

**Department of Veterans Affairs
VA Long Beach Healthcare System
Long Beach, Ca**

**Veterans Mental Health Consumer Council
(Veteran's Voice Long Beach)**

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I-NAME

The name of the council will be the VA Long Beach HCS Veterans Mental Health Consumer Council, Veterans Voice Long Beach, hereafter referred to as the "Council", "MHCC", or "Veterans Voice".

ARTICLE II-PURPOSE

Section 1. Mission Statement

The mission of the Council is to establish an equal partnership of Veterans and their families who utilize mental health services in the VA in conjunction with VA mental health professionals, community partners, and Veteran Service Organizations and VISN Mental Health Leadership to improve the quality of care in VA mental health services.

Section 2. Purpose

The purpose of the Council is to provide a forum for members to express their views and opinions and to work in partnership with Mental Health Administration throughout the VA mental health services. The effort is to assure that all Veterans receive the highest quality services and are able to achieve the greatest degree of independence by participating in their own recovery.

Section 3. Functions

1. Educating- Veterans, consumers, family members, staff and the community
2. Reducing stigma associated with mental illness
3. Reviewing quality and customer satisfaction data, identifying needed changes, and setting priorities for recommended changes
4. Communicate and work on concerns for Veterans with a mental health diagnosis with Mental Health Leadership throughout VA Long Beach.
5. To identify and address the priority tasks, as identified by the Council.

ARTICLE III-MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Size

1. Each site with a local council will have three (3) voting members. All sites are encouraged to facilitate attendance by all members. All members may participate in discussions though only three members will have the voting ability.
2. A quorum of the members is a majority of the voting members. (in the absence of a voting council member)

Section 2. Membership Structure

MEMBERS

A. Qualifications

B. Council members must be at least one of the following:

1. A consumer of VA mental health services
2. A member of a community mental health organization or advocacy group (such as National Alliance on Mental Health) who advocate for veterans with a mental health diagnosis.

C. Council members should reflect the diversity of veterans who receive mental health services. Ideally, a diverse membership would include representation of the following:

1. Veterans with diversity in age, race, gender, and psychiatric diagnosis;
2. Individuals who have knowledge of the major mental health service programs;
3. Various geographic areas in the medical center's catchment area (including CBOCs and vet centers).

The majority of all Council members are Veterans receiving mental health services at the medical centers, Vet Centers and CBOCs.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Regularly attends and participates in Council and committee meetings
2. Council members to participate in systemic issues and not personal issues at the Council.
3. Assists Council officers in completing their duties as requested by the Chair
4. Completes tasks that the member has agreed to complete

Section 3. Removal of Council Members or Council Officers

Members can be removed from the Council or a committee for any of the following reasons:

1. The member is no longer able to fulfill their Council responsibilities or has not been fulfilling their responsibilities;

2. The member's behavior is disruptive and limits the Council's ability to function in a cohesive and effective manner.
3. The member is not able to focus on systemic issues.
4. A member has not consistently attended three meetings, without notice to the co-chairs, staff liaison or administrative coordinator.

In these instances, the Council Chair will notify the member of possible removal and given an opportunity to take corrective action if appropriate.

Removal may occur only at a properly called meeting of the Executive Board of the Council. :

1. The Chair will ask the Executive Board to review the membership of an individual
2. The Chair will present the reason for reviewing the individual's membership
3. The individual should give reasons why he/she should not be removed.
4. The Executive Board must then reach a 2/3 vote in order to remove a member from the Council.

Section 4. Executive Board

The members of the Executive Board of the Council will consist of the following:

Administrative Coordinator
 Secretary
 Co-chair(s)

Section 5. Officer Qualifications and Duties

Chair and Co-Chairs

Qualifications

1. A current consumer of VA Mental Health Services
2. Leadership abilities
3. Ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing
4. Willingness to devote the necessary amount of time to this position
5. Ability to review systemic issues without personalizing it.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Oversees the development, implementation, and reporting of the Council's activities, including collaboration with Administrative Coordinator on minutes and annual report.
2. Determines the agenda for Council meetings
3. Conducts all Council meetings
4. Serves as the official spokesperson for the Council, with issues reviewed by the VAC.

5. Attends committee meetings when possible, i.e., Recovery Transformation Team, MHEB and other committees as appropriate and designated by the Executive Board.
6. Monitors and tracks all activities, progress, and unfinished Council business
7. Responds to inquiries with the assistance from Council members and staff liaison.
8. Fills committee vacancies occurring during term in office with the consent of the Council.
9. Serves as a member of the Mental Health Executive Board.

Secretary

Qualifications

1. Ability to effectively summarize meeting discussions to relevant minutes
2. Ability to type, collate, copy and distribute written materials
3. Willingness to commit time to perform duties
4. Have a very familiar understanding of recovery transformation and Veteran empowerment.
5. A current consumer of VA Mental Health Services

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Schedules and notifies members of all Council meetings
2. Records minutes of Council meetings
3. Sends meeting minutes and other communications to appropriate parties in a timely manner
4. Attends all Consumer Council Meetings
5. Prepares MHEB reports by the VISN VAC and attends when necessary.

Administrative Coordinator Qualifications (the chair)

Qualifications

1. A current consumer of VA Mental Health Services
2. Leadership abilities
3. Ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing
4. Willingness to devote the necessary amount of time to this position
5. Ability to review systemic issues without personalizing it.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Oversees the development, implementation, and reporting/recording of the Council's activities, including collaboration with Secretary on minutes and annual report.
2. Coordinates the agenda for Council meeting.
5. Attends committee meetings when possible, i.e., Recovery Transformation Team, MHEB and other committees as appropriate and designated by the Executive Board.
6. Monitors and tracks all activities, progress, and unfinished Council business

7. Responds to inquiries with the assistance from Council members and staff liaison.
8. Fills committee vacancies occurring during term in office with the consent of the Council.
9. Serves as a member of the Mental Health Executive Board.

Section 6. Elections and Transfer of Officers

—GENERAL ELECTIONS SHOULD OCCUR IN NOVEMBER OR AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE THEREAFTER OF EACH YEAR. ONE CO-CHAIR WILL BE ELECTED IN EACH ELECTION. ALL OTHER OFFICERS WILL BE ELECTED BIENNIALLY.

1. Candidates for office can be nominated by any existing Council member or can self-nominate.
2. Nominees can accept or decline the nomination
3. A question and answer session will allow committee members to ask questions of the nominees
4. Nominees must be members in good standing with the Council and have attended a majority of meetings in the 3 months prior to nominations
5. The written votes are tallied by the Liaison and the administrative coordinator, the nominee with the highest number of votes wins that office

Section 7. Terms of Office

Each officer will serve for a term of 1 year, beginning January 1 and ending December 31. Officers may serve consecutive terms, not to exceed 2 consecutive terms.

Section 8. Vacancy

A vacancy will exist whenever an officer resigns or is removed from the Council. To address vacancies, the Council Chair will call for a special election at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Council.

Section 9. Compensation and Reimbursement

The members of the Council will serve without pay. Council members are encouraged to become registered volunteers at the Medical Center.

Section 10. Liaison to the Council

Liaison Qualifications

1. A VA staff member who provides mental health services and understands the relationship between the mental health service line and facility and VISN leadership.
2. Leadership abilities
3. Ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing
4. Ability to devote the necessary amount of time to this position

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Supports Council members in the development and maintenance of the Council
2. Provides assistance to Council members and officers in furthering the mission of the Council as requested by the Chair (e.g., helping link Council to relevant VA providers for information sharing)

ARTICLE IV-MEETINGS

Section 1. Schedule

Regular meetings of the Council will be bi-monthly the 1st and 2nd Thursday from 8AM to 9AM or as designated by the council members. Meetings on a quarterly basis will be held face to face on a rotating basis.

Special meetings of the Council may be called at any time by the Chair.

Special meetings of committees may be called by the Chair or committee Chair.

Section 2. Notice

The Administrative Coordinator informs members and guests of the meeting schedule. The call for regular or special meetings of the Council will be posted on designated bulletin boards and emailed and/or mailed to individuals or organizations on the Council mailing list at least 5 days prior to the meeting.

Section 3. Agenda

The agenda for each meeting is determined by the Chair. **PRIORITY TASKS SHALL BE LISTED ON THE AGENDA.**

Council members may directly request the Council Chair add new business items for placement on the agenda for the next meeting.

Section 4. Attendance

Members are expected to attend all regular meetings of the Council. If unable to attend, members should notify the Council Chair or Co-Chair and request to be excused. After three unexcused absences in a row, the Council will review the member's status. Multiple unexcused absences can result in removal from the Council.

There will be no proxies for meetings of the Council. Members must be present to vote on any business of the Council.

Section 5. Confidential Communication

Members agree to keep confidential the information discussed in the Council Committee meeting unless the Council states that specific information is to be shared (data gathering, surveys, etc.).

ARTICLE V-COMMITTEES

The Chair may create or dissolve committees as needed. Committees are structured as follows:

1. Committees may be formed to work on a specific initiative, issue or problem
2. Committees are led by Chairpersons, who are appointed by the Council Chair, and committees report their information to the Council
3. Members may volunteer to serve on committees.
4. Committees document and communicate progress and findings in short written reports to the Council
5. Minutes of committee meetings will be distributed at the next regular meeting of the Council.

6. Committee Chairs are responsible for distribution of minutes and reporting of committee activities to the Council.

ARTICLE VI-REPORTING

The Secretary distributes minutes of Council meetings to all Council members and other designated parties... Committees of the Council will report directly to the Council in a standard written format specifically designed for committee reporting. The Council periodically reports its requests, findings, and recommendations to facility leadership, which may include the VISN Director, Mental Health Executive Board, and other appropriate staff. At the end of each year, the Council drafts an annual report of its activities and accomplishments.

ARTICLE VII-ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

The Council will not discriminate in any regard with respect to race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, parenthood, physical disability or mental disability.

ARTICLE VIII-AMENDMENTS

These Articles may be altered, amended, repealed, or replaced, and new Articles may be adopted by the membership of the Council. Such amendments require a two-thirds vote of the quorum of membership of the Council in favor of such action.

Approved by the VISN #22 VAC on this 04 / 19 day of 2016.