

# Partnering to Provide Mental Health Care Education to Rural Providers of Veterans

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## BACKGROUND

- Many Veterans choose not to utilize, or are unable to utilize VHA providers and facilities.
- Consequently, many Veterans receive care for mental illness from primary care providers who have no access to VA-specific training.
- VA is committed to ensuring that eligible Veterans receive high quality health care using evidence-based treatment modalities.
- We tested the viability of partnerships between VA & non-VA educators/entities. **GECs routinely access rural providers.**



**Aim 1:** Conduct an educational needs assessment with rural care providers who serve Veterans, but who are outside the formal VHA administrative structure.

**Aim 2:** Package and deliver requested, appropriate, and reinforced education regarding specific care modalities to rural providers.

**Aim 3:** Evaluate educational activities by conducting follow-up surveys to determine (a) value of delivered education and (b) extent of provider knowledge, attitudes and behavior change.

# Project fit various Advisory Board suggestions:

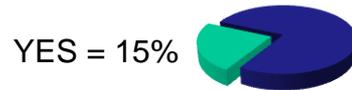
- **Focus and Scope**
  - broad focus: rural minorities, non-VA rural
  - reach out to other systems and centers
- **Topics in rural context**
  - use of technology
  - engage busy clinicians in education and research
  - implementation of EBP's in CBOCs
- **Resources**
  - consider working with external sources (eg HRSA)
  - internet and technological expertise

# Results - a

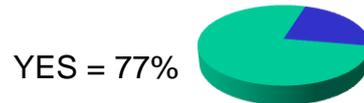
## 1. TWO-STATE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

(selected items; n=726)

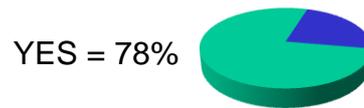
a. Percent of your patient population who are Veterans?



b. Would you welcome clinical education on Veteran's mental health?



c. Would you welcome clinical education on Veteran's physical health?



## 2. EXAMPLE PROVIDED EDUCATION

(n=597)

**Primary Care Providers' Guide to Mental Health and Veterans**

**A Special Three Part Series**  
Available online beginning Mar 1, 2010

Three 20-minute webinars designed for Oklahoma's health care providers who have Veterans as patients.

**PART 1: Assessment & Treatment of Depression in Veterans**  
Kristen Sorocco, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, OKC VAMC  
Assistant Professor, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

**PART 2: Assessment & Treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Veterans**  
Kristen Sorocco, PhD  
Collin L. Davidson, MS, Oklahoma State University

**PART 3: Assessment & Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorder in Veterans**  
Kristen Sorocco, PhD  
Collin L. Davidson, MS

ACCESS via: [www.ouhsc.edu/geriatricmedicine/okgec/webinars.asp](http://www.ouhsc.edu/geriatricmedicine/okgec/webinars.asp)  
Select the presentation of your choice.

Free CD's of these webinars or other webinars may be obtained by contacting Michelle Stewart at [michelle-stewart@ouhsc.edu](mailto:michelle-stewart@ouhsc.edu) (405 271-8130).

Please take a few moments to complete the survey at the end of the presentation so we can count your participation.

This webinar series is brought to you by the Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health and Clinical Centers, and is Co-sponsored by Oklahoma Geriatric Education Center (OGEC).



Example educational reinforcement  
1 & 2 months later

**Primary Care PTSD Screen (PC-PTSD)**

Use these questions to screen your patients for PTSD.

In your life, have you ever had any experience that was so frightening, horrible, or upsetting that, in the past month, you:

- Have had nightmares about it or thought about it when you did not want to? YES / NO
- Tried hard not to think about it or went out of your way to avoid situations that reminded you of it? YES / NO
- Were constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled? YES / NO
- Felt numb or detached from others, activities, or your surroundings? YES / NO

**Scoring:** Current research suggests that the PC-PTSD results should be considered "positive" if a patient answers "yes" to any three items.

A positive PC-PTSD should be followed up with PTSD Checklist-Civilian Version (PCL-C) which can be found at: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/index.asp>

For more information, see [www.ouhsc.edu/OkGEC](http://www.ouhsc.edu/OkGEC)

Department of Veterans Affairs

# Results - b

## 3. FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS (selected items)

- The program has led to new ideas that I will try out in my work setting:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
0.0%	0.0%	20.7%	39.7%	39.7%

- Have you shared the knowledge gained with co-workers? 68%
- Have the handouts been helpful to you? 88%
- Have the reminders been helpful to you? 76%

### Qualitative Responses:

- Great information and time management.
- A much needed update on PHQ-9 and PTSD.
- I've used the knowledge gained in patient care
- I've modified the way I assess patients
- I've changed how I counsel patients
- I've noticed improved patient outcomes
- Including more assessment scales in student education
- Shared with family
- Used handouts with (nursing) students
- I wish you would offer more classes that increase depth of older adults care and mental health care.



## Conclusions:

- Federally-funded entities can navigate administrative and financial hurdles to accomplish jointly planned education.
- Modest attempts to inform community providers of VA standards of care are accepted and valued.

## Next Steps:

- OkGEC and AGEC will continue providing VA-specific content to non-VA rural providers.
- Use national education leadership roles to disseminate out; increase geographic areas served.
- Better characterize value of education to providers and Veterans.