Focus Group: Veterans & Veteran Advocate  
October 16, 2014 at Veteran’s Memorial Building, Santa Cruz, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.  
Facilitated by Dr. Jerry Solomon  
Staff assistance: 4  
Number of person in attendance: 13  

Question: What is missing?  
- Homelessness  
- Safe, affordable housing.  
- Clinic locations; need to be locally based (and not have to go out of the area for VA services)  
- Responding to “acting out” behavior; have a shared response.  
- Some Vets need payees  
- Paid or volunteers need to care  
- Vets need help connect with resources, including transportation  
- Peer services: have shared experience, or train workers on Vet issues  
- Focus needs to be on how to serve, not on how not to serve  
- Important to have peers and volunteers. Can receive a stipend that won’t affect benefits. Can lead to a paid position.  
- Keep Santa Cruz safe.  
- Education about vet drug use; sometimes it is a way of coping with PTSD.  
- Once homeless are housed drinking decreases.  
- Need co-occurring services.  
- No detox services through VA, or County. It is a cumbersome process with the VA.  
- There is a harm reduction program at Vets Memorial Building.  
- Important for Vets to get their money and benefits.  
- Barriers, especially for homeless:  
  - Ability to communicate; need phone bank  
  - Mail room; now they charge for that  
  - Email service  
- Peers know what it is like  
- Transportation for local  
- CIT training for Vet specific issues  
- Suicide hotline needs to be more adequate to the unique needs of Veterans  
- Expand emergency beds (Paget House)  
- No residential services for women, couples, or pets  
- Suicide hotline needs to know Vet issues, otherwise Vet won’t be interested in talking to them  
- Services for families  
- Trauma informed services. Way of dealing with Vets & PTSD.  
- Large percent have PTSD; also a large number have depression.  
- Peer run services and professional services are needed. Both need to be informed of Vet issues  
- Law enforcement needs to understand that people need help, not just a ticket.
• Peer/volunteer to visit home bound Vets; some of this is happening via word of mouth.
• Days use/drop in center for Vets is needed.
• Services to Vets greatly improved with Vet Advocate (PEI funded by County), but we need more services.
• More outreach, especially in South County
• Need medication management
• In home care needed
• Need local board and care and nursing facilities for Vets.
• Need website with list of resources for Vets.
• Memory care
• Gangs are recruiting Vets.

What are the highest priorities?
• Housing- safe and affordable
• More services for Vets at the Vets Memorial Building
• Suicide hot line
• More volunteers (won’t have enough funds for paid)
• Need recreation or social activities that are alcohol and drug free
• Integrated care. “One Stop” services.
• Various services need to be coordinated.

What is working?
• Veteran Advocate, but need more service hours
• Vets Hall re-opening is great, but need more hours. Serve about 100 on Wednesdays with various services. Need more days.
• Emeline is doing great.
• Thursday group for combat veterans (of various wars; young and older Vets)
• Women’s group at Walnut Avenue for Vets
• SSVF grant. Help with deposit and rent assistance for homeless. Also provide assistance with furniture and house hold items.
• Dean (Vet Advocate) has resource list
• Vets Advocate has provided good training to other providers
• Paget house
• VRC- Veteran resource Center
• Lift Line has added services.

What are the unique needs of South County?
• Large number of Vets
• Outreach to the community
• Not enough activity is focused in South County
• Have not been able to use the Watsonville Memorial building
• Expenses for venue is lower; can explore services there.