



Legislation Text

File #: 2019-0247, **Version:** 1

To: County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Human Services

Staff Name and Phone Number: Paul Dunaway, 565-3673 and Mark Orlando, 565-5950

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): All

Title:

Veterans Service Office Grants

Recommended Actions:

- A) Authorize the Director of Human Services to execute a grant agreement in the amount of \$49,000 with the State of California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) for the period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020, for the execution of the Forgotten Warrior Project.
- B) Authorize the Director of Human Services to execute a grant agreement for the amount of \$49,000 with the State of California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) for the period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020 for the execution of the Sonoma County Veterans Service Office Veteran Peer Specialist program.

Executive Summary:

The Human Services Department has been awarded two grants of \$49,000 each from the State of California Department of Veterans Affairs for FY 19-20 through Proposition 63 Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding. The funds from one grant will provide mental health outreach and counseling to vulnerable veterans and their dependents, with an emphasis on those who have experienced sexual trauma in the military. The funds from the second grant will be used to create the Veteran Peer Specialist (VPS) program, providing mental health outreach by peers to the veteran population.

Discussion:

Mental Health services for victims of military sexual trauma:

In the last few years, the prevalence of sexual trauma in the military has come to light through increased public reports made by both active and retired military personnel. An experience of sexual trauma in the military only adds to the difficulty that veterans face when reintegrating into society. Given the ongoing issue of military sexual trauma (MST), we continue to pursue funding for mental health services to support those veterans who have experienced this type of trauma during their service. With additional funding our veterans service office can support veterans and their families recover and heal from their experiences of MST.

Since 2014, the County of Sonoma has run the Forgotten Warriors Project, which provides mental health outreach and counseling services to veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma (MST). This is the fifth year Sonoma County has received funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs for these services. The Human Services Department contracts with Verity, a local nonprofit that offers counseling and supportive services for people who have experienced sexual violence. The Adult and Aging Services Division (A&A)

Veterans Services Office will subcontract with Verity to provide mental health services for the period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020. Verity will provide the Veterans Service Office monthly progress reports regarding number of clients served, demographics and a basic synopsis of types of services rendered. Detailed quarterly reports will also be submitted to CalVet via the County Veterans Service Office. The funding will make it possible to continue the *Forgotten Warriors Project*, and will support the agency's provision of specialized, trauma-informed advocacy, wraparound case management, and effective intervention services in English and Spanish to all veterans who have been victims of MST during their service or service training. The project goal is to improve long-term health indicators for veterans in Sonoma County to ease their transition back to civilian life. The Adult and Aging Division will provide project oversight, program and fiscal administration, monitoring, and data reporting for the *Forgotten Warriors Project* to the State of California Department of Veterans Affairs. (Award letter Attachment #1).

Peer Mental Health outreach to veterans:

The Department was awarded \$49,000 to support the Veteran Peer Specialist (VPS) program. This is a new grant request and the County has not previously received grant money for this project. This funding is available for the period of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. (Award letter Attachment #2).

Peer outreach and engagement can be a very effective way to support specific populations by allowing people to connect with someone with a shared understanding of the experiences they have been through. Being a veteran has its own unique identity and challenges, which can be difficult to truly understand by non-military providers. Utilizing peer providers can facilitate a trust and connection that enhances the client experience and participation in programs and services.

This funding will allow the initiation of the Veteran Peer Specialist program which will provide mental health outreach to a veteran population of 23,372, many of which are spread throughout a large and often difficult to access geography. Grant money will be used to hire and train (1) Veteran Peer Specialist who will perform most of their duties out in the community as an alternative to veterans and their families coming to an office. The Veteran Peer Specialist will be hired and paid through a contract with the non-profit agency Verity but will work for the Veterans Service Officer and be based out of the Santa Rosa Veterans Service Office. Many military veterans and their families are not aware of the service provided by the Veterans Service Office. Efforts will be made to connect with veterans at Vet Connect, a pre-existing weekly clinic in Santa Rosa, through homeless outreach by partnering with existing outreach organizations such as the Catholic Charities HOST (Homeless Outreach Services Team), and by having a presence at Coast Guard Training Center Petaluma to develop greater awareness of benefits to personnel leaving the military and transitioning to civilian residency in Sonoma County.

The Veteran Service Office has set a very high bar of achieving 100% contact with the Sonoma County veteran population. This includes members and families separating (or about to separate) from Active Duty, National Guard, or Reserves regardless of Character of Discharge. Several elements of a successful program are already in place including strong leadership, motivated individuals, and a supportive public. As the lead agency, the Adult and Aging Division will provide project oversight, program and fiscal administration, monitoring, and reporting of the Veteran Peer Specialist Program to the State of California, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Prior Board Actions:

July 12, 2016 - Board approved a Grant for the State of California, Department of Veterans Affairs, Mental

Health Services Act (MHSA), Proposition 63.

September 22, 2015 - Board authorized the Director to execute an agreement for \$20,000 with the State of California, Department of Veterans Affairs Standard Agreement for the period of October 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016.

October 7, 2014 - Board approved the FY 2014-15 California Department of Veterans Affairs Standard Agreement in the amount of \$25,000 for Sonoma County Veterans Services Office.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 18-19 Adopted	FY19-20 Projected	FY 20-21 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$98,000	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures		\$98,000	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal		\$98,000	
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources		\$98,000	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The funding is included in the recommended 19/20 budget. No additional appropriations are needed. There is no local match and no County General Fund is needed.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll)	Monthly Salary Range (A - I Step)	Additions (number)	Deletions (number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

1. Award Letter - Forgotten Warriors Project
2. Award Letter - Veteran Peer Specialist (VPS) Program

3. Grant Agreement - Forgotten Warriors Project
4. Grant Agreement - Veteran Peer Specialist (VPS) Program

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None