



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 23, 2020**  
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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES AND MAYOR'S  
OFFICE OF THRIVENYC ANNOUNCE MISSION: VETCHECK TO SUPPORT  
VETERANS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

***Mission: VetCheck unites the veteran community through check-in calls to provide connection during this challenging time and referrals to the essential services veterans may need***

**NEW YORK**—The New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) and the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC announced Mission: VetCheck today, a new project to make supportive check-in calls to veterans across the city. The initiative will be implemented in collaboration with a growing list of veteran-serving organizations, including the United War Veterans Council, The Mission Continues, Catholic War Veterans, Travis Manion Foundation and various American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts.

"New York City's veterans have dedicated their lives to serving and protecting others," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. "Now, more than ever, they need our support to manage stress and isolation through programs like Mission: VetCheck. I want all veterans to know that they are not alone and the City is here to serve them during this challenging time."

"Veterans and those close to them are dedicated to a life of duty and serving others. Mission: VetCheck allows them to continue their service by volunteering to help reduce the social isolation that is being felt by fellow Service Members—past and present—in addition to their families. This helps to meet veteran community members' core needs during these tough times," said **Lieutenant Colonel James Hendon, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans' Services**.

"New York City's veterans deserve every resource our City has to offer, particularly during this isolating and difficult time. ThriveNYC is proud to support Mission: VetCheck, which mobilizes the power of volunteers and the energy of the veteran community to connect veterans to one another and to vital public resources," said **Susan Herman, Director of the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC**.

New York City is home to over 200,000 veterans. The transition from military to civilian life that veterans undergo can be isolating, challenging, and can take a lifetime. This can lead to veterans experiencing profound social isolation even prior to the current COVID-19 crisis. The coronavirus outbreak is exacerbating some existing mental health needs as well as creating new ones for many New Yorkers, making it more important than ever to stay connected to one's community. This time has also increased citywide rates of food insecurity, unemployment, social isolation, and the need for housing, medical and benefit assistance.

VetCheck is designed to offer New York City's veterans support and connection to the veteran community during this crisis, as well as immediate information about essential public services, including free meals, COVID-19 test site locations, and mental health resources. Veterans can also be referred to DVS for additional resources and support such as housing, benefits or healthcare needs.

VetCheck trains volunteers from New York City's veteran community to make compassionate check-in calls to other veterans. Training is delivered by DVS and the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC, and volunteer management is overseen and conducted by New York Cares. Volunteers will be offered supplemental training resources through PsychArmor, an organization that provides military-specific trainings.

The New York National Guard helped pilot the initiative by making over 4,000 calls to city veterans. Almost a quarter of the veterans whom volunteers were able to speak with were referred to services. The most common service requests have been for food assistance, unemployment, information about COVID testing, and healthcare questions.

Veterans who are interested in helping their fellow veterans by making check-in calls can sign up to volunteer at [Mission: VetCheck](#). To take part, volunteers will need access to a computer and phone so that they can make the calls from home.

Those veterans who are seeking a check-in or know a veteran who would benefit from a call can also visit [Mission: VetCheck](#) to send a request.

"Mission: VetCheck is an important way to connect veterans with other veterans and provide services and resources during this very challenging time. The COVID-19 outbreak and shutdown have exacerbated mental health issues, poverty and isolation for many veterans, and for millions of New Yorkers. I am proud to support the VetCheck mission and work with the Department of Veterans' Services to ensure that our city's veterans are not left behind," said **Chaim Deutsch, Chair, City Council's Committee on Veterans**.

"New York Cares is excited to add DVS and ThriveNYC to the number of city agencies we are supporting to further the health and well-being of veterans in New York City," said **Gary Bagley, Executive Director at New York Cares**.

"We applaud DVS's efforts to increase outreach and improve communication throughout New York City's veteran community particularly amidst this historic pandemic. Mission: VetCheck provides a critical element of connecting veterans in need to services and better understanding the needs of New York's veteran population," said **Todd Haskins, Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board**.

"Since the pandemic hit the US, Veterans Crisis lines have seen a [12% surge in call volume](#). But while the veteran population may be vulnerable at this time, they are also a group we can look to for modeling resilience. The military community has taught me that the key to emotional and mental well-being is twofold: feeling connected to one another and providing a service to others that brings purpose and fulfillment. I can think of no group of people to learn from who are more deeply rooted in social connection or primed for service than our military," said **Ryan Manion, President of the Travis Manion Foundation**.

### **About the New York City Department of Veterans' Services**

The [New York City Department of Veterans' Services](#) (DVS) strives to improve the lives of all veterans and their families. Our mission is straightforward: to foster purpose-driven lives for NYC service members, veterans, and their families through effective connections with the NYC community; targeted advocacy at the local, state, and national level; compassionate service, ensuring we make it easier to access services and benefits they've earned. We believe veterans are civic assets whose strength and demonstrated commitment to public service help NYC thrive. For more information on DVS, please visit our website at [www.nyc.gov/vets](http://www.nyc.gov/vets), call 212-416-5250, or follow us on social media [@nycveterans](#).

### **About ThriveNYC**

The [Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC](#) (ThriveNYC) oversees a citywide commitment to promote mental health for all New Yorkers. ThriveNYC partners with 12 City agencies to implement over 30 innovative mental health programs that serve hundreds of New Yorkers every year. Thrive programs reach people with the highest need – those with serious mental illness, those affected by trauma, and those living in historically underserved neighborhoods. And Thrive programs break down barriers to care for all New Yorkers by providing free services in multiple languages, regardless of insurance or immigration status. All of ThriveNYC's work prioritizes equity and inclusion and builds the evidence base for innovative approaches.

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