



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

[californiaveterans.org](http://californiaveterans.org)



California Association of Veteran Service Agencies

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Behavioral Health Transformation is California's newly launched initiative to implement Proposition 1 and modernize the state's behavioral health system. California Association of Veteran Service Agencies (CAVSA), a consortium of six nonprofit veteran service providers working together to address the needs of California's veterans, is fully engaged in this great effort. Our members serve veterans throughout the state in urban and rural communities stretching from Eureka to San Diego. Collectively, we inform public policy and advocate at the state and local levels for mental health, housing assistance, employment and medical needs for veterans. Addressing these needs will lift veterans and their families out of poverty and homelessness.

“Every single veteran in our golden state deserves our support.”

—Lindsey Sin, Secretary, CalVet

To guide our work ahead, this annual report contains up to date data on challenges that too many veterans face – homelessness, suicide, mental illness, substance abuse disorder, food insecurity, and more. We share in both the tragedy and the resilience needed for transformation—a resilience drawn daily from the many successes of CAVSA members. Transformation demands strength, and CAVSA members demonstrate this strength every day through their achievements. Transformation also requires vision, such as that captured in CAVSA's advocacy agenda for 2025 and the words of CalVet Secretary, Lindsey Sin: *“Every single veteran in our golden state deserves our support.”*



# Acknowledging Veteran Needs

## Homelessness.

There were 1,279 fewer veterans experiencing homelessness in California on a single night in January 2024 than in January 2023.

## Food Insecurity.

23% of Californians were food insecure in 2023. That is 278,465 veterans when applied to the veteran population.

## Suicide Deaths.

More veterans, 570, died by suicide this year than last year, 559.

## Overdose Deaths.

Of the 334 Californian veteran opioid overdose deaths, 278 of them were attributed to fentanyl.

## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

6% of veterans nationally are estimated to have PTSD. Applied to the veteran population in California, that would be 97,462 veterans.



San Diego Veterans Village participates in Veterans Day Parade, November 2024

Measure	California Veterans N= 1.4 million
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	9,310 Approximately 0.7% of California Veterans
Persons Experiencing Food Insecurity	278,465 Approximately 20% of California Veterans
Suicide Deaths	570 Age-adjusted rate: 41.0 per 100,000 individuals
Overdose Deaths Any Opioid	334
Fentanyl	278
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	97,462

# Celebrating Veteran Service



Leaders gather for 35th annual Veterans Village of San Diego Stand Down, attended by San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria, August 2024

[Veterans Village of San Diego](#) Stand Down events are a vital lifeline for veterans struggling to regain stability and access to critical resources. Over \$28,000 worth of dental care, more than 3,000 meals, and 3,083 pairs of socks were received by veterans and their families. [Watch a short video here.](#)

[U.S.VETS](#) hosted their Annual Suicide Prevention and Awareness Virtual Summit. Guest speakers provided testimonials and insights to lived experiences and clinical implications, mental health outreach and suicide prevention.

[New Directions for Veterans](#) At OASIS for Women Veterans, ND-Vets creates a therapeutic and safe environment where military women recover and heal through education, wellness, and recovery.

[California Veterans Assistance Foundation's](#) Covey Cottages is moving along as planned! The 12-unit village of new homes will provide permanent housing for veterans who are homeless or at-risk of falling into homelessness.

[Swords to Plowshares](#) is celebrating [five decades](#) of service and advocacy. Each year they support nearly 3,000 homeless, low-income and at-risk veterans in the Bay Area.

[Nation's Finest](#), based in Northern California, hosted a veterans advocacy group in October to learn more about concerns they have accessing needed services. At the session, veterans shared stories of their trials, tribulations, and successes. Together they worked on strategies to bring these stories to state policy makers and local community leaders.

[CAVSA](#) hosted a webinar titled *Serving Those Who Served: California's Mental Health Programs*, featuring expert speakers discussing Proposition 1's impact on veteran mental health and housing needs.

# Veteran Legislative Victories

Each year, CAVSA monitors key legislation impacting veterans and advocates on priority issues such as mental health, housing, and support services. During our June Lobby Day, we held 17 meetings with legislative offices and were honored on the Assembly Floor during the presentation of HR 104 (Reyes).

## [HR 104 \(Reyes\) Relative to Veterans.](#)

The Legislature declared June as California Veterans Awareness Month and gave recognition to the work veteran service providers are doing statewide.

## [SB 1025 \(Eggman\) Pretrial Diversion for Veterans.](#)

This bill includes certain felony offenses in the pretrial diversion program for veterans if their condition significantly contributed to the crime, requiring courts to make this determination unless there is clear evidence otherwise. It mandates counties to coordinate services for these veterans, creating a local program. The Governor's signing message can be found [here](#).

## [Proposition 1.](#)

In March 2024, California voters passed Proposition 1, the Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond Act, which allocates \$1.03 billion to housing projects specifically for veterans with behavioral health conditions. The state Notices of Funding Availability are starting to roll out for project [HomeKey+](#), and funding announcements are anticipated in the summer of 2025.

*"The promise of thousands of new, dedicated veteran housing units offers one of the state's most sweeping and welcome reforms in favor of vulnerable veterans."*

—Stephen Peck, CAVSA Board President and U.S.VETS President & CEO



CAVSA Board Members attend the CalVet Leadership Summit in San Diego. Pictured left to right are **Leo Cuadrado**, New Directions for Veterans COO, **Akilah Templeton**, Veterans Village of San Diego President & CEO, **Deborah Johnson**, California Veterans Assistance Foundation President & CEO, **Stephen Peck**, U.S.VETS President & CEO, **Michael Blecker**, Swords to Plowshares Executive Director.

# Advocating For Veteran Focused Policy

## 2025 State and Legislative Priorities

- » Continue our efforts to educate legislators, regulators and staff on the unique needs of veterans and their families including but not limited to, mental health challenges such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and military sexual trauma (MST).
- » Increase our efforts to educate veterans on the dangers of fentanyl and other opioids.
- » Continue to work with the legislature and state and local agencies on identifying increased barriers for veteran subpopulations.
- » Develop an action agenda that reflects the lack of dedicated resources for veterans in the local BHSA plans and the lack of funding for veteran specific mental health programs.
- » Increase general funding and Behavioral Health Services Act funding for veteran mental health, substance abuse treatment, and suicide prevention.
- » Expand state and federal support service funding for veterans experiencing or exited from homelessness, especially to improve utilization of HUD-VASH vouchers.
- » Continue to lead on Proposition 1 housing program implementation to ensure the programs meet the needs of homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness.

“Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country, and it is our duty to support them in return.”

—Governor Gavin Newsom



Art Alvarez (of VPOP) assists a veteran during the Orange County / Long Beach VA Stand Down at the Tierney Center.

## 2025 Local Priorities

- » Expand veteran advocacy and engagement at the local level to ensure veterans achieve their fair share of behavioral health services funding.
- » Coordinate local advocacy meetings between veterans and local officials to educate on key deprivations related to veterans in their community and the need for veteran specific support in their local BHSA plans.
- » Educate providers and other constituencies about need for veteran cultural competency in local mental health services and community programs.
- » Expand CAVSA's local community impact through advocacy, outreach, and training.

*As we reflect on the challenges and successes highlighted in this report, we remain committed to improving the lives of California's veterans. While progress is being made, the ongoing struggles many veterans face demand continued attention and action. CAVSA will keep pushing for policies that prioritize veteran care and support.*