



SB 409- Veterans Mental Health Plan

SUMMARY

SB 409 requires the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) to develop a plan to accommodate veterans with complex mental and behavioral needs at the state's veteran's homes.

BACKGROUND

Research, including a 2008 RAND Corporation survey and the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study, has shown that veterans are more likely to suffer from a mental or behavioral health condition than the general population.

About 2,500 California veterans reside in California's eight veteran's homes. They receive residential or long-term care, including basic mental and behavioral health services. Those with mental and behavioral health conditions typically suffer from depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, substance use disorder, and/or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In January 2017, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) found that the state's veteran's homes have limited capacity to assist veterans with complex mental and behavioral needs. Veterans who suffer from such needs often require more services. Because of staffing and specialized care ratio requirements and limited resources available, some veteran's homes have had to deny admission or discharge these veterans.

For example, data from the Yountville and Redding veterans homes show that in 2015-16, 30 applicants were denied admission and 32 residents were discharged (10 involuntarily) due to behavioral health-related concerns about staffing and care disruption.

Consequently, veterans most in need of mental and behavioral health services stemming from their sacrifices and service to the state and country are unable to receive the care they need.

EXISTING LAW

California operates veterans homes, which provide independent living, long-term care services, and basic mental and behavioral health care to eligible California veterans. CalVet regulates the state's veterans homes.

THE SOLUTION

SB 409 requires CalVet to develop a plan to accommodate more residents suffering from complex mental and behavioral health needs in California's veteran's homes. The plan should include a strategy for where and how many residents with complex mental and behavioral health needs could best be accommodated, in light of staffing and other budgeting limitations. CalVet must report its plan to the Legislature by January 1, 2019.

SB 409 improves the state's ability to provide mentally ill veterans who have already sacrificed so much for our country, with the care they need and deserve.

SPONSOR

Author

SUPPORT

American G.I. Forum of California
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County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California (CBHDA)
Military Officers Association of America, California Council of Chapters
State Council on Developmental Disabilities
Vietnam Veterans of America-California State Council

STAFF CONTACT

Dana Cruz
(916) 651-4034
dana.cruz@sen.ca.gov