

CalMHSA Salutes California's Veterans



The United States has nearly 22 million veterans, with two million of those living in California, according to the Census Bureau. Approximately 63,000 of California's veterans will confront a mental health challenge,¹ and all veterans experience a period of readjustment as they reintegrate into life with family, friends and community. Active-duty military personnel have significantly higher rates of major depression, generalized anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder than the general population.

The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is using innovative efforts to address the unique challenges California's returning combat veterans face in returning to civilian life, by connecting them to mental health services, and helping their families and communities to understand the patterns and prevalence of mental health challenges among returning veterans.

1 [National Council of Behavioral Health.](#)

Between 37% and 50% of veterans in the Veterans Affairs healthcare system have been diagnosed with a mental health challenge, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or depression. [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.](#)

Communities Step Up to Support Veterans

- Over 150 veterans, active duty, retired and their family members attended "Serving Those Who Serve," a military-focused community dialogue provided in partnership with San Diego County. The forum provided a safe place for participants to share struggles with mental health challenges, supporting a spouse after combat, career opportunities, and how to access mental health services anonymously. The event also featured a resource fair where attendees could obtain resources from a variety of community groups.
- The National Alliance on Mental Illness, California (NAMI) held "Everyone Has A Voice," an all-day interactive discussion to empower partners with veteran-specific outreach strategies. NAMI offers continued support, resources and contacts to organizations working to expand connections with veterans.
- United Advocates for Children and Families (UACF) conducted leadership trainings in Los Angeles, San Diego, Humboldt, Fresno, Ventura, Orange, Lassen and Modoc counties where over 1,700 community members, including veterans, were empowered to tell their stories in a manner that impacts change, community response and reduces the stigma and discrimination often associated with mental health challenges.



Panelists at "Serving Those Who Serve" in San Diego

The [Each Mind Matters Great Minds Gallery](#) features inspiring first-person stories of hope, resilience and recovery from a veteran's perspective.

Additional National Mental Health Resources for Veterans:

[U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website](#); [U.S. Department of Defense/Department of Veterans Affairs Suicide Outreach website](#); [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Returning Service Members \(OEF/OIF\) website](#); [Mental Health America website](#); [Military Pathways website](#); [National Alliance on Mental Illness website](#); [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Veterans and Military Families website](#).



California's Higher Education Systems Help Veterans Aim High

With support from CalMHSA, California's higher education systems are implementing new strategies to help veterans succeed on campus and beyond.

California Community Colleges

- Over **850** participants have attended 20 Welcome Home Trainings for faculty and staff to increase awareness about military culture, the transition challenges veterans face when leaving the military, and the particular stressors faced by student veterans.

CalMHSA on Campus

265 faculty and veterans at Sierra College attended "At Ease," a training offered to help participants understand and support veterans.

San Diego City College health services collaborated with the campus veterans center and the Wounded Warrior Project to offer "Yellow Ribbon's Be-A-Link" suicide prevention training for faculty, staff and students.

- 3,819** faculty, staff and students have completed Kognito Interactive Veterans Suicide Prevention Training to better understand challenges faced by student veterans and refer students to appropriate support services.



Kognito Peer-to-Peer Online Veteran Suicide Prevention Training

"It was very informative. Talking to veterans was my weaker area of expertise. I didn't understand how they felt coming back from serving very well, so I found it hard to empathize. I feel like I can more effectively speak with a veteran now [after completing the training]."

- Kognito Interactive Veterans Suicide Prevention Training Participant

California State University

- Each campus has established a Veteran Resource Center that guides and provides support while the veteran pursues their education.
- CSU campuses have implemented new strategies that engage peers in mentoring veterans on campus to promote success and retention. Active Minds student chapters recruit and engage student veterans. Campuses recruit student veterans to serve as peer health educators.

CalMHSA on Campus

CSU Sonoma partnered with county professionals on an all-day training program to learn how to offer improved care to military-connected undergraduates.

CSU San Marcos hired a full-time pre-doctoral intern to support veteran students.

CSU Stanislaus, CSU San Luis Obispo and CSU Channel Islands all held mental health trainings with a specific focus on veterans.

515 faculty and staff at CSU Northridge completed Kognito Interactive's suicide prevention training for veterans, where they learned how to best respond to issues student veterans bring to campus.

University of California

- The Veterans Resource Website, available in Fall 2014, will bring together resources including a [Public Service Announcement](#) for veterans on campus, support services, career and professional development, and family services. UC Riverside also offers a [Public Service Announcement on programs for veteran support](#).
- "Do You Love a Veteran" facilitated discussions help students develop healthy relationships for veterans and their loved ones.