



A G E N D A

ORANGE COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL

November 12, 2025

2:00 PM

www.veterans.ocgov.com/advisory

Location:

Orange County Community Services
OC Veterans Service Office
1300 S. Grand Ave., Building B
Newport Conference Room #232
Santa Ana, CA. 92705

****In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, those requiring accommodation for this meeting should notify the Orange County Community Service office 72 hours prior to the meeting at (714) 480-6450****

The Orange County Veterans Advisory Council shall not hold a meeting unless the number of members participating constitutes a quorum of the Council.

This agenda contains a brief description of each item to be considered. Except as provided by law, no action shall be taken on any item not appearing in the agenda. Members of the public who wish to speak on an item(s) may complete a Speaker Request Form(s) identifying the items prior to the beginning of the meeting. To speak on a matter not appearing on the agenda, but under the jurisdiction of this Advisory Council, you may do so during Public Comments. Council members may not discuss or take action on issues raised during public comment unless the issue is listed in this agenda. Speaker request forms must be completed prior to the beginning of the meeting, the reading of the individual agenda items and/or the beginning of Public Comments. When addressing the Council, it is requested that you state your name and place of residence for the record prior to providing your comments. Address the Council as a whole through the Chair. Comments to individual Members or staff are not permitted. Speakers are limited to three (3) minutes.

Materials/handouts can be accessed up to 72 hours in advance of the meeting by visiting www.veterans.ocgov.com/advisory or calling (714) 480-6555.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair, Steven Vargas
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:
3. COUNCIL ROLL CALL: OC Community Services Representative
4. PUBLIC COMMENTS:
At this time, members of the public may address the Council regarding any items within the subject jurisdiction, provided that no action is taken on off-agenda items unless authorized by law. (Comments shall be limited to three (3) minutes unless the Chair pre-identifies a different time at the start of meeting for all public speakers).
5. PRESENTATIONS:

Jamboree Housing Veterans Housing Accomplishments

Kelsey Brewer, Vice President, Business Development

6. ACTION ITEMS:
 - i. OCVAC Meeting Schedule – Chair, Steven Vargas
Recommendation: Review and approve the Orange County Veterans Advisory Council meeting schedule for 2026.
 - ii. Election of Officers – Conducted by County Staff
Recommendation: Accept nominations from the floor and conduct election for the following OCVAC positions: Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for a term of (1) year.
 - iii. OCVAC Recommendation Letter – Chair, Steven Vargas
Recommendation: Review and approve sending OCVAC Letter of Support regarding recommendation to Relieve Hardships Related to Pet Ownership to the Orange County Board of Supervisors.
7. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT: Chair, Steven Vargas
8. OCVSO UPDATE: Eric Ensley, Veterans Service Officer
9. CALVET LINC UPDATE: Ben Gales, Local Interagency Network Coordinator
10. COMMITTEES:
 - i. Communications Standing Committee Report: Council Member, Robert McDonald
 - ii. Events/Outreach Standing Committee Report: Council Member, Michael Radigan

11. COUNCIL COMMENTS:

At this time, members of this Advisory Council may comment on agenda or non-agenda matters within the subject jurisdiction, provided that NO action be taken on off-agenda items unless authorized by law.

12. ADJOURNMENT:**Next Meeting:**

TBD

2:00 PM Location – TBD

“Have We Helped A Veteran Today?”

DISCLAIMER: No member of the Orange County Veterans Advisory Council (OCVAC) shall sign a letter or make a statement purported to represent the position of OCVAC as a body. Letters or verbal statements of support or opposition on any issue shall only be made or signed by the Chair of OCVAC and shall be submitted to the Council for pre-approval. The policy of the Board of Supervisors does not allow OCVAC or its Chair to sign a letter of position on any matters pertaining to legislation. OCVAC members may write personal letters or speak as individuals stating personal positions but may not do so as representing the position or opinion of OCVAC or the County of Orange.



2026 Orange County Veterans Advisory Council Meeting Schedule

Veterans Service Office
1300 S. Grand Avenue, Building B
Santa Ana, CA 92705

Regular Meeting Schedule 2 nd Wednesday at 2:00pm (Refer to Agenda for Meeting Location & Time)	
January 14	
March 11	
May 13	
June 10	
July (DARK)	
August 12	
October 14	
November 18*	
December (DARK)	

**Meeting date moved due to holiday November 11*

Orange County Veterans Advisory Council

1300 South Grand Avenue, Building B
 Santa Ana, CA 92705
 (714) 480-2801 ♦ (714) 567- 7577 FAX
www.veterans.ocgov.com



November 12, 2025

Subject: OCVAC Recommendation to Relieve Hardships Related to Pet Ownership

Dear Board of Supervisors:

At our May 8, 2024 OCVAC meeting we heard a report from CalVet Local Interagency Appointment Coordinator (LINC) Ben Gales that referenced domestic pet ownership as an obstacle to housing veterans. This prompted OCVAC to appoint an ad hoc committee to study and report on the problem. The report submitted by that committee at the October 8, 2025 OCVAC meeting found that substantial and effective measures are in place to support unhoused veterans who own domestic animals but that several gaps exist, gaps in support that could be addressed at little expense to the county and to the great benefit of a number of vulnerable veterans. The ad hoc committee had three specific recommendations that have been approved by OCVAC and that we now address to you.

Recommendations:

1. Direct OC Animal Care to produce a 'one-page fact sheet' on need-based free and reduced vaccination programs that are available to veterans and the general public and that the 'one pager' be widely distributed online and in paper form with social and animal service providers throughout the county. The ad hoc committee found that all permanent supportive housing providers in Orange County accept clients with pets provided that the pets are up to date on their vaccinations and licensed as may be required by the city in which they are being housed. The potential for vaccinations to be a barrier to housing placement can be fully met but through several disparate agencies: OC Animal Care provides free, need-based vaccinations to pet owners from unincorporated Orange County and in cities that contract with OC Animal Care; some of the cities that have their own municipal animal care and control programs appear to offer similar need-based vaccinations; while the 501(c)(3) non-profit H.E.A.R.T (Healthcare Emergency Animal Rescue Team), provides a free, mobile clinic that will travel to support those in need of free veterinary care through their "On-the-Road-Saving Lives" program. The problem, however, is that these services do not appear to be well known to veterans or the social service agencies who work with veterans. This puts the County in a position to alleviate one obstacle to housing homeless veterans and non-veterans alike by simply sharing information about services that are already available. Such a one pager could be posted online and in printed format at County and municipal animal care offices, as well as through OCVAC, the OC Veterans Resource Center, the county's Coordinated Care Committee, the Orange County Veterans and Military Families Collaborative (OCVMFC), Orange County Veterans Treatment Court, and the OC Healthcare Agency.
2. Direct Orange County Animal Care and the County Healthcare Agency produce a joint evaluation of the need and potential options to provide a free boarding service for veterans who want temporary housing in a congregate shelter or when they have to be admitted to hospital. While all permanent supportive housing providers in Orange County accept clients with pets, none of the congregate shelter options in Orange County can accept clients with their pets. While evidence is largely anecdotal, we believe that a significant number of veterans (and members of the general public) may live in cars or on our streets longer than necessary because they can't take their pets into the

temporary shelters that they are offered. Many veterans are also unable to pay for commercially boarding their pets when they are temporarily hospitalized, undergoing residential substance or mental health treatment. This is a need that at least one 501(c)(3) non-profit, Patriots and Paws, has been anxious to collaborate with the county to solve. While OCVAC has not studied what such a program would cost or how best to structure any solution, we feel the county would do well to study the matter, as it may be a cost effective way not only to better serve veterans or even the broader community, but a way to reduce the amount of time people stay unhoused on the streets with all the costly harm increase more extended street homelessness inflicts.

3. Ask the Orange County Coordination of Care Committee to include the number of veterans who turned down permanent housing, the type of housing they rejected, and the stated reason in each case as part of their annual report on veterans housing. The Chair of the ad hoc committee that studied this issue attended the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) Veterans Committee meetings and meetings of the OCVMFC Sub-Committee on Veterans Housing (July 2024, September 2024), then followed up in emails and phone interviews with several of the principals from those committees. While some facts were clearly established (e.g. that all of the county's permanent supportive housing providers accept clients with pets but the congregate shelters do not) but was unable to obtain hard data on the numbers of veterans who were rejecting housing, the type of housing that was rejected or the stated reason for the rejection. An email to the Chair from the local VA's Melanie Martin was typical of the generalized answers that were shared:

"Anecdotally, the two main reasons that Veterans turn down units is unit size and dislike of the neighborhood. As we discussed last month, not being able to take pets into their units can also be a barrier but it usually has to do with the Veterans needing to have either updated pet licenses/vaccines or ESA letters to move into the unit (and shelters/GPDs). More and more shelters/ GPD and project-based units are accepting pets now but the issue mentioned above can still be a problem."

When pressed for specific data Ms. Martin said she wasn't sure they kept statistics on rejected housing and that if they did she would have to ask her superiors if she could share the data with OCVAC.

The members of OCVAC are concerned that precise data is not readily available to us or the public. It is unclear to us whether statistics on rejected housing placements are even being kept but that it is an important matter of interest around which public policy is made. Given the public's interest in housing, their special interest in veterans housing and the millions of public dollars being spent in Orange County on alleviating homelessness, we think that the county should direct the CoC to include the basic statistics—the type of housing offered, the numbers and reasons for all rejections—in its annual report.

Thank you for hearing our recommendations. Please know that OCVAC is ready to provide further information to you or your staff on this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

Steven Vargas
Chairperson
Orange County Veterans Advisory Council