



## Mental Healthcare for OTH Vets

APRIL 2017

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary, Dr. David J. Shulkin, while testifying in a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on March 7, 2017, announced his intention to expand provisions for urgent mental health care needs to former service members with other-than-honorable (OTH) administrative discharges. This move marks the first time a VA Secretary has implemented an initiative specifically focused on expanding access to assist former OTH service members who are in mental health distress and may be at risk for suicide or other adverse behaviors. "The President and I have made it clear that suicide prevention is one of our top priorities," Shulkin said. "We know the rate of death by suicide among Veterans who do not use VA care is increasing at a greater rate than Veterans who use VA care. This is a national emergency that requires bold action. We must and we will do all that we can to help former service members who may be at risk. When we say even one Veteran suicide is one too many, we mean it." It is estimated that there are a little more than 500,000 former service members with OTH discharges. As part of the proposal, former OTH service members would be able to seek treatment at a VA emergency department, Vet Center or contact the Veterans Crisis Line. "Our goal is simple: to save lives," Shulkin continued. "Veterans who are in crisis should receive help immediately. Far too many Veterans have fallen victim to suicide, roughly 20 every day. Far too many families are left behind asking themselves what more could have been done. The time for action is now." Before finalizing the plan in early summer, Shulkin will meet with Congress, Veterans Service Organizations and Department of Defense officials to determine the best way forward to get these former service members the care they need.

The San Mateo County Veterans Services Office (CVSO) can help you and your family submit claims for benefits to the Department of Veterans Affairs and provide follow up services to ensure that you receive the benefits to which you are entitled. All our services are free and confidential. Contact us today at (650) 802-6598 or VeteranServices-SMC@smcgov.org. <http://hsa.smcgov.org/veterans>

### WHERE TO CONNECT WITH US:

Tuesdays, 8:30am to 3pm, VA Menlo Park Building #348

April 6th & 20th, 8:30am-3pm, VA Palo Alto Building #4, Room #B210

April 14th, 8am-4pm, Peninsula Vet Center

April 19th, 9am-3pm, Cañada College & Skyline College Vet Resource Centers

April 24th, 9am-12pm, College of San Mateo Vet Resource Center

**SAVE THE DATES: May 5th**, San Mateo County Stand-Down at San Mateo County Event Center: <http://hsa.smcgov.org/sanmateostanddown2017>

**June 2nd-** 2nd Annual Open House & Resource Fair - Redwood City American Legion Post 105

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is available. <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>



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