“Bringing Your Community Together to Bring Our Veterans Home”

Rural Clergy Webinar

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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

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?

What?

- 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)

Muskogee, Louisville, Walla Walla, Maine, Prescott AZ, Reno?(2014)

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

Pew	Couch
Pastor	Clinician
Trust	Confidentiality
Sin	illness
Faith	Evidence-based practice
Healing	Coping

Commonalities

- “Psyche” = “soul” in New Testament
- Common Goals
- Community
- Conditions

Pew and Couch want to collaborate!

Barriers to Overcome

Afraid they have different belief system

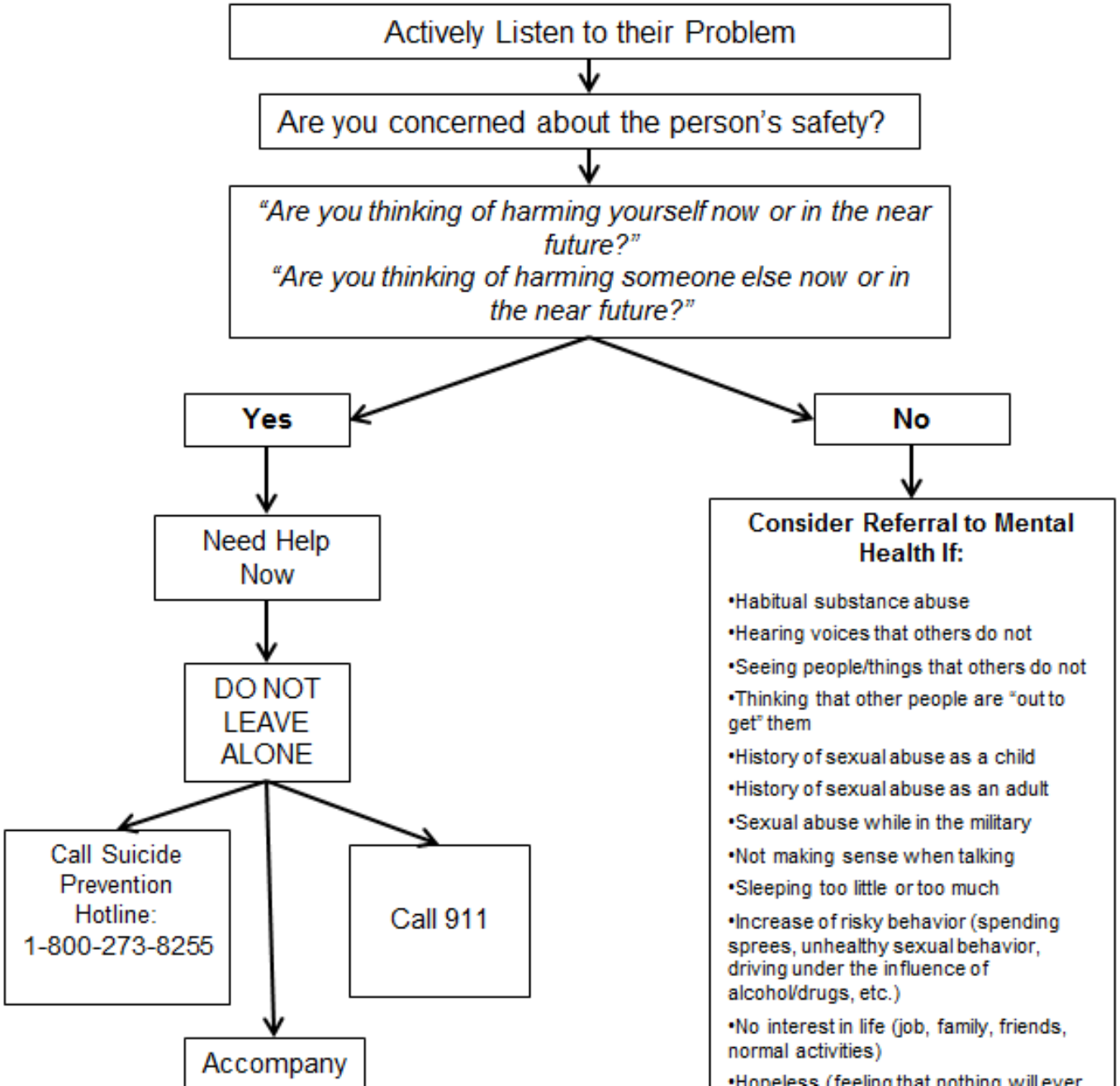
They don’t know each other

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



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