

# Strategic Plan 2023-2026

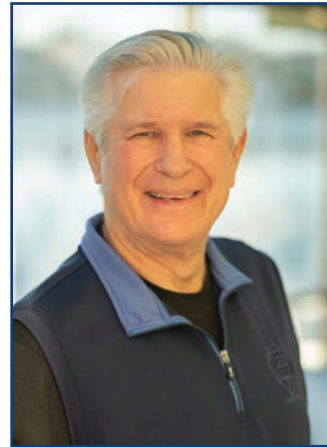


**Orange County Veterans  
& Military Families Collaborative**

CONVENED BY **UCI**

## Message From the OCVMFC Chair

Since 2021, I have had the honor of leading the OCVMFC and it has been amazing to see the growth and impact it has had on our veterans, service members, and their families in our community. This has been the result of the time and effort of our Collaborative working groups and committees, the support of the University of California, Irvine, and our partner organizations. As a veteran and a member of the Orange County community, it has been rewarding to see this growth and unwavering focus on our veterans, service members, and their families.



In our very first Strategic Plan, we laid out a plan to stand up the Collaborative and to work through the challenges put in front of us by the global COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 slowed our pace, but it did not deter our initiatives. We identified key areas that affected veterans, service members, and their families and developed plans to confront them.

We live in an ever-changing world and the same is true with our veterans, service members, and their families. The needs they faced in the past years have changed, and our efforts to address their needs must evolve to keep pace. We must move towards predictive planning to more proactively create solutions that avert crises. This is the goal of our new Strategic Plan—ensure the needs of today and the future years are going to be met. For as long as their needs exist, the OCVMFC will do its part to provide for their well-being.

We should always remember that we can never serve veterans in quite the same way they served us, but we can try.

**LTC(R) Pete Seitz**

Chair, OCVMFC

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# Orange County Veterans and Military Family Collaborative (OCVMFC) Strategic Plan

## Background

The Orange County Veterans & Military Families Collaborative (OCVMFC), a coalition of more than one hundred and thirty public, private, and government members and agencies, was established in 2013 to bridge the gap of existing fragmented care to provide more coordinated services and support to veterans, service members, and their families. It serves the needs of more than 100,000 Orange County veterans as well as their families.

In 2016, the USC School of Social Work Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families (CIR), conducted the Orange County Veterans Study to provide data-driven recommendations for serving the population of veterans residing in Orange County, California. The results validated the establishment of the OCVMFC and its focus on service members encountering a wide range of needs as they transition out of the military into civilian communities. This study surveyed over 1,200 veterans living in Orange County and several focus groups were conducted as well. The main finding is many service members leaving the military and relocating to Orange County are not prepared for the transition. USC's CIR is conducting a follow-up expanded survey with results anticipated in 2023.

In 2018, the OCVMFC was recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as the Community Veteran Engagement Board for Orange County and OCVMFC continues to engage through the VA's Veteran Experience Office. In 2019, the University of California, Irvine, became the OCVMFC's Convener, providing leadership and support to the Collaborative's vital mission.





**FIGURE 1** The OCVMFC working together to Build a Strong and Resilient Veteran Community

As depicted in **Figure 1**, the OCVMFC connects veterans and their families to the resources they need to become strong, resilient members of the Orange County Community. To that end, the aim is to manage veteran/family member needs and provide solutions through better insight into this demand from the various sources of input and authoritative data sources. When paired with better insight into the broad supply of resources available to address veteran/family member issues, it becomes possible to tackle root cause issues and not just the symptoms of the problems. The OCVMFC accomplishes this through the actions of eleven working groups and committees, which are focused on critical areas such as Women Veterans, Health & Wellness, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Housing & Homeless Outreach, Faith-Based, Children & Families, Older Adult Veterans, Legal and Re-entry, Resources, Government Relations, and Public Relations & Outreach. When working together towards a common objective, the OCVMFC will help provide a stronger OC veteran community as well as a model for public service agencies to address similar issues with demographics outside of the veteran community.



## Vision

OCVMFC is the premiere organization increasing the resilience of veterans, service members, and their families so they seamlessly integrate and thrive in Orange County while serving as a model for the nation.

## Mission

The OCVMFC, a coalition of public and private service agencies, works together to deliver coordinated, comprehensive, and timely services for veterans, service members, and their families to improve their lives and seamlessly integrate them into the Orange County community.

## Guiding Principles

### TEAMWORK

We are connected by a common purpose greater than ourselves. We are stronger together than we are individually.

### COMPASSION

We respect our veterans, service members, and their families and treat them with dignity.

### TRUST

We understand we are all trying to solve the challenges and overcome barriers our veterans and families face, which demands implementing a multi-disciplinary and holistic approach for the benefit of the veteran community.

### INNOVATION

We are not bound by current processes or rules. We see opportunities where others see challenges and obstacles. We will find solutions that remain compliant while identifying and advocating for change where it is needed.

# Orange County Veteran Environment

While progress has been made, there continues to be a challenge with capturing the demographics of Orange County veterans. Many veterans (1) move frequently throughout southern California, (2) do not seek out veteran services, and/or (3) do not self-identify as a veteran, especially older veterans. The U.S. Census Bureau, which is responsible for conducting a population census every 10 years, used long-form and short-form surveys as the primary means of gathering demographic data within the United States. The short form, which collects less data, is sent to every household. The long form, which collected more detailed data was sent to 1 in 6 households. While the US Census Bureau stopped using the long-form survey, which included more detailed demographic questions (e.g. veterans status) following the 2000 census, they implemented the American Community Survey to fill this void.

	US Census Long Form	ACS
Periodicity	Every 10 years	Every year
Sample Size	1 in 6 Households	1 in 35 households

Based on *Census Reporter* (2020), Orange County has a population of roughly 3,170,345, inside its 792.8 square miles with a median age of 38.3 years. Of this population, approximately 4.3% are veterans. Some additional demographic details of the veteran population are provided in **Figure 2** below:

## Veteran Status

**4.3%**

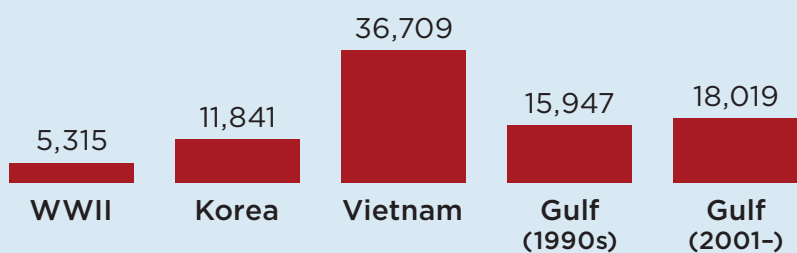
Population with veteran status

about 80 percent of the rate in California: 5%

about three-fifths of the rate in United States: 7.1%

## Veterans by wartime service

105,193 Total veterans | 98,230 Male | 6,963 Female



\*Civilian veterans who served during wartime only

**FIGURE 2** Orange County Veteran Demographics. Based on [censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06059-orange-county-ca](https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06059-orange-county-ca) (2020)

In addition to the current demographics of the veteran population, periodic base realignments and closures can have an impact on the future makeup of this population in Orange County. With the closing of Marine Corps Air Station El Toro and Marine Corps

Air Station Tustin in Orange County, there are only two remaining active military facilities, Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach, and Joint Forces Training Base (JFTB) Los Alamitos in the county. The Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach is a United States Navy weapons and munitions loading, storage, and maintenance facility supporting the Active Component while the JFTB is focused on support to the Reserve Component of the Armed Forces including the National Guard and Army Reserves. An understanding of these facts and their impact is necessary to better support the changing needs of the future veteran/family member population.

While many organizations such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, CALVET, County Veteran Services Office, DMV, colleges, service providers, and others collect veteran information, due to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Privacy Act regulations, the ability to share information is severely constrained. As a result, the ability to accurately capture demographics to provide services that are efficient, effective, timely, regionally focused, and resourced for success is a challenge.

While highlighted in the Orange County Veterans Study, it remains relevant today that service members encounter a series of needs as they transition out of the military into civilian communities. These include securing employment and housing, addressing physical and/or mental health issues, and adjusting their self-identity to the civilian culture. With military culture being so structured and hierarchical, many of the systems that provide a safety net no longer exist. The military provides for many fundamental needs, such as housing, meals, healthcare, and employment, while also providing a sense of identity and community. As service members transition from the military, they are faced with the responsibility and challenge of addressing their own needs and those of their families while also navigating a civilian community very likely unfamiliar to them and often ill-equipped to receive them. This transition has tremendous implications for post-service well-being and functioning. The ease through which this transition is made has a profound impact on post-service well-being. Combined with the very high cost of living within Orange County and the knowledge that most veterans are older adults (and potentially on a fixed income) these challenges become more significant to overcome as further increases of chronic needs develop.

Many service members leaving the military and relocating to Orange County are not prepared for the transition. Many leave the service without a job, without permanent housing being identified, and with significant unmet physical and psychological health issues. Further, several service members leave the military with legal and financial issues.

As the OCVMFC has evolved, its focus for the next three years is on a comprehensive and holistic approach for (1) connecting veterans with their earned benefits and services, (2) addressing the acute and chronic needs of veterans, and (3) preventing and intervening early on these needs so veterans, service members, and their families are strong and resilient and can thrive in Orange County.

# Goals and Objectives



## Goal 1

**Identify the appropriate resources to build out the network of both public and private service providers to address the needs of veteran and military families holistically**

- A.** Identify service provider needs across each Working Group (WG) life-cycle of support based on the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) taxonomy.
- B.** Identify and expand volunteers as appropriate to better assist the veteran community.
- C.** Proactively track potential funding sources and recurring events for service providers to maximize their support for all veterans/military families in Orange County.

## Goal 2

**Gain a comprehensive understanding of the environment and the impacts on veterans and military families in Orange County to better address problems or prevent them before they arise**

- A.** Identify all sources of input for vet needs and the authoritative data source for each WG.
- B.** Create a feedback mechanism for veterans and their family members to identify lessons learned and an action plan to enhance how the Collaborative supports the community.
- C.** Enhance relationships across public and private organizations to better capture the underserved veteran population and their needs.





### Goal 3

**Create mechanisms to allow for better information sharing across the entire community to enhance collaboration, identify trends or larger issues, and address needs**

- A.** Institutionalize an inclusive case coordination platform across the Collaborative.
- B.** Increase the capacity of service providers within the platform to ensure service needs for all veterans and their families are supportable.
- C.** Educate members of the Collaborative on HIPAA and Privacy Act requirements regarding the protection of PHI/PII and measures that can be taken to allow for improved information sharing and collaboration within the OCVMFC.
- D.** Develop and maintain internal communication materials (i.e. key talking points, presentations) and external outreach materials (brochures, website/social media site copy to better communicate Collaborative needs and its key successes for various stakeholder communities.

### Goal 4

**Create and document repeatable processes and develop mentorship and training programs to build depth and breadth in capabilities across the Collaborative**

- A.** Document the life-cycle of support for each WG from the identification of the need from the veteran/family member to the resolution of the need.
- B.** Develop a Collaborative budget planning process and 1-yr budget for Collaborative operational needs.
- C.** Develop a strategic communications plan to focus Collaborative efforts, enhance its brand and coordinate messaging.
- D.** Standardize Steering Committee meeting agendas to maintain focus on the goals of the Collaborative and progress on WG/Committee objectives.
- E.** Develop or provide access to material to educate Collaborative members on all aspects of operations from veteran/family available benefits, WG operations, the communications plan with talking points, and the use of Collaborative resources.

# Appendix A: Working Groups, Committees, and Others



## Working Groups

### Housing and Homeless Outreach

Supports the Orange County veteran and military family community through the provisioning of services to reduce homelessness and proactively assists those most at risk of future homelessness before their situation becomes a crisis.

### Employment and Entrepreneurship

Supports the Orange County veteran and military family community through the provisioning of services to reduce unemployment/underemployment and assists with their entrepreneurship goals.

### Legal and Reentry

Provides educational support to veterans and their families as well as service providers within Orange County on available legal services.

### Older Adult Veterans

Improves direct service support to older adult veterans and their families, especially the isolated or shut-in, within Orange County. Enhances the support provided to these veterans and families to successfully navigate benefits processes.

## Health and Wellness

Supports the Orange County veteran and military family community through the provisioning of wellness, behavioral, and physical services and assists with the ability to gain access to their full health and wellness benefits.

## Faith-Based

Provides educational support to veterans and their families as well as service providers within Orange County on how faith-based organizations can best provide services to support veterans.

## Children and Families

Actively identifies veteran connected families and children within Orange County and works with service partners to provide needed resources.

## Women Veterans

Improves direct service support to women veterans and their families within Orange County. Provides peer mentorship and enhances the support provided to these veterans and families to successfully support their unique needs.

## Committees

### Resources

Provides support to the OCVMFC in the areas of fiscal management and meeting planning/execution. Promotes collaborative membership to ensure the availability of all needed services for veterans and their families. Identifies and shares potential funding sources for collaborative membership.

### Public Relations and Outreach

Provides support to the OCVMFC in the areas of communications, messaging, and branding. Creates a “one voice” message for the Collaborative to ensure consistency of messaging for all external engagements.

### Government Relations

Provides support to the OCVMFC around engagement with governmental organizations. Manages the priority governmental engagement initiatives of the Collaborative to ensure consistent actions with elected officials when working on behalf of the Collaborative.



## Liaisons

- Where a Working Group is not possible for the Collaborative, a liaison will serve as the connection between the steering committee and outside group.
- The liaison will represent the Collaborative and pass information to it.
- Goal is to ensure we are connected and can provide support when necessary.
- A Liaison member will act as a non-voting representative between the OCVMFC and the community agency, organization, or program in which they are representing.
- A Liaison member will present action items or information relevant to the OCVMFC Strategic Plan and its 11 Working Groups and Committees. This includes but is not limited to, requests for support, activities, and or situational awareness as to ongoing within the community that impact veterans and their families.
- A Liaison member is encouraged to actively participate in Steering Committee meetings, engage in OCVMFC Working Groups and Committee meetings/activities, and general meetings as schedule and authority allow.

## Executive Advisors

- Executive Advisors should have a broad understanding and involvement with veteran activities and have connections with key people that can enhance the work of the collaborative.
- Executive Advisors should be able and willing to cover areas outside the normal Working Groups responsibility when necessary.
- Executive Advisors will present action items or information relevant to the OCVMFC Strategic Plan and its 11 Working Groups and Committees. This includes but is not limited to, requests for support, activities, and or situational awareness as to ongoing within the community that impact Veterans and their families.
- Executive Advisors are not authorized to act solely or collectively as representatives of the OCVMFC in any given capacity without prior discussion and approval from the OCVMFC Executive Committee.
- Members-at-Large are to leverage connections/relationships via positive and professional stewardship throughout the community, bringing awareness to the OCVMFC and encouraging ways to participate in support of our Veterans and their families.



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[WWW.OCVMFC.INFO](http://WWW.OCVMFC.INFO)

