



**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA  
& NORTHERN NEVADA**

*Serving America's Most Vulnerable*

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Christie Holderegger, VP Development & Communications  
(916) 213-4133 | [cholderegger@voa-ncnn.org](mailto:cholderegger@voa-ncnn.org)

**FOR VETERANS DAY VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA SEEKS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND MORAL  
INJURY AS UNDERLYING CAUSE FOR HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS**

*Knowing more about the effects of moral injury helps address root causes of homelessness*

Sacramento, California – Friday, November 8, 2019 – Each year on Veterans Day, Americans honor all military veterans who have served our country and especially those who have returned home safely after active duty.

While the transition back to civilian life goes smoothly for some veterans, for others it is a challenging and complicated process. Some veterans may be dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder but clinicians who work with veterans have identified an additional cluster of symptoms that are related to military deployment but do not fit the criteria for PTSD. These symptoms fit with what is now being called Moral Injury.

For those who have served in the military, especially in combat zones, moral injury can occur when a soldier's wartime actions conflict with one's personal moral code. Military values that veterans have learned cannot simply be set aside after their military service is over, even for those who never serve in combat. For veterans with moral injury, the shift back to civilian society and values can become impossible. They may have lost their best friends in their unit or feel ashamed of things they did or failed to stop. They can feel so hollowed out, numb, and despairing that they cannot find their way back from emotional isolation and end up living painfully disassociated from ordinary life and relationships.

Volunteers of America is interested in this topic because the effects of moral injury contribute to homelessness, self-harm including suicide, rage, addiction, compulsive overwork and/or depression. Unlike some causes of distress, moral injury is not a mental illness. It is an existential crisis in identity and meaning because of devastating life circumstances. It can happen at any age and recovery is possible.

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Volunteers of America (VOA) is committed to broadening the public, faith-based, and medical community's knowledge about the effects of moral injury. VOA's goal is to help others better understand that moral injury is a legitimate obstruction to personal well-being for a vast spectrum of populations and communities and extensive training in how to address it in those populations is key to overcoming addiction, depression, and other factors that can lead to homelessness.

Volunteers of America's moral injury repair initiatives have increased our capacity to serve veterans in crisis and at risk of suicide. Engaging staff who are veterans and who are certified mental health specialists (via certification as Veteran Peer Support Specialists, a recognized mental health specialty), our training programs offer critical skills to strengthen veterans against the challenges they face.

For more information on Volunteers of America's work on moral injury, visit <https://www.voa.org/moral-injury>.

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#### **About Volunteers of America:**

Founded locally in 1911, the Northern California & Northern Nevada office of Volunteers of America is one of the largest providers of social services in the region. The professional paid staff operates more than 50 programs: homeless services and shelters; substance abuse treatment and recovery services; senior, veteran, and youth services; transitional, permanent, supportive, and low income housing. Volunteers of America provides shelter or housing to nearly 1,800 men, women and children every night in Northern California. Learn more about Volunteers of America Northern California & Northern Nevada at [www.voa-ncnn.org](http://www.voa-ncnn.org).

#### **About Volunteers of America services for veterans:**

Recognizing the specific needs of those who served our country, the Northern California & Northern Nevada office of Volunteers of America (VOA) provides specialized programs for homeless and at-risk veterans and their families in Yolo, Placer, El Dorado, Sacramento, Nevada, and Yuba/Sutter counties. Services for veterans include rapid re-housing, case management and homeless prevention. A large focus is heavily placed on increasing veteran's employment potential through job readiness and retention training. VOA's work with veterans is made possible by the generous support of The Home Depot Foundation, PG&E, Wells Fargo, and Home Aid.

**Volunteers of America Northern California & Northern Nevada**

3434 Marconi Ave, Sacramento, CA 95821

916.265.3400 (Tel); 916.442.1861 (Fax) • [info@voa-ncnn.org](mailto:info@voa-ncnn.org) • [www.volunteersofamerica-ncnn.org](http://www.volunteersofamerica-ncnn.org)