

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
SAN DIEGO MILITARY AND VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

**MEETING NOTICE: In Person
North Central Live Well Center
5055 Ruffin Road, 2nd Floor Conference Room, San Diego CA 92123
Phone (858) 694-3222**

Public Video Viewing/Comment Option:

<https://sdcounty-ca-gov.zoom.us/j/87287664632>

**February 20, 2025
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

AGENDA

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:00 - 1:01 | 1. Call to Order |
| 1:01 - 1:02 | 2. Pledge of Allegiance |
| 1:02 - 1:03 | 3. Roll Call |
| 1:03 - 1:05 | 4. Action Item: Approval of December 19, 2024, Meeting Minutes |

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:05 - 1:15 | 5. <u>Guidelines for Public Comment on Items not listed on the agenda:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Members of the public may request to speak about any issue within the purview of the Board.➤ Each speaker will be limited to three (3) minutes.➤ Board members may not discuss or take action on issues raised during public comment unless the issue is listed in this Agenda. |
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PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION ITEMS

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:15 – 1:25 | 6. Discussion Item: New Community Connections: SDMVAC Council Members share community events they had recently attended |
| 1:25 – 1:55 | 7. Presentation Item: California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), San Diego District Office, Sean Johnson, Assistant Deputy Secretary of California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) |
| 1:55 – 2:25 | 8. Presentation Item: Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Solana Beach, Guy McDermott, Commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Solana Beach. |

- 2:25 – 2:45 9. **Discussion Item:** Establishing and Organizing Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Address Key Issues Facing Veterans: Food Security, Housing, Education, Employment, Healthcare and Legislation: All San Diego Military and Veterans Advisory Council Members
- 2:45 – 3:00 10 **Discussion Item:** Suggested topic for future meetings: All San Diego Military and Veterans Advisory Council Members

ADJOURNMENT/ NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting will be held on April 17, 2025, 1:00 – 3:00 pm, at 5055 Ruffin Road, 2nd Floor Conference Room, San Diego, CA 92123.

ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISABLED:

Agendas and records are available in alternative formats upon request. Contact the San Diego Military and Veterans Advisory Council Meeting staff contact at (858) 694-3222 with questions or to request a disability-related accommodation. To the extent reasonably possible, requests for accommodation or assistance should be submitted at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting so that arrangements may be made. Additional information can be found on the San Diego Military and Veterans Advisory Council (SDMVAC) website:

https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/ssp/veterans_advisory_council.html

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
SAN DIEGO MILITARY AND VETERANS
ADVISORY COUNCIL (SDMVAC)**

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**SDMVAC Meeting Minutes
December 19, 2024**

Members Present

Danny Jackson
Jude Litzenberger
Philip Kendro
Mark Gracyk
Jaime Yslas
Paula Jansen

Members Absent

Tony Teravainen

Staff Present

Alberto Banuelos, Asst. Director, Self-Sufficiency Services
Amy Klock, OMVA
Ray Flores, OMVA

Guests

Dr. Frank Pearson – Director, VA San Diego Healthcare System
Russ Thompson – Director, San Diego Pro Sports Military Alliance
Cody Ploss – Accredited Residential Manager
Steve Dilley – Director, The Veterans Art
Danny De Leon Peralta
Morghan Henry

1. Meeting called to order at 1:02 pm by Jude Litzenberger, Chair
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
 - SDMVAC present members noted above.
4. The October 17, 2024, meeting minutes were approved by four Council Members present and two abstentions.
5. Public Comments:
 - No public comment.

6. **Discussion Item:** New Community Connections: SDMVAC Council members share community events they had recently attended. The Council members share insights from their engagement at a recent Veteran's tribute event.
7. **Presentation Item:** VA San Diego Healthcare System, Dr. Frank Pearson, Director of the VA San Diego Healthcare System. Dr. Frank Pearson gave an overview of the VA San Diego Healthcare System's mission, vision, leadership, and structure. He also shared their key priorities, including patient safety, employee engagement, customer service, timely care, community care, suicide prevention, and system modernization.
8. **Presentation Item:** San Diego Pro Sports Military Alliance, Russ Thompson, Director of San Diego Pro Sports Military Alliance. Russ Thompson outlined the San Diego Pro Sports Military Alliance, a collaborative initiative by local professional sports team to honor and support military members, veterans and their families. The Alliance offers complimentary and discounted tickets, in-game promotions, on-base activation, and various forms of support to the military community.
9. **Discussion Item:** Suggested topic for future meetings: All San Diego Military and Veterans Advisory Council. Chair Jude Litzenberger suggested planning a strategy to synthesize the data collected from previous presenters and extend invitation to additional Veterans-related organizations for future presentations to monitor and track the information effectively.

ADJOURNMENT/SET NEXT MEETING:

The meeting was adjourned at 2:54 p.m. The next regular meeting will be held on February 20, 2025

ITEM #6 New Community Connections: SDMVAC Council members share community events they had recently attended

All San Diego Military and Veterans Advisory Council Members



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**LIVE WELL
SAN DIEGO**

ITEM #7 California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)

Sean Johnson, Assistant Deputy Secretary of California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)





CalVet Veterans Services Division

Benefits Support, Mental Health, and Permanent Supportive Housing

Sean Johnson

Assistant Deputy Secretary, Veterans Service Division

California Department of Veterans Affairs

CalVet Serves California Veterans

- World class skilled nursing/assisted living long-term care in eight Veterans Homes (Chula Vista Home)
- Veterans Transition Assistance Program (CalTAP)
- CalVet Home Loans
- Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) support services
- Certification of private colleges to receive GI Bill payment
- Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) grants to Counties
- Much more



CalVet Local Interagency Network Coordination

San Diego County
Point of Contact

Lance Strong
SDLINC@calvet.ca.gov





California Department
of Veterans Affairs

CalVet Benefits Support Operations



CalVet Veterans Benefits Support System

- Veterans Representative Academy
 - 113 representatives accredited in 2024, 6 in San Diego County
- Subvention (SFY 2023/24)
 - Statewide Totals (claims, new/increased benefits in \$\$)
 - 302,897 claims, \$578.9 million in new/increased benefits
 - San Diego County = (w/subvention payment \$\$)
 - 27,487 claims, \$18 million in new/increased benefits
 - San Diego County Subvention Payment = \$769,166 (supports CVSO budget of \$4.8 million)
 - Medi-Cal Cost Avoidance Veteran Benefit Enhancement (VBE) = \$3,910
- District Office Support
 - Quality Review
 - Power of Attorney



District Office Reviewed Electronic Claims

	Oakland DO	Los Angeles DO	San Diego DO
Jan-Mar 2024	4643	5295	1575
Apr-Jun 2024	4803	5773	1934
Jul-Sep 2024	5331	5474	2534
Oct-Dec 2024	5725	4908	2936
2024 TOTAL	20,502	21,450	8,979



San Diego District Office at a Glance

SDDO has received a total of 5,864 submissions to review from Counties in SFY2024/25, roughly 828 claims submitted to VA from SDDO.

County	July 24	Aug. 24	Sept. 24	Sept. 24	Oct. 24	Nov. 24	Dec. 24	Jan. 25
Orange	146	138	150	150	183	122	162	173
Riverside	330	339	420	420	373	370	328	420
San Diego	323	337	266	266	347	353	344	360





California Department
of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Mental Health/Homelessness Initiatives Overview



Veterans Support to Self Reliance (VSSR) Pilot

\$25 million in grant funds awarded throughout California. The mission of the VSSR Pilot is to evaluate enhanced supportive services models in Permanent Supportive Housing to:

- Improve outcomes for aging and high acuity veterans
- Decrease housing displacement
- Allow veterans to age in place in a community of care

Funded positions:

- Service Assistant, Peer Specialist, Mental Health Specialist, Transportation Specialist, Occupational Therapist, Social Worker (Geriatric), Nurse, VSSR Pilot Specialist
- Flexibility in direct hire/contracting for staff positions.

Locations:

- Current operating PSH sites with existing services staff
- Established service coordination, case management, property management



CVHI-Mental Health Support Grant Program

The goal of the CVHI-MHS grant program is to expand access to mental healthcare for veterans and their families, especially those who are historically underserved, by supporting a sustainable network of veteran-specific resources throughout the state of California with three-year grants.

- \$38 million in competitive grants serving each LINC region
- Comprehensive, coordinated statewide approach to minimizing the incidence of veteran suicide by focusing on prevention, early intervention, and treatment services.
- **Scope:** Outreach, Peer Support, Case Management, Outpatient Clinical Care, Nontraditional & Innovative Approaches
- **Expectations:** Improve the wellbeing of CA veterans and their families experiencing barriers to mental healthcare



Permanent Supportive Housing for Veterans (Proposition 1)

- \$1.065 billion worth of housing investments for veterans who are at risk of homelessness, experiencing homelessness, or experiencing chronic homelessness who have mental health needs or a substance use disorder.

Summer 2024



Engage Stakeholders

Stakeholder Engagement including **demand survey** and small group **listening sessions** to inform program overview document release.

Late 2024



Issue Notice of Funding Availability

Requests for applications for bond funding will leverage existing Homekey models.

Early 2025



Accept Applications

Technical Assistance and webinars for **potential NOFA applicants** will be prioritized prior to opening of the application portal.

Summer 2025



Announce Awards

Awards will be announced on a rolling basis as applications are received and reviewed.

Homekey+
A place to live — and thrive.



Modeled after HCD's existing Homekey Program grants for housing with supportive services:

- Extremely low income (30% AMI or less).
- Experiencing or at-risk of homelessness + behavioral health challenge
- At least 5 years supportive services required; initial seed money for operations but looking for long term sustainability
- Coordination with County Behavioral Health department. Large counties (population over 100k) required to have veteran on Behavioral Health planning board.

Eligible Use of Funds:

- Acquisition, rehabilitation of motels, hotels, hostels, or other sites and assets that could be converted to permanent housing.

Eligible Entities:

- Cities, Counties, regional and local public entities
- Development Sponsor (loans only)

CalVet Veterans Services Division

Roberto Herrera Deputy Secretary

roberto.herrera@calvet.ca.gov

Sean Johnson Asst. Deputy Secretary

sean.johnson@calvet.ca.gov

David Lawrence Grant Manager

david.lawrence@calvet.ca.gov

Judy Porter VSSR Pilot Manager

judy.porter@calvet.ca.gov



ITEM #8 Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Solana Beach

Guy McDermott, Commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Solana Beach



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**LIVE WELL
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NEXTPEAK

PROJECT

RESTORE HOPE

Introduction

Next Peak's Mission:

**"To empower Veterans and their families to return to wholeness through
Community and Connections."**

Vision: Create safe spaces for Veterans and their families across America to allow for true healing and hope.

Purpose: Through community and authentic connection, address the emotional and social challenges veterans face when returning home and help them assimilate back into the family system post service.

The Problem

The **VA** medical system designed for the masses has caused a systemic failure for those in need for specialized care particularly, the Combat Veterans.



Massive Backlog of Claims

The average wait time to see a health care provider is 6 weeks, sometimes months and in some cases - even a year.



Inadequate Care

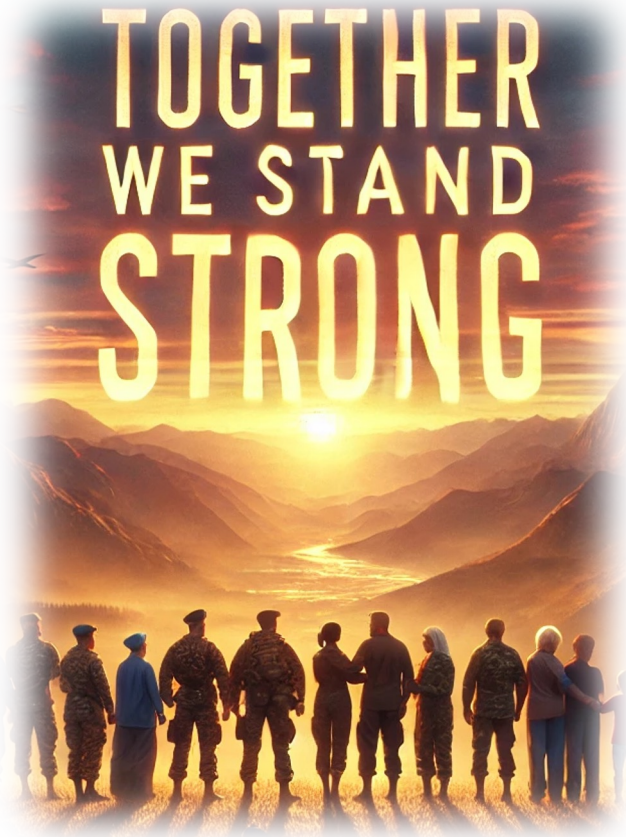
There are limited resources for specialized care and a shortage of mental health providers, which has forced the VA to outsource help via community care.



Limited Access to Mental Health Resources

The cost of sustained combat and inadequate treatment are unresolved medical issues, chronic pain, suffering and higher rates of suicide.

Call to Action



“If we are going to send our veterans to combat, what are we doing as a community to mend them?”

The Need: A comprehensive, integrative approach to healing that complements the VA system and meets veterans where they are.

The Opportunity: Project Restore Hope transforms VFWs into holistic centers of healing and community.

Veteran Healing Veterans One connection at a time!

Overview

Starting Point: Transforming Solana Beach VFW Post 5431 into a state-of-the-art healing center.

Features:

- Non-Clinical medical modalities.
- Physical wellness programs (yoga, fitness, alternative therapies).
- Peer-led recovery and connection groups.
- Family support programs.

Goal: Create a scalable model that can be replicated in cities with large veteran populations.



PROJECT
RESTORE HOPE

History/Legacy of the VFW



Founded: 1899 to Support Veterans Returning from Foreign Wars
The VFW was established over a century ago to advocate for the rights and well-being of veterans, addressing the unique challenges they faced after serving abroad.

Pivotal Role: Advocated for the Establishment of the VA Medical System
The VFW played a critical role in shaping veteran healthcare, driving the creation of the VA medical system to ensure returning service members received the care they deserved.

Full Circle: Complementing the VA with Non-Traditional Healing Approaches
Today, the VFW is uniquely positioned to fill care gaps by offering holistic services such as mental health support, wellness programs, and peer counseling, complementing traditional VA care.

Modern Mission: Reignite the VFW as a Trusted Community Hub
By evolving into a space for healing, education, and connection, the VFW seeks to re-establish itself as a vital resource for veterans and their families in every community.

This transformation honors its legacy while empowering future generations of veterans to thrive.

Our Approach

- **Integrated Holistic Healing:**

- Partnerships with non-clinical treatments modalities..
- Physical: Fitness and alternative medicine.
- Social: Building authentic connections and a sense of belonging.

- Inclusivity:**

- Focus on Iraq and Afghanistan veterans while embracing Vietnam-era and all other service members.

- Community-Based Model:** Designed to engage both veterans and civilians in collective healing.



Pilot Project: Solana Beach VFW



Transformative Goals:

- Renovate the facility into a welcoming, healing-focused space.
- Introduce 10 holistic programs in 2025.
- Serve as a blueprint for national expansion.

Local Impact:

Increase veteran participation by 50% within the first year.

Engage the broader Solana Beach community in veteran support efforts.

Long Term Vision:

Replication: Roll out the Project Restore Hope model to 10 additional cities by 2030.

Impact: Serve 1 Million+ veterans and their families annually.

Cultural Shift: Change the perception of VFW Posts from aging institutions to vibrant centers of hope and healing.

The Ask

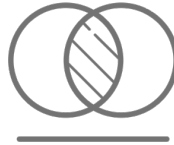
\$1.2 Million

HOW IT BREAKS OUT:



\$500k

Facility renovations and
Upgrade



\$400k

Program development
and staffing



\$300k

Outreach and community
Engagement

Why Your Investment Matters: Every dollar helps rebuild the lives of veterans and their families while reinvigorating a historic institution.

Why Support Project Restore Hope?

Innovative Solution

Project Restore Hope is the first initiative to integrate holistic healing into the VFW system. By addressing mental health, physical wellness, and emotional resilience, it redefines what veteran care can be.

Proven Commitment

In 2024, successful pilot programs demonstrated real impact, offering veterans and their families life-changing support while fostering deeper community engagement.

Scalable Impact

Designed as a replicable model, Project Restore Hope has the potential to revolutionize care for veterans across the country, creating a nationwide network of healing and connection.

Powerful Legacy

This initiative breathes new life into the VFW's 120-year history, restoring its relevance as a trusted resource for veterans while honoring its legacy of advocacy and service.

Why It Matters

Every veteran deserves more than survival—they deserve to thrive. Project Restore Hope fills the gaps in care and creates a brighter future for those who've given so much.



Closing & Call to Action

Join Us:

Together, we can restore hope, transform communities, and empower America's heroes.

How to Get Involved:

Donate: Invest in hope for veterans and their families.

Advocate: Spread awareness about our mission.

Volunteer: Join us in transforming lives.

Contact Information:

Website: NextPeak.org

Email: guy@nextpeak.org

Phone: 619-301-0502



NEXTPEAK

PROJECT
RESTORE HOPE

Let's Go.



ITEM #9 Establishing and Organizing Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Address Key Issues Facing Veterans: Food Security, Housing, Education, Employment, Healthcare and Legislation

All San Diego Military and Veterans Advisory Council Members



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ITEM #10 Suggested topic for future meetings

All San Diego Military and Veterans Advisory Council Members



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