

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 5, 2025

**STATEWIDE INITIATIVE LAUNCHES TO ASSESS NEEDS OF LOUISIANA'S
MILITARY VETERANS AND FAMILIES**

UL Lafayette and Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs to Lead Comprehensive Study with Support from Key Veteran Organizations

BATON ROUGE, La.—A statewide initiative to better understand the challenges faced by Louisiana's military veterans and their families is set to launch in 2025. This initiative, spearheaded by the Louisiana Center for Health Innovation (LCHI), a center under the Informatics Research Institute at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs (LDVA), aims to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment survey to identify gaps in resources and services, guiding future support efforts for the state's veteran community.

The survey will focus on key areas such as mental health, housing, employment, health care access and family support, providing a clear picture of the current realities faced by Louisiana's veteran population. The findings will be used to improve existing services and inform strategic initiatives aimed at creating stronger, more resilient veteran communities across the state.

With a deep understanding of veteran experiences, the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs will use the survey as an impactful tool to improve the resources provided to Louisiana's veterans and their families.

Secretary Charlton Meginley of LDVA stated, "The Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs supports the research study conducted by the Louisiana Center for Health Innovation at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. We believe the information that could be gathered through this study will enhance the services that we and our partners can provide to all veterans who call Louisiana home."

The Louisiana Center for Health Innovation, leveraging its research expertise in health innovation, informatics and community-based public health, is leading the development of the assessment tools and evaluation framework in close collaboration with LDVA and veteran-serving organizations.

"As a top-tier research university, UL Lafayette is proud to lead this initiative through the Louisiana Center for Health Innovation, delivering data-driven insights that will have a profound impact on Louisiana's veterans and their families," said Dr. Ramesh Kolluru, vice president for Research, Innovation and Economic Development at UL Lafayette. "We believe this to be the most meaningful way for us to honor our veterans for their service."

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Dr. Gabriela Wilson, Director of the Louisiana Center for Health Innovation and principal investigator of the study, added, “At LCHI, we are deeply committed to transforming data into action that serves our communities. This initiative is about more than identifying service gaps—it's about listening to veterans, elevating their voices and designing solutions that reflect their real needs. Our goal is to ensure that every veteran and their family in Louisiana is seen, heard and supported.”

The success of this initiative relies on participation from Louisiana’s veterans, service members and families. Those eligible are encouraged to participate in the 2025 survey to share their experiences and help shape the future of veteran support in the state.

For more information about the initiative and how to get involved, please visit <https://lchi.louisiana.edu/>. For inquiries in English, contact Dr. Gabriela Wilson, Director of LCHI, at gabriela.wilson@louisiana.edu or 337.482.0197. For inquiries in Spanish, contact Dr. Angie V. Sanchez, Health Innovation Officer at LCHI, at angie.sanchez@louisiana.edu or 337.482.0694.

About the University of Louisiana at Lafayette

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette is a leading public research institution committed to advancing knowledge, fostering innovation and serving the needs of Louisiana’s communities.

About the Louisiana Center for Health Innovation

The Louisiana Center for Health Innovation at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette is dedicated to advancing health innovation, health informatics and public health solutions that promote the well-being of Louisiana’s communities.

About the Informatics Research Institute

The Informatics Research Institute (IRI) at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette focuses on groundbreaking research that leverages informatics to address critical societal challenges. Their mission is to use AI and data science to drive scientific advancements and real-world solutions for healthier populations, resilient communities and a secure, interconnected world. IRI is home to four research centers including the Louisiana Center for Health Innovation, Accessible Healthcare Through AI Augmented Decisions (AHeAD), the National Incident Management Systems and Advanced Technologies (NIMSAT) Institute and the Center for Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity.

About LDVA

The Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs serves all generations of veterans with dignity and respect while striving to provide the highest quality programs and services alongside our federal, state and local partners to make Louisiana a veteran-friendly state. LDVA staff, many who are veterans themselves, relentlessly advocate for Louisiana veterans and their families to ensure they receive superior customer service and support by connecting them to the benefits they have earned in service to our country.

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