

Critical Concerns for California's Veterans

- **67% of California homeless veterans are not only homeless, but are unsheltered – living in settings defined as “unfit for human habitation”.** 29% of all homeless veterans in the U.S. live in California.
- **Just 31 of California's 58 counties have Veteran Treatment Courts which support treatment instead of incarceration for justice-involved veterans.** Many counties with high percentage veteran populations do not have access to appropriate treatment or diversion programming.
- **69% of California's veterans are 55 years old or older; 25% are over 75 y/o.** Special care is needed to support the well-being of our aging veterans, their families, and caregivers.
- **Women veterans face serious challenges:**
 - the number of homeless women veterans increased by 7% nationwide from 2016-2017, compared to 1% for male veterans.
 - at all ages, women veterans are more likely to be divorced than their male veteran or non-veteran female counterparts. Greater financial burdens and single parenthood challenges often ensue.
 - the percent increase in suicide rates among women veterans was higher than their male veteran counterparts for the first time ever in 2016-2017

- **California veteran's suicide rate is 28.8 per 100,000 – compared to California's general population suicide rate of 13.6 per 100,000.** 1.4 California veterans died of suicide per day in 2015 (most current verified data). Although veterans comprise only 8.5% of U.S. adult population, they constitute at least 18% of all U.S. suicides.



- **Veteran opioid overdose deaths nationally are an estimated 19.85 per 100,000 compared to 13.3 per 100,000 national general population.** Despite knowing that veterans' risk is greater than their non-veteran counterparts, California lacks veteran-specific community data, impeding life-saving prevention and targeted intervention efforts.
- **Most County Mental Health Departments do not support veteran-specific care.** Despite veterans being a “priority” population for Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds, only 19 counties mentioned veterans in their MHSA County Plans.

CAVSA's Veteran Action Agenda 2018-2019

Based on our *State of the Veteran Community-2018 Report* findings, CAVSA member agencies and stakeholders are focusing on five key topics described here with highlights of some of the 22 action items.

1. Address Housing Challenges for Veterans

Four action items include focusing on older, women, Post-9/11 veteran families with children as priority populations for housing

2. Expand Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Activities

Four action items include providing veteran-specific suicide care activities to first responders, Emergency Department staff, County Veteran Service Officers, and Employment Development Department personnel to reduce suicide attempts

3. Expand Advocacy Capacity and Data Collection Efforts

Five action items include working with the VA and rural counties to develop targeted data on opioid addiction rates and programs in high risk rural counties.

4. Engage with the California Judicial Council on Shared Interest Areas

Three action items include exploring legislative and policy paths to expand Veteran Treatment Courts in California.

5. Build Community and Agency Partnerships

Six action items include building connections with community-based non-veteran-specific providers of mental health and social services to provide support on veterans and military-connected family issues.



***“Knowing is not enough; we must apply.
Willing is not enough; we must do.”***

--Goethe

CAVSA Mission

CAVSA’s mission is to address and promote the employment, training, education, housing, medical, and business needs of veterans and their families.



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State of the Veteran Community-2018 Report Key Findings & Action Agenda

California is home to the largest veteran population in the U.S. and now faces the challenge and opportunity to lead the nation with our demonstration of both the will and allocation of the means to “do right by” our veterans and their families who served alongside them.



To assess the most critical needs of California’s veterans and their families, the California Association of Veteran Service Agencies (CAVSA) developed the first *State of the Community – 2018* Report to provide an evidence base for CAVSA’s work. CAVSA is stepping up to meet these identified needs. Please join us.