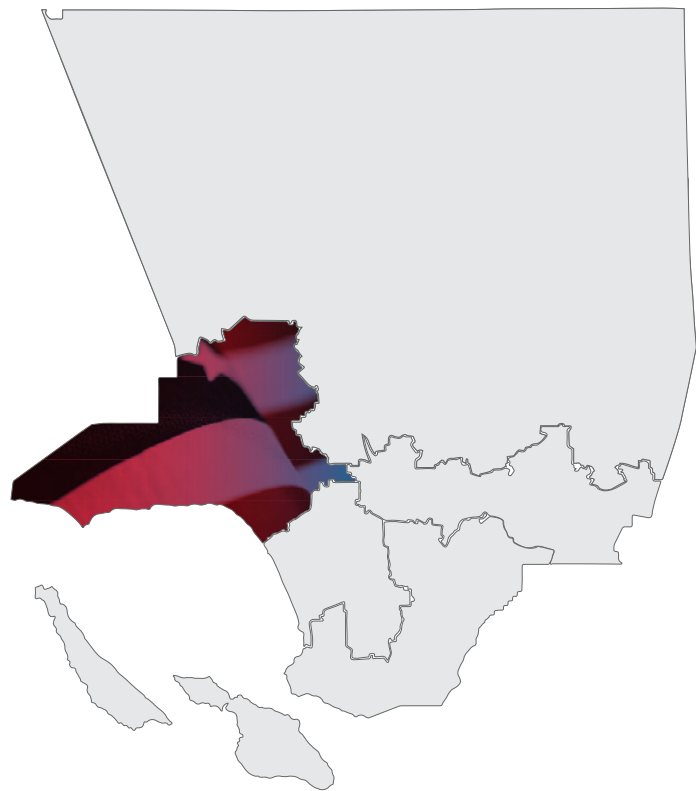


Age

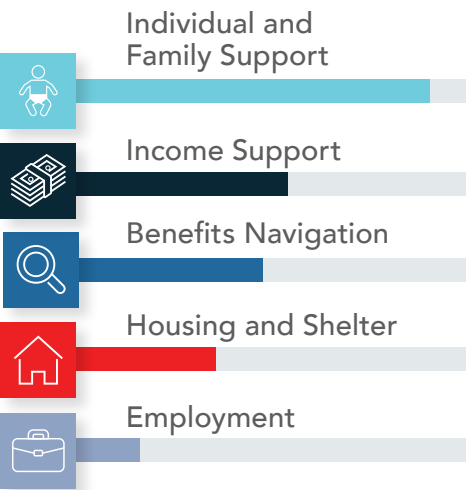


Goodwill SoCal

Supervisory District 3



Top 5 Needs



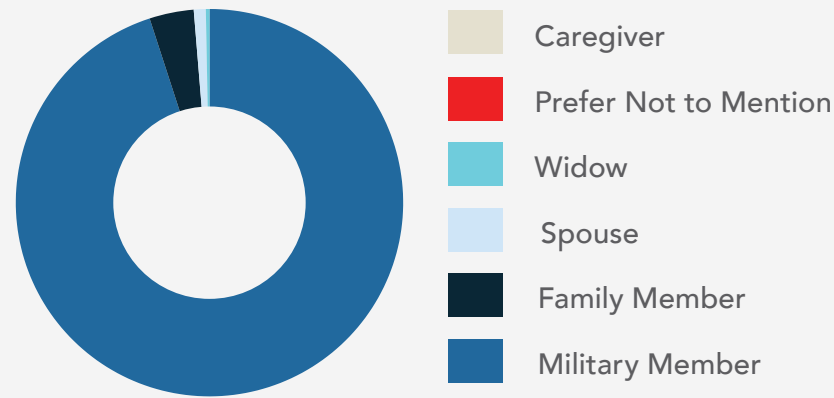
Total Clients 414

Cases 606

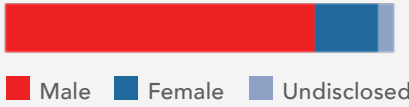
Referrals Sent 104

Time to Case Closure 60.4 days

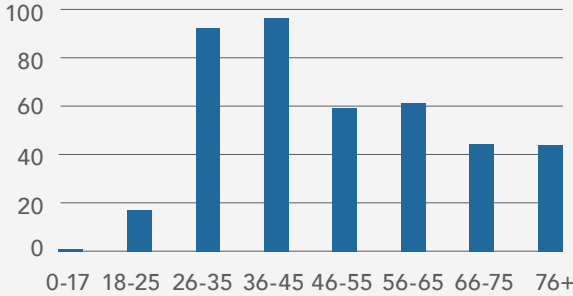
Breakdown of Clients



Gender

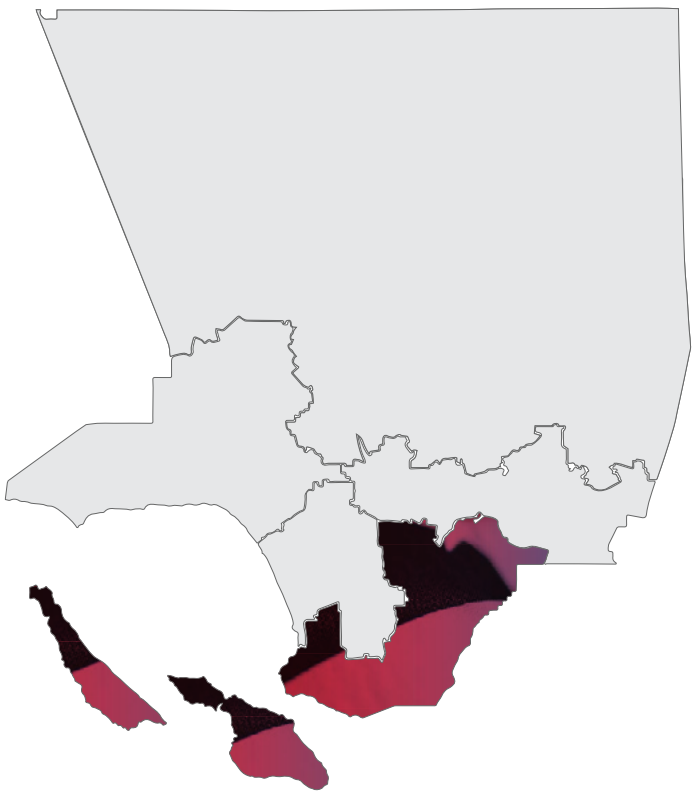


Age

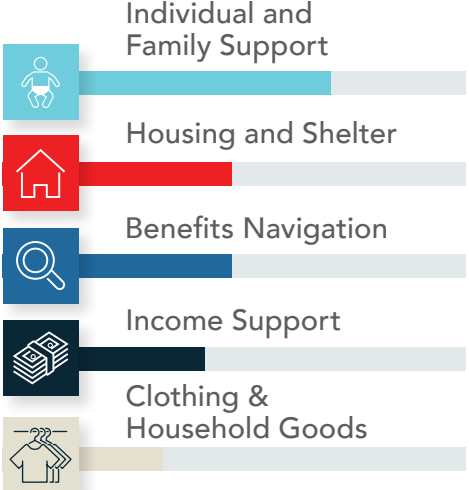


Battleship USS Iowa

Supervisory District 4



Top 5 Needs



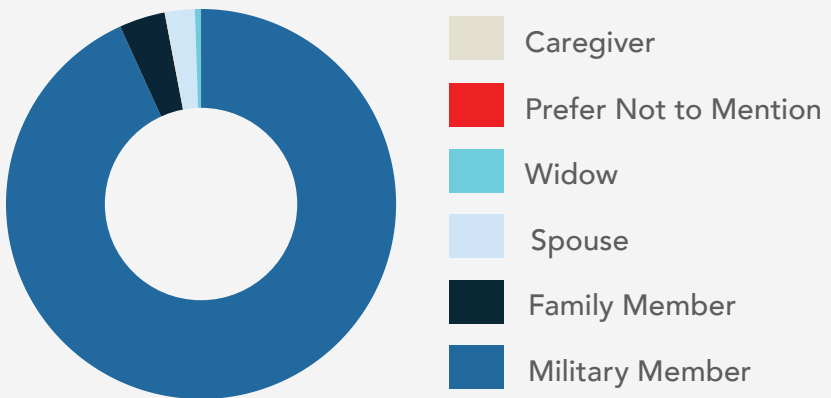
Total Clients 540

Cases 1,035

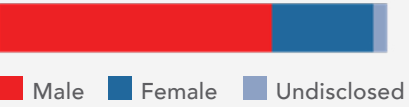
Referrals Sent 313

Time to Case Closure 24.3 days

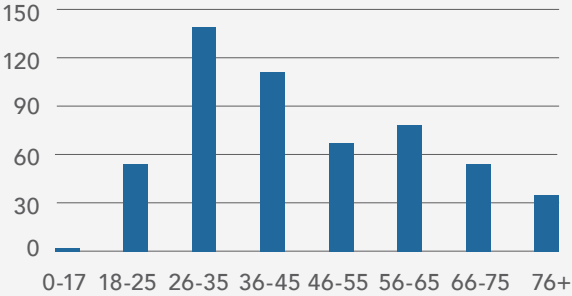
Breakdown of Clients



Gender



Age



JVS SoCal

Supervisory District 5

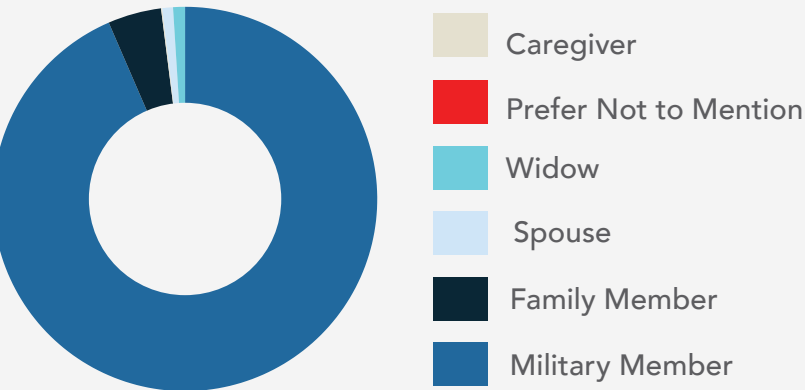


Top 5 Needs

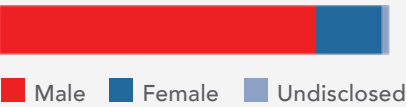


Total Clients 586
Cases 1,427
Referrals Sent 443
Time to Case Closure 31.3 days

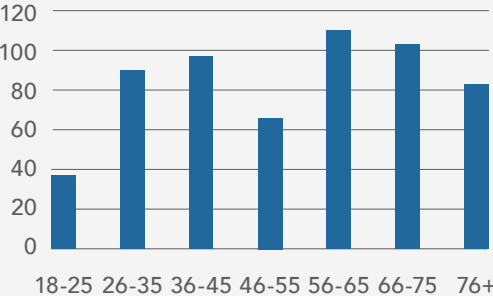
Breakdown of Clients



Gender



Age



Glossary

BHPH	Bob Hope Patriotic Hall
CAP	Community Access Point
CBO	Community-Based Organization
DoD	Department of Defense
ETS-SP	Expiration Term of Service Sponsorship Program
JVS SoCal	Job. Vision. Success, Southern California
DMH	Department of Mental Health
MVA	Military and Veterans Affairs
LAVC	Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative
MH	Mental Health
MILFAM	Military Family
RP	Rally Point
SCG	Southern California Grantmakers
SD	Supervisory District
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VFWC	Veteran Family Wellness Center
VOALA	Volunteers of America, Los Angeles
VPAN	Veteran Peer Access Network
VSO	Veteran Service Organization



**For immediate assistance with claims/benefits,
please contact (877) 4LA-VETS**

**For immediate support, call the Veterans Crisis Line at
988 or text 838255**

VPAN Support Line: 1-800-854-7771 Press *3

Email:

info@mva.lacounty.gov

veterans@dmh.lacounty.gov

#YouMatter
