

**ORANGE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE
VETERANS COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING**

Wednesday, November 13, 2024
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Location:
**Orange County United Way
18012 Mitchell South,
Irvine, CA 92614**

Committee Chair: Becks Heyhoe-Khalil, Orange County United Way

Committee Members:

Ruby Lara, Santa Ana Housing Authority
Melanie Martins, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Jeffery Pagano, Orange County Veterans and Military Families Collaborative
Eric Richardson, Volunteers of America Los Angeles
Jade Smith, Acera Health
Larry “Smitty” Smith, Individual

AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions – Becks Heyhoe-Khalil, Chair

- **Meeting Start Time:** - 9:04 (Call to Order)
 - Present: Becks Heyhoe-Khalil, Jeffery Pagano, Eric Richardson, Larry “Smitty” Smith
 - Absent: Ruby Lara, Melanie Martins, and Jade Smith

Larry “Smitty” Smith arrived during Consent Calendar 1 (9:12 a.m.)

Public Comments – Members of the public may address the Veterans Committee on items listed within this agenda or matters not appearing on the agenda so long as the subject matter is within the jurisdiction of the Veterans Committee. Members of the public may address the Veterans Committee with public comments on agenda items after the agenda item presentation. Comments will be limited to three minutes. If there are more than five public speakers, this time will be reduced to two minutes.

To address the Veterans Committee during the Public Comment period, members of the public are to complete a Speaker Request Form prior to the beginning of each agenda item. Staff will call your name in the order received. Members of the public may also submit public comment by emailing CareCoordination@ocgov.com. All comments submitted via email or at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting will be distributed to the Veterans Committee members and all comments will be added to the administrative records of the meeting. Please include “Veterans Committee Meeting Comment” in the email subject line.

MINUTES

November 13, 2024

No public comments

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Approve the Veterans Committee meeting minutes from September 19, 2024.

Eric Richardson motioned to approve Consent Calendar 1. Jeffery Pagano seconded the motion. Becks Heyhoe-Khalil, Jeffery Pagano, Eric Richardson, Larry “Smitty” Smith voted yes, no nay, no abstentions. Motion passed.

BUSINESS CALENDAR

1. **Continuum of Care (CoC) Update** – Felicia Boehringer, CoC Administrator, Office of Care Coordination

Felicia Boehringer, CoC Administrator, outlined the CoC Nomination and Election process, emphasizing that the application deadline is end of day today, 11/13/24, highlighted the upcoming Meet and Greet on 11/18/24, while also clarifying that only CoC members can vote and updates to voting members or alternates can be made through the Office of Care Coordination. Felicia Boehringer encouraged members to attend upcoming CoC meetings to stay connected and announced a job opening for a Staff Specialists Extra Help position within the Office of Care Coordination.

Committee Discussion:

- Chair, Becks Heyhoe-Khalil encouraged individuals to apply for the CoC Board, emphasizing the importance of diverse experiences, and urged attendees to spread the word to those not present, despite the application deadline being today. Becks Heyhoe-Khalil also announced that Orange County United Way is supporting Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week with in-person events and social media resources available on their website, then invited two attending members of the Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC) to share the committee's purpose.
- Larry “Smitty” Smith explained that Orange County is experiencing significant changes within the homeless system, with many proposed solutions falling short and the CoC has prioritized elevating the voices of individuals with lived experience to advise on policies and procedures. Larry “Smitty” Smith noted that the Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC) was established to help aid in tackling homelessness, a complex issue with diverse challenges, as those experiencing homelessness face varied circumstances that make finding solutions difficult.

Public Comment:

- Robert “Santa Bob” Morse shared that he has been part of the LEAC for three years, gaining valuable insights from fellow committee members on topics like domestic violence. Robert “Santa Bob” Morse highlighted a neighboring LEAC advocacy effort in San Diego, where the committee persuaded the San Diego City Council to reconsider a proposed 1,000-bed congregate shelter.

2. **Veterans Affairs (VA) Update** – Kerry Winter, LCSW, HUD-VASH Intake Team Supervisor, Tibor Rubin Medical Center, Long Beach VA Health Care System
 - a. HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Tenant-Based Vouchers
 - b. One Team Approach

Chair, Becks Heyhoe-Khalil skipped Business Calendar Item 2 due to the presenter’s absence.

3. **HUD-VASH Project-Based Voucher Update** – Daniel Garcia, Coordinated Entry System (CES) Administrator, Office of Care Coordination; Sarah Jones, CoC Manager, Office of Care Coordination; and Kerry Winter, LCSW, HUD-VASH Intake Team Supervisor, Tibor Rubin Medical Center, Long Beach VA Health Care System
 - a. CES Coordinated Vouchers
 - b. Public Housing Authorities (PHA) Updates
 - c. VA Vouchers

Daniel Garcia provided an update on the Business Calendar Item 3a HUD-VASH Project-Based Voucher Lease-Up, mentioning that both Mesa Vista and Aurora Vista properties completed their lease-ups as of September 2024, following the last Veterans Committee meeting. He noted that sixteen (16) veteran households have moved into Estrella Springs, with ten (10) units still available. However, it is expected that there will be no vacancies by the time of the next committee meeting.

Committee Discussion 3a:

- Eric Richardson inquired whether OC CoC CES has any new veteran-specific units or properties becoming available, explicitly so veterans with lived experience can engage with builders and funders to provide input and mentioned a positive example of lived experience feedback from a Garden Grove veterans property. Eric Richardson suggested that this would be an ideal opportunity for the LEAC to add value and partner.
- Jeffery Pagano stressed the importance of connecting the LEAC to project-based developers, highlighting that greater involvement of LEAC is essential during the development of project-based veteran housing and underlined the need for LEAC's participation throughout each phase of the process to ensure involvement at every stage.
- Larry “Smitty” Smith agreed with Eric Richardson and Jeffery Pagano and noted that input should begin at the earliest stages of development, as there is limited opportunity for feedback once plans have already been approved. Larry "Smitty" Smith emphasized the importance of setting clear expectations for unhoused veterans when they first accept housing, ensuring they understand that if they would like they can be transferred to another unit if in good standing, and that transparent communication about the transfer process would lead to greater acceptance of the initial housing. Larry "Smitty" Smith emphasized that homeless veterans, coming from a structured environment and accustomed to following orders, are generally more willing to accept housing than civilian homeless individuals, especially when the process is clear, documented, and transparent, despite the overlap with issues like drugs and mental health.
- Becks Heyhoe-Khalil sought clarification on whether CES's efforts to fill vacancies have resulted in fully occupied properties or if there will still be ongoing vacancies, particularly at Buena Esperanza, Hero’s Landing, and Placentia Veterans Village. Becks Heyhoe-Khalil also responded to Eric Richardson’s comments about the need for more lived experience

feedback, explaining that discussions with developers should begin early to ensure that financial and planning issues are addressed from the start. Becks Heyhoe-Khalil asked whether veterans receive ongoing supportive services after twelve (12) months and if they are eligible to apply for a tenant-based voucher, as well as what other services, like housing navigation, are available to them. Becks Heyhoe-Khalil shared that she has not encountered any veterans transitioning out of permanent supportive housing who were offered additional services, even with a housing voucher and wondered if the Office of Care Coordination or another agency could access a list of veterans currently in permanent supportive housing.

Public Comment 3a:

- Ed Gonzalez explained that Veterans Affairs (VA) would have information on veterans in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and could track whether clients are transitioning back to VASH vouchers or regular housing vouchers, which would help determine any additional supportive services provided.

Sarah Jones, CoC Manager, presented on Business Calendar 3b, Orange County HUD-VASH Tenant-Based Vouchers Updates, detailing the total number of vouchers allocated by each Public Housing Authority, those in use, those still in the search process, and those that have been leased. Sarah Jones also pointed out that the Garden Grove Housing Authority does not currently have any VASH vouchers. The data, updated from the first week of October, reflects tenant-based vouchers, meaning recipients can keep their voucher and find a unit independently. Sarah Jones highlighted that applicants are being approved, and additional units are being added to the CES system. Within a week, applicants are matched with available units, and the document submission process begins.

Committee Discussion 3b:

- Becks Heyhoe-Khalil noted that while there seems to be an abundance of tenant-based VASH vouchers, veterans within CES face limitations due to the need for verified VA documentation while waiting to be matched with a unit. In contrast, veterans not in CES do not encounter these barriers, which sometimes leads to a discrepancy in available vouchers, since there aren't enough clients to fill the units.

Becks Heyhoe-Khalil skipped Business Calendar 3c due to the presenter's absence.

4. WelcomeHomeOC Program Update – Becks Heyhoe-Khalil, Chair

Chair, Becks Heyhoe-Khalil explained that there are 11 vouchers available to be sourced, processing three (3) from Anaheim, seven (7) from Orange County, and two (2) from Santa Ana and mentioned that 40 individuals have been housed this year through the program.

5. CES Veteran Registry Data Update – Daniel Garcia, CES Administrator, Office of Care Coordination

Daniel Garcia, CES Administrator, presented the Veterans Registry Data, showcasing various graphs that detailed the number of clients on the registry, monthly inflow vs. outflow, types of housing plans clients are on, and the number of homeless versus housed veterans. Daniel Garcia further explained that CES collaborates with 30 partner agencies, meeting weekly to explore how

they can match clients to available opportunities in both older and newer properties as projects and units become available.

Committee Discussion:

- Chair, Becks Heyhoe-Khalil sought clarification on the data of Permanent Housing Plan, asking if the numbers included both project-based and tenant-based vouchers, as well as clients within CES, and inquired whether the Veterans Committee would have an opportunity to provide feedback on the dashboards currently under review by the CES Steering Committee.
- Eric Richardson explained that some veterans may be placed on VASH while still awaiting eligibility, which can cause data overlap, and raised concerns about whether the outflow of individuals transitioning into Permanent Housing accurately reflects true placements, or if some clients are simply falling off the registry due to lack of contact. Eric Richardson proposed discussing the total number of homeless veterans (294) at the next meeting to clarify these issues.

Next Meeting: To be determined, pending 2025 CoC Board and Committee calendar approval.

All are invited to stay for the Orange County Veteran and Military Family Collaborative (OCVMFC) Housing Working Group meeting from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.