

# **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**Between**

**Lake County Behavioral Health**

**And**

**San Francisco VA Health Care System**

## **I. PARTIES & LEGAL AUTHORITY**

Pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 523 and 38 U.S.C. 8103, this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is between Lake County Behavioral Health and the San Francisco VA Health Care System, Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA”), in support of VA programming in the Group Room of the Bevins Court Apartments located at 958 Bevins Court, Lakeport, California. This agreement with Lake County Behavioral Health enables VA to extend outreach and services to eligible Veterans at (as specifically outlined in the next section of this MOU). The term ‘Parties’ in this MOU shall refer to both, Lake County Behavioral Health and San Francisco VA Health Care System together.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. BACKGROUND & PURPOSE**

Veterans participating in the groups live in a relatively isolated rural area and are often more socially isolated than the general population. They experience issues related to their military service, which may include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and medical issues. Interacting with other veterans in a supportive environment can reduce social isolation, create social connectedness, and provide a social support system. The groups also provide education and treatment of mental health issues.

The San Francisco VA Health Care System is committed to the goal of providing health care and Mental Health services to Veterans in their community whenever possible. VA Mental Health services offered at the Group Room of the Bevins Court Apartments located at 958 Bevins Court, Lakeport, California are designed to support, current Lake County Veterans. Consequently, these services shall be made available to Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system who are current residents of Lake County and surrounding counties. To receive San Francisco VA Health Care System health care and Mental Health services, including those offered by SFVAHCS staff, in the Group Room of the Bevins Court Apartments, Veterans must, in general, be enrolled in the VA Health Care System and registered in the San Francisco VA Health Care System (for charting and coordination of care purposes). San Francisco VA Health Care System staff will follow standard VA protocol and procedures (e.g. ROIs when necessary,

protection of sensitive patient information, etc.) when providing such services at the Bevins Court Apartments.

The undersigned representatives for Parties shall review this MOU annually to determine whether revisions/modifications are necessary.

### **III. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **a. Lake County Behavioral Health**

The Veteran Support Groups offered in the Group Room of the Bevins Court Apartments located at 958 Bevins Court, Lakeport, California are formal group therapy programs and, along with individual psychotherapy sessions, are hosted in the Group Room of the Bevins Court Apartments and provided by clinical staff from the San Francisco VA Health Care System. All aspects of the management of the space belong to the staff of Lake County Behavioral Health Services and Bevins Court Apartments, not to VA.

Lake County Behavioral Health shall provide VA confidential meeting space located in the Group Room of the Bevins Court Apartments located at 958 Bevins Court, Lakeport, California at no cost to VA, to permit VA employees to provide information and assistance on VA health care and confidential Mental Health services to eligible Veterans.

To appropriately furnish this office space, Lake County Behavioral Health Services working with Bevins Court Apartments shall provide office equipment, including chairs and tables.

#### **b. Department of Veterans Affairs**

VA is not and will not be involved in any aspect of the space management. VA staff will collaborate with the MHSA team leader (or his/her designee) as appropriate, regarding the management of the space.

VA staff will occupy this space one day per week. The space will only be identified as a "VA Space," not as a mental health office, and the group as a 'VA Group' in order to protect the privacy of Veterans who are seeking care.

VA staff shall not make any permanent improvements to the space. VA staff shall bring laptops when appropriate to document sessions with Veterans. Upon termination of this MOU, VA shall remove its government-owned property when vacating the space.

The CBOC Mental Health Director, or his/her designee, shall provide professional guidance to the San Francisco VA Health Care System staff working in this space on campus, including (but not limited to) problem-solving administrative situations that arise and providing clinical consultation.

The VA staff assigned to perform duties on campus at the Bevins Court Apartments located at 958 Bevins Court, Lakeport, California shall:

1. Provide information and assistance about VA health and mental health services for Veterans attending the groups as needed.
2. Deliver VA Mental Health Services in the form of PTSD support groups and limited individual psychotherapy to eligible Veterans in Lake County, who self-refer for such treatment (contacting or entering the office on their own accord), and are enrolled or willing to be enrolled in Mental Health care in the San Francisco VA Health Care System (with limited exceptions as defined by federal law).

VA staff shall not provide onsite emergency psychiatric or medical care. If a Veteran is identified as being in need of acute psychiatric or medical care, the VA clinician will call 911 and alert Lakeport Police Department in order to address the crisis. A formal VA Disaster Plan and Behavioral Emergency Plan will be implemented, to include Lake County emergency policies and procedures.

This collaborative effort between the center and the local VA system promotes wellness, mental health, and support among Veterans in Lake County and the surrounding areas.

#### **IV. TERMS & CONDITIONS**

##### **a. Guiding Principles for Parties**

All collaborative efforts between Lake County Behavioral Health Services, Bevins Court Apartments and the San Francisco VA Health Care System shall be guided by the following principles:

1. Protection of Veteran rights shall be respected and maintained at all times.
2. San Francisco VA Health Care System operations at the Bevins Court Apartments Group Room location in furtherance of this agreement shall comply with all VA Patient Care and Information Security standards.
  - a. Sensitive Personal Information (SPI) shall not be disclosed to any parties without written consent (i.e. signed Release of Information form).
  - b. VA shall abide by appropriate privacy safeguards, including, but not limited to the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. §522a, and HIPAA regulations.

##### **b. Oversight and Governance**

1. The Ukiah CBOC Mental Health Director (or his/her designee) and the MHSA Program Manager (or his/her designee) will meet quarterly to coordinate and resolve any operating issues.



**VII. AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES/APPROVAL AUTHORITIES**

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**Bonnie Graham**  
SFVAHCS Director

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**Todd Metcalf**  
Administrator, Lake Co BHS

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**John McQuaid**  
SFVAHCS MH Director

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**Anita Grant**  
County Counsel, Lake Co

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**Clare Friedlander**  
Ukiah CBOC MH Director

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**Chair**  
Lake County Board of Supervisors

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**Carole J. Huchingson**  
Clerk of the Lake County  
Board of Supervisors