“Bringing Your Community Together to Bring Our Veterans Home”

*Rural Clergy Webinar*

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VA South Central MIRECC
Topics Overview

- Importance of Communities for Reintegration
- Congregation as Community and Partner
- Lessons Learned from VA/Clergy Partnership
- Ideas for You and Your Community!
“When I came home from war to my church, I was either treated as a Hero, or a Monster. I’m not either of those.”
Reintegration to What?

“Our goal is not to reintegrate Veterans to the VA but to their community”
Why are **Communities** important to Reintegration?

Warriors come **FROM** and **RETURN TO** the Community
“If we send ‘em, we must mend ‘em”

Wendell Berry
What did we do before we had a VA?
Poll Question

Who is in our audience today?

A. Community clergy
B. Chaplains
C. Lay persons in faith community
D. Health care providers
E. Veterans
Congregation as Community
Congregation as Community of Reintegration

“Community” of believers

Congregation has “history” with Veteran

Congregation shares common values

Faith communities are intergenerational
Congregations as Community Partners
VA/Clergy Partnership (VCP) for Rural Veterans

Sponsored by VA Office of Rural Health through:

South Central Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC)
Why?
Train pastors as “first responders” to Vets

Build partnerships with churches, MH and community resources for collaboration

Form an ongoing community “hub” of support

Get Rural Veterans and families the access to care and support that they need.
Where?

Arkansas:

- El Dorado - “Project SOUTH” (2009)
- Russellville - “Pew and Couch” (2010)
- Pine Bluff - “VIP-VETS” (2011)
- Searcy - “White County Clergy Partnership” (2012)
- Jonesboro/Mountain Home (2013)

Poll Question

What do you think are the greatest needs of Veterans in your community?

A. More jobs for Veterans
B. Family support
C. Easier access to mental health/VA
D. Greater community awareness/concern
E. Homelessness
Good Community Partners

Ministerial Alliances/Interfaith Organizations

Church Denominations & Associations

Community Mental Health Providers

Schools

Businesses

Community Foundations
Good Military/Veteran Partners

- VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
- Dept. of Defense Family Support Services
- Veteran Service Organizations
- Veteran Service Officers
“The Pew”

Vs.

“The Couch”
Pew and Couch Lunches
## Different language and perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pew</th>
<th>Couch</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Clinician</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
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<td>Sin</td>
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<td>Faith</td>
<td>Evidence-based practice</td>
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<td>Healing</td>
<td>Coping</td>
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Commonalities

“Psyche” = “soul” in New Testament

Common Goals

Community

Conditions
Pew and Couch want to collaborate!
Barriers to Overcome

- Afraid they have different belief systems.
- They don’t know each other.
- They don’t understand what each other does.
  - e.g. “prayer only” vs. “medicate only”
- They don’t know how to collaborate.
Mental Health Referrals for Veterans

Actively Listen to their Problem

Are you concerned about the person’s safety?

“Are you thinking of harming yourself now or in the near future?”
“Are you thinking of harming someone else now or in the near future?”

Yes

Need Help Now

DO NOT LEAVE ALONE

Call Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Consider Referral to Mental Health If:
- Habitual substance abuse
- Hearing voices that others do not
- Seeing people/things that others do not
- Thinking that other people are “out to get” them
- History of sexual abuse as a child
- History of sexual abuse as an adult
- Sexual abuse while in the military
- Not making sense when talking
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Increase of risky behavior (spending sprees, unhealthy sexual behavior, driving under the influence of alcohol/drugs, etc.)
- No interest in life (job, family, friends, normal activities)
- Hopeless (feeling that nothing will ever get better)

Accompany

No

Call 911
What Congregations and Communities are doing to Reintegrate Veterans
Breakfast for Troops on Drill Weekend
Ideas for Congregations:

Serve meal for troops on drill weekend
Adopt a Veteran family
Host Veteran’s Day breakfast/lunch
Do service projects for or with Vets/families
Use of worship for reintegration
Ideas for Communities
Stuff that’s worked

• Building relationships for referring Vets
• Veterans “Benefits Fair” or panel discussion
• “Yellow-Out” for High School football
• Military kids camps/literacy programs
• Veteran Workout at local gym
More stuff that’s worked

• Veteran family Rodeo, archery, bowling
• Student Veteran Project and mentorship
• Hospice Partnership
• Educating community on “Invisible Wounds of War”- churches, senior adults, denominations/associations, MH providers, Rotary club
Poll Question

What ideas might work best in your community?
A. Partnering with local schools
B. Provide breakfast for local armory
C. “Pew and Couch” lunches to collaborate
D. Veteran resource fairs
E. Educating community on Veteran issues and “invisible wounds of war”
Results of Community Partnership
Lessons Learned from VCP
#1 Building Relationships
#2 Bringing Everyone to the Table
#3 Small things are more meaningful than big things
#4 Getting and maintaining pastor involvement
# 5 Finding the Veterans that need help
Community Partnerships - Not your father’s VA model
Now it’s your turn!
Questions?
What do ya’ll think?
Rural Clergy Training Website

www.ruralhealth.va.gov/ruralclergytraining