



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**VA Hires Over 1,600 Mental Health Professionals to Meet Goal,
Expands Access to Care and Outreach Efforts**

**VA Loma Linda Healthcare System Hires
27 New Mental Health Professionals**

LOMA LINDA, Calif. – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has met the goal to hire 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in President Obama’s Aug. 31, 2012, Executive Order to Improve Access to Mental Health Services for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families. The VA Loma Linda Healthcare System has hired 27 new mental health professionals toward this goal.

“I am proud of the hard work our staff has completed to bring these new staff members on board,” said Barbara Fallen, acting director of the VA Loma Linda Healthcare System. “We are not slowing our efforts however, and will continue to actively recruit for any vacant mental health positions for the future so Veterans will get the care they need.”

As of May 31, 2013, VA has hired a total of 1,607 mental health clinical providers to meet the goal of 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in the Executive Order. Additionally, VA has hired 2,005 mental health clinical providers to fill existing vacancies.

“Meeting this hiring milestone significantly enhances our ability to improve access to care for those Veterans seeking mental health services and demonstrates our continued commitment to the health and well-being of the men and women who have served the Nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Meeting this goal is an important achievement, but we recognize that we must continue to increase access to the quality mental health care Veterans have earned and deserve.”

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VA provides a full range of comprehensive mental health services across the country. In Fiscal Year 2012, more than 1.3 million Veterans received specialized mental health care from VA. This number has risen each year from 927,052 in Fiscal Year 2006. In addition to hiring more mental health professionals, VA is expanding the use of innovative technology to serve Veterans in rural or underserved areas. VA expects to increase the number of Veterans receiving care from tele-mental health services in fiscal year 2013, and has increased the number of Vet Centers, which provide readjustment counseling and referral services from 233 in 2008 to 300 in 2012.

In November 2011, VA launched an award-winning, national public awareness campaign called Make the Connection, which is aimed at reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental health care and informing Veterans, their families, friends, and members of their communities about VA resources. More information on Make the Connection can be found at www.maketheconnection.net.

Mental health professionals interested in seeking employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs can obtain information at www.vacareers.va.gov. Veterans and their families interested in learning more about the mental health services provided by VA can go to www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

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The Jerry L. Pettis Memorial VA Medical Center is the centerpiece of the VA Loma Linda Healthcare System. Opened in 1977, it is located ½ mile from its major affiliate, Loma Linda University. The VA Loma Linda Healthcare System is one of the top 25 employers in the Inland Empire. With approximately 2,500 employees and more than 1,000 volunteers, it serves more than 67,000 Veterans who entrust their health care needs to VA for a wide variety of services through inpatient and outpatient care. In partnership with Loma Linda University Medical Center and Loma Linda University Healthcare, VA provides primary care and mental health at outpatient clinics located in Blythe, Corona, Palm Desert, Murrieta, Rancho Cucamonga and Victorville.