

Department of Veterans Affairs

MIRECC Matters

A Publication of the VISN 5 MIRECC

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Feeling Engaged and Energized

Richard Goldberg, Ph.D.

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In my last column, I highlighted how the VISN 5 MIRECC's integrated research, education and clinical programs help maximize our contributions to local, regional, and national VA efforts to improve mental health care and related outcomes for Veterans. In April of this year, I had the pleasure of attending the VA Mental Health Centers of Excellence Strategic Planning Workshop. Leadership from across multiple centers met to improve cross-center communication and collaboration as well as align and synergize resources to collectively address VA national priorities. Over 2 and a half productive days, we specified several multi-center initiatives focusing on suicide prevention and other VA high-priority areas. We also

developed action plans for launching these initiatives.

The workshop and the efforts launched have re-energized my commitment to working collaboratively and synergistically with a cadre of researchers, educators and clinicians across the country to support and enhance the VA mission. Locally, I am also feeling excited about the wide range of research and educational programming highlighted in this issue of the MIRECC Matters. Finally, in keeping with our MIRECC's motto of putting recovery into practice, I am also delighted to be working with local clinicians and mental health peer specialists to implement a professional-peer co-facilitated medical wellness self-management intervention. The intervention, called *Living Well*, is a program that I developed and re-



Dr. Richard Goldberg
VISN 5 MIRECC Director

cently evaluated within the context of a VA Health Services Research and Development funded merit award. I am excited to see teams trained to deliver *Living Well* in VISN 5. Look for my talk at our MIRECC Science Meeting in September where I will present findings from our study and my plans for further dissemination.

2018 Summit on Military Sexual Trauma

Alicia Lucksted, Ph.D.

On April 18th, the DCVA Medical Center and Veterans Mental Health Advisory Council hosted a full-day summit on Military Sexual Trauma. The planning team, which included the DC MST coordinator, Trauma Services, Mental Health Department and leadership from the Veterans Council, created an engaging and activating day of professional and experiential expertise.

Under the motto “We are Stronger Together. Accountability, Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment,” more than 120 attendees gathered in the Freedom Auditorium to listen to diverse speakers. The audience combined Veteran-clients, VA staff of various disciplines, representatives from numerous VA offices, and community resources and leaders. One delegation drove from Michigan to attend, moved to do so by their experiences with and concern about Veterans suffering the effects of military sexual trauma. One commented, *This has been a Master’s Degree education in one single day!*

The summit was moderated by Ms. Alohalani Bullock-Jones,

Women Veteran Program Manager for VBA and a U.S. Navy Veteran. Speakers integrated personal experiences of military sexual trauma and of assisting survivors with expert knowledge and information.

David Blackledge – U.S. Army Brigadier General (Ret) and the Program Director of Veterans Services for Melwood, Inc. – illustrated the profound healing and empowerment that is possible in his descriptions of Veterans’ attending Melwood’s customized retreats for survivors of military sexual trauma. He recounted several compelling stories from his military career about working to hold senior military personnel to account for perpetrating sexual harassment.

Next, **Colonel Don Christensen**, (Ret, JAG) spoke as President of the Protect Our Defenders Organization. He described its mission as providing direct legal representation to survivors of military sexual trauma, advocating through the media for attention to it, and advocating within the military justice system for better protections of those who report sexual assault or harassment.

Remarks from **Dr. Glenda F. Hodges** of Howard University’s College of Medicine were bracing. She said, *I don’t need to know more than you want tell about what you’ve been through,*

but I can still celebrate that you have come through it. We have been through so much but that does not mean that I need to be a broken person. We can help each other be whole.

Ms. Neyl Garrett, a social worker and U.S. Army Veteran, discussed breaking the silence around military sexual trauma and resisting stigma. She told part of her own story: *People can give us all the tools there are but we have to use them, every day. If we do, bad times are shorter and less frequent, recovery is more frequent....I can still love my Army, my country, be proud of my service AND still speak about the trauma I experienced.*

The Summit’s centerpiece was a panel of female Veterans who are military sexual assault survivors, sharing their personal experiences. It is impossible to do justice to the full range of their stories and journeys; we have chosen just a few quotations:

I was unfeeling, emotionless – that was my coping, my lack of trust. Peeling back those layers of shame and trying to escape in my mind -- that worked but isolated me. It took years. But through all that I knew that one day I had to get through this. It’s not an easy journey but it is so worthwhile.

Summit on Military Sexual Trauma, continued

Don't hold back, get yourself help and therapy. You are worth it. Talk back to what they have led you to think you are. Fight for your life. It is worth it.

I was sexually assaulted in the Marine Corps by other men [in the 1990s]. Zero resources available, speaking up was not an option and I had work to do. So I did not revisit it for almost 18 years... but it finds a way to leak out and not in a healthy way, in a damaging way to your life and your family and yourself. That is why I am so glad to see the programs now. I am now a nationally certified victim advocate for survivors of MST, especially men. I hear a lot of horror stories but also a lot of powerful stories of people standing back up.

I was very green when I joined the military. I joined because I was a single parent and wanted to make a future for my child and myself. I was raped by my drill sergeant. I did not say anything because I was afraid they would make me leave. ...it took two marriages failing and twenty years later for me to realize I needed help

...[decades] of my life are just gone, accomplishments that I threw the wrench into. It's hard to live with. I'm not sure where I'm going next. Inside I'm still a train wreck. I want to love and

trust people more than everything, but I don't know how to get there. But I'll get back up again.

Sexual trauma survivors in the audience emotionally thanked the panelists for speaking openly, and expressed their own desperation and grief. The survivor panel responded with support and connections in the moment, as did mental health professionals in the audience.

Dr. Michael Knep -- Patient Centered Care Director of the Integrative Health and Wellness Program -- then led a 10 minute guided meditation. In addition to demonstrating a valuable tool for personal care wellness, this exercise helped audience members regroup and "sit with" the personal stories we had just heard.

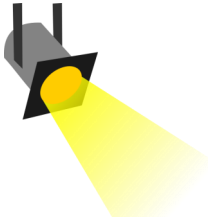
Next, **Dr. Alicia Y. Christy** -- Deputy Director of Reproductive Health in the Women's Health Service, VA Office of Patient Care and a retired U.S. Army Colonel -- emphasized that VHA needs to better address sexual functioning problems among Veteran clients, and that they are especially prevalent among people who have experienced sexual assault.

Dr. Dominique Neptune, Associate Chief of Staff, DC VAMC Mental Health, provided closing remarks. The Summit painted a vivid picture of the urgent need for better accountability, improvements where VA systems of care are insufficient, and prevention of

military sexual assault in the first place. It also sounded a call for increased visibility of the issues, dismantling of stigma and of retaliation for reporting, and the sharp need for further advocacy in the military, US legal systems, and within VHA.

Meanwhile, summit organizers had filled the main lobby with an array of resources, including an all-day, powerfully positive exhibit of **The Clothesline Project**. Veterans and others had created messages of resolve, pain, and empowerment regarding their own experiences with sexual assault on white T shirts. These were clipped to clotheslines strung along the lobby walls for others to read. The display was staffed by supportive volunteers who explained its purpose and invited everyone to view the shirts and stand witness to the experiences behind them. See <http://clotheslineproject.info/> for more information on The Clothesline Project and its history.

This was an exceptional day. Planners and attendees learned, educated, and connected. We are truly thankful for all who made this summit happen and for all who came and shared their stories.



Veteran Spotlight

The mission of the VISN 5 MIRECC is to support and enhance the recovery and community functioning of Veterans with serious mental illness. In order to offer research, education, and clinical training programs that meet the needs of Veterans and the VA clinicians who serve them we rely on stakeholder advisory groups like the Veterans Advisory Panel. In upcoming issues of the MIRECC Matters, we will introduce you to one of our dedicated Advisors who help shape our work. This issue's Veteran Spotlight shines on long-time Panelist Mr. Reginald "Reggie" Lewis. Mr. Lewis served in the Army, I-Corp, Communications Center Specialist from 1973-1977. He has been a Veterans Advisory Panel member for over 10 years. Mr. Lewis is a people person, spending time with others daily. He continues a life of service. Each week he serves as a volunteer at the Havre de Grace Citizens Nursing Center and at Harford Memorial Hospital. Mr. Lewis has been nominated for and received numerous awards over the years for his work with others. He is particularly proud of receiving the Harford County "Most Beautiful People" Award in 2014.

To the VISN 5 MIRECC Matters Readers:

It is with great joy that I, **Reginald T. Lewis**, a disabled man with serious mental illness, am now writing about my feelings and my happiness about being a member of the Veterans Advisory Panel (VAP).

This is a membership which I feel so good about, starting with Ralf Schneider, who oversees the monthly meetings, and is a great motivational leader with good social skills. He keeps me at my best, and that is hard. I am surrounded by fellow VAP members and they are some of the greatest people I know, and respect. To top things off for me is the chance of a life time: working with and for great people like the Director of the VISN5 MIRECC, Dr. Richard Goldberg and some of the MIRECC staff members like Dr. Melanie Bennett, Dr. Samantha Hack, and Dr. Anjana Muralidharan, who are all the best in what they do. I love them all.

I do not take lightly what we do. It is all important work, done for the good of all. We are helping Veterans who need help. We are voicing things to help ourselves, but more so to help other Veterans. I plan on being a good member for many more years, because I love it.

That is what interested me in the VAP, in the beginning. It was being a part of something so big and positive. It was very important and I loved it then. What I like most about the VAP is the great people that are involved. They all really care so much about what they do, say, and bring to the table. I think the most important thing about the VAP is the fact that we all want to help out our fellow Veterans and anybody that needs it.

Therapeutic Yoga at the Martinsburg VA Medical Center

Alicia Lucksted, Ph.D.



In June 2016, the VISN 5 MIRECC provided funding to the Martinsburg VAMC to expand their Mindful Yoga for Pain program. One staff member was sent to Yoga Teacher Training in Frederick, MD for advanced training to safely facilitate yoga classes specific for Veterans managing chronic pain, with the goal of providing holistic approaches to managing chronic pain.

Upon completion of Yoga Teacher Training, the VA staff member took over the program and developed a series of yoga sequences targeting the muscle groups associated with low back pain and worked to teach the participating Veterans how to move safely and mindfully. This has been done by holding poses for multiple breaths and cuing Veterans to look at the location of their feet / knees / hips / shoulders and recognize the positioning of their body as it relates to other body parts, to teach Veterans how to recognize what happens to their posture when they perform any type of movement. Emphasis has been placed on muscular engagement in all poses, even the “easy” ones, to help the participating Veterans recognize how to move in a controlled manner utilizing strength, as opposed to letting their joints take all their body

weight without muscular support.

The physical benefits of yoga have proven to be beneficial for the participants, with some reporting a decrease in the amount of opioid medications they need to manage their pain. Far more Veterans have reported the mental and emotional benefits of a yoga practice as being what they find most valuable. For Women’s History Month, one participant was interviewed and talked about using the yoga meditation and breathing techniques to cope with daily life, specifically focusing and relaxing.

The popularity and demand of the Mindful Yoga for Pain classes became so great that two additional yoga classes were implemented in January 2018. Three of the classes utilize chairs as props to provide support as Veterans begin their yoga practice and learn how to move in and out of postures safely; in Yoga 2, no chairs are used and the class is structured in the same manner as what Veterans could expect to find in a community yoga studio. The goal of Yoga 2 is to provide Veter-

ans the experiences and tools necessary to feel comfortable having a yoga practice independent of the Martinsburg VA to better integrate the benefits of yoga into their daily lives. As a trial to determine the benefits of participating in yoga more than once a week, an additional Yoga 2 class is being offered for current Yoga 2 participants to track the self-reported benefits the Veterans experience by participating in multiple yoga classes weekly.

From March 2017 to March 2018, there were over 1,450 appointments recorded for the Mindful Yoga for Pain classes. Moving forward, Martinsburg hopes to expand their yoga program to include more trauma-informed practices to better serve Veterans managing PTSD and MST.

For more information about Martinsburg’s expanding therapeutic yoga program, contact Ms. Shianne Galt, Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist at 304-263-0811 ext. 4760 or Shianne.Galt@va.gov

Learn about Current Research Studies at the VISN 5 MIRECC

The mission of the VISN 5 MIRECC is to help Veterans “put recovery into practice”. Our research, education, and clinical programs intersect to address this mission. A number of investigators are conducting studies that are aimed at assisting Veter-

ans in identifying, planning for, and achieving their personal recovery goals. These studies are recruiting participants who receive mental health services within the VA Maryland Healthcare System. Below are descriptions of two

of them, with phone numbers to call if you or someone you know receives mental health services within the VA Maryland Healthcare System and would like to learn more.

Study 1: A Conjoint Analysis Survey to Elicit Preferences for Outcomes of Psychiatric Medication Treatment in Veterans with Serious Mental Illness

Veterans between the ages of 18-75 who have been diagnosed with Schizophrenia or Bipolar Disorder and who have been prescribed a psychiatric medication are invited to participate in a research study to help us better understand Veteran preferences when choosing medications.

You will be paid for your participation. Research will be conducted at the Baltimore and Perry Point VA.

Please call Katie Despeaux at 410-637-1431 to see if you are eligible.



Study 2: Improving Negative Symptoms & Community Engagement in Veterans with Schizophrenia

Our team is looking for veterans between the ages of 18-75 who have been diagnosed with Schizophrenia or Schizoaffective Disorder to evaluate a new intervention

aimed at improving negative symptoms. Negative symptoms include things like having low energy to do things, not feeling pleasure when doing things, and difficulty socializing with other

people. Participation includes four study interviews and group sessions that occur twice a week for 12 weeks. You will be paid for your participation.

This study is being conducted by Melanie Bennett, Ph.D. at the Baltimore, Perry Point, and DC VA Medical Centers.

Please call Kelly Lloyd at 410-637-1887 to see if you are eligible.

Comings and Goings

With mixed emotions (happy for them, sad for us!) we say farewell to members of our MIRECC.

In January 2018, we wished a fond farewell to **Julia Kindred, M.S.** after 12 years at the MIRECC. For her first 3 years Julia was a Research Assistant on projects testing psychosocial interventions for Veterans with schizophrenia. From 2008-2010, she was Research Coordinator for MIRECC research at the Washington, DC VA. While there, Julia became the MIRECC's expert on human subjects' research policies at that site and established standard operating procedures for research that remain in place today. She returned to Baltimore in 2010 to assume the role of the MIRECC's Director of Human Subjects Protections and Quality Assurance. In that role, Julia managed all of the ongoing training of all of the MIRECC's Research Assistants and Coordinators. She also formalized all of the MIRECC's policies and procedures to ensure that research investigators adhere to local and national regulations governing the participation of human subjects in research. Julia exhibited great attention to detail and an easy-going management style, and we will miss her sense of humor and funny stories about her son, Owen. Fortunately, Julia is nearby in her new role as the Assistant Research Compliance Officer here in the VAMHCS. We wish Julia the best in her new position!

Steve Day, our Administrative Officer since 2013, retired in

March. When Steve joined the MIRECC he quickly mastered the complexities of our operations and for over 5 years provided exceptional oversight of the myriad administrative and budgetary requirements and regulations relating to our work. But most of all, Steve was a gracious, gentle, and kind man. His talents and sensitivities will be sorely missed. We wish him and his family all of the best as he heads off to enjoy retirement.

In June we bid adieu to **Mary Brighid Walsh** as she starts a new life adventure. Mary Brighid started at our MIRECC as a research assistant then became a study coordinator, contributing in some way to many of our MIRECC's most complex studies. Her great work ethic, determination, and attention to detail made Mary Brighid an important MIRECC asset and coworker. But her charm, team spirit, contagious laughter, and (let's not forget) delicious homemade baked goods makes her irreplaceable. She and her new husband, Tyler, have been relocated to Seattle, WA by the US Army JAG Corps where she plans to continue working in mental health research. We wish her the best on the west coast!

Rebecca Schaffner, a MIRECC Research Assistant, left in May to pursue a counseling position. Rebecca worked on several MIRECC studies and was an integral part of those research teams. Good luck!

Cindy Clark retired in June. She has been at the MIRECC since 2000! Over the past 18 years, she has been involved in research projects



and educational activities for Veterans with serious mental illness and their families. In addition, Cindy has served as a trainer and consultant for the national VA Social Skills Training program for the last five years. She has also served as an interventionist on several research projects focused on Veterans with serious mental illness including the Ending Self-Stigma intervention. She is hoping to stay active in nursing education while enjoying retirement!. We will miss you!

We also welcome 2 new MIRECC staff!

David Czajkowski is our new Administrative Officer. He joined the VAMHCS in 2006 as a Program Specialist for the Surgical Care Center. He has since worked as the Management and Program Analyst for the Office of Education and Academic Affairs, and the Business Manager for the Social Work Service. David is an Air Force Veteran, having served as a Signal Intelligence Officer, with assignments to Lowery Air Force Base in Colorado, Goodfellow Air Force Base in Texas, Hahn Air Base in Germany, Fort Meade in Maryland, Kadena Air Base and Misawa Air Base in Japan, Kelly Air Force Base in Texas, and Osan Air Base in South Korea.

Tracy Robertson is a Certified Peer Support Specialist and a Veteran. Most recently, she worked as a volunteer in the Baltimore VA Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center for four years, where she gained experience conducting groups and supporting the recovery of Veterans with mental illness. She will be working on the PEER for Older Veterans study, as well as supporting other research, clinical, and educational projects by providing her unique perspective as a Peer.

VISN 5 MIRECC Recent and Upcoming Educational Activities

The mission of the VA Maryland Healthcare System Capitol Health Care Network (VISN 5) Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) is to support recovery and enhance community functioning of Veterans with serious mental illness. We are committed to providing outstanding training opportunities for students, advanced trainees, and professionals to contribute to the development of a cadre of researchers and clinicians who are dedicated to the study and treatment of veterans with serious mental illness within the range of treatment settings that serve them. Here we list some recent educational activities:

(1) MIRECC Staff Member Ms. Natalie Kiddie conducted a workshop titled *Overview of Canine Assisted Therapy for Veterans in Recovery* for the Psychosocial Rehabilitative & Recovery Center and Trauma Services Fellows and Interns at the Washington DC VA Medical Center. Natalie brought Dolce, her psychiatric rehabilitative facility service dog. First, Natalie reviewed the neurochemical reinforcement of the Human Animal Bond, Social Bonding Theory, and relevant acronyms and terminology. Next, she provided a brief his-

tory of animals in the military and an overview of Canine Assisted Therapy, including definitions, oversight, and relevant research. She then discussed the ways that Canine Assisted Therapy might eventually be used as a potential Complementary and Alternative Medicine strategy for Veterans in Recovery. Each presentation included a brief demonstration and discussion of how Canine Assisted Therapy can be used in a group treatment setting. Attendees role-played as part of a group activity that demonstrated examples of both directive and non-directive animal assisted activities as part of a larger treatment intervention.

(2) MIRECC Investigator Dr. Anjana Muralidharan gave a presentation titled *Working with Veterans with Serious Mental Illness for the GRECC exercise physiologists who help Veterans with fitness training*. To help support these staff members in providing fitness training to Veterans with serious mental illness, Dr. Muralidharan provided an overview of serious mental illness diagnoses and symptoms and tips for communication with this population to maximize understanding and rapport-building.

(3) You can now follow the VISN 5 MIRECC on VA Pulse!

While some of the site is still “under construction” we’ve already added a ton of great resources. You can learn a little bit more about our staff, find copies of the MIRECC Matters, learn about upcoming webinars/trainings, access intervention manuals, and so much more! Any VA employee can sign up to use VA Pulse.net. Follow us at <https://www.vapulse.net/groups/visn-5-mirecc/pages/welcome>.

(4) The MIRECC runs a bi-monthly Science Meeting (2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month, 12-1, at the MIRECC, VANTS 800-767-1750, 71129). We are taking our usual summer break from the science meeting. Look for email reminders in August when the Science Meeting will resume. **Good news—we will now have CEs available for The 2018-2019 series!** We have some great presentations planned, including an update on outcomes from Dr. Richard Goldberg’s trial of Living Well, and a review of Dr. Melanie Bennett’s pilot study of a smoking cessation program that starts when Veterans are in the hospital and continues via telephone when they leave.

(5) On Tuesday, June 12, at the Perry Point VAMC, and Friday, June 29th, at the Baltimore VAMC, the MIRECC sponsored an all day Workshop for VA mental health clinicians entitled: *Whole Health in Mental Health Care: Strategies and Resources*. Sessions focused on smoking cessation, sleep improvement, and exercise with older Veterans with serious mental illness.

Family Support for Mental Health Recovery

Do you work with Veterans who have been diagnosed with a mental illness and want to offer resources to their family members on ways of assisting in the recovery process? Here is a brochure that provides tips, information and resources on how to support a loved one and at the same time

consider self-care for the family member.

If you would like to receive copies of this brochure to hand out, please contact Tracy Robertson, CPRS at 410-637-1522 or by email at tracy.robertson@va.gov.

Thank you.



Monthly Psychopharmacology Case Conference

All VISN Clinicians are invited to attend this conference and to bring questions about a difficult or challenging psychopharmacology case. Note that the topic of the conference has been expanded from a focus only on metabolic side effects of antipsychotic medications to include all areas

of psychopharmacology. Case Conference facilitators are Robert Buchanan, M.D., MIRECC investigator and Professor of Psychiatry at the UMB School of Medicine; Julie Kreyenbuhl, Pharm.D., Ph.D., MIRECC investigator and Associate Professor in the UMB Depart-

ment of Psychiatry; and Neil Sandson, M.D., inpatient attending psychiatrist in the VAMHCS and MIRECC staff member.

The case conference is held on the first Thursday of every month, 1:00 - 2:00 PM, 1-800-767-1750, code 79846.

For more information, contact Julie Kreyenbuhl at Julie.Kreyenbuhl@va.gov.

Educational Webinar Series for Peer Specialists

The VISN 5 MIRECC hosts educational webinars for VA Peer Specialists. The next webinar is titled *Effectively Assisting LGBTQ Veterans*. It is scheduled for July 12, 2-3:30 pm. This webinar will educate attendees about VA services to support the many Veterans who are in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community.

Because of a history of past obstacles to receiving access to health care, there are unique treatment considerations and concerns for LGBTQ Veterans. Among these are concern about disclosure and discrimination. Peer Specialists are in an ideal position to help LGBTQ Veterans confidently navigate the VA system and knowledgeably support their fellow

Veterans with the unique issues and obstacles they may face. Our presenter will be Jillian Silveira, OTR/L the VAMHCS LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator who has done outstanding work to support the VA's initiative to "Serve all who served".

A calendar invite has been sent. For more information, contact Ralf Schneider at Ralf.Schneider@va.gov.

MIRECC Staff Conduct Trainings in Evidence-Based Practices for Veterans with Serious Mental Illness

The mission of the VISN 5 MIRECC is to *put recovery into practice*. Our Clinical Core partners with clinical programs and staff at the VAMHCS, VISN, and national levels to support *recovery-oriented* and *evidence-based* clinical services for Veterans with mental illness. MIRECC investigators offer workshops to enrich the staff at your clinical program or provide training on an unmet clinical need. We have expertise in a range of topics related to

mental health recovery. Topic areas include:

- Ending Self Stigma
- Promoting Community Integration
- Family and Mental Health Treatment
- Person-Centered Care
- Treating Substance Use Disorders

- Early Psychosis Services
- VA Peer Specialists and Peer-Delivered Interventions

Seminar length can be modified if needed. If you're not in VISN 5, our investigators can make presentations remotely to VA programs anywhere in the country.

For more information, contact Anjana Muralidharan at Anjana.Muralidharan2@va.gov.

Staff Training to EASE Self-Stigma Among Veterans in Recovery

Self-Stigma is the harm caused when people start to define themselves by the stereotypes they are exposed to. It interferes greatly with wellness, recovery and treatment. EASE is a 90 minute program designed to be useful to mental health staff, of all disciplines, levels, and positions, to refresh our knowledge about stigma and its harmful effects

and to learn practical strategies we can use to help the Veterans we work with be resilient in the face of common stigmatization of mental health problems. **EASE** strategies employ four principles, from which it gets its name: **E**ducation, **A**wareness, **S**hifting perspective, and **E**mpowerment.

For more information and to access EASE training materials so you can deliver EASE yourself, go to <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/training/ease.asp> or contact the EASE Team at EA-SETeam@va.gov.

Learn about the Post-doctoral Fellowship at the VISN 5 MIRECC

The VA Advanced Fellowship Program in Mental Illness Research and Treatment at the VISN 5 MIRECC has one open post-doctoral psychologist fellowship position and one open post-residency psychiatrist fellowship position each year. The goal of these two-year fellowships is to train psychologists and psychiatrists to become leading clinical researchers in the area of serious mental illness. Fellows

develop independent programs of research on topics related to psychosocial treatment development and implementation of recovery-oriented services and engage in supervised clinical training, delivering clinical services in settings that serve Veterans with serious mental illness. Detailed information can be found on the national MIRECC website at [http://](http://www.mirecc.va.gov/mirecc-fellowship.asp)

www.mirecc.va.gov/mirecc-fellowship.asp and at the VISN 5 website at <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/>.

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact Dr. Melanie Bennett at Melanie.Bennett@va.gov to discuss details of the opportunities available for fellows.

Recovery-Oriented Small Grants Program

The VISN 5 MIRECC offers a small grant mechanism to fund recovery-oriented clinical and educational innovations within VISN 5 in response to the VA's Action Agenda to transform VA mental health services to a recovery model. The program especially encourages (but is not limited to) proposals such as: creating, adopting, launching or ex-

panding recovery-oriented clinical or self-help projects; new programs to educate staff, Veterans, and/or family members of Veterans about mental health recovery models; or specific recovery-oriented services/programs. Past grants have been used by clinicians and peer specialists to attend trainings, bring in speakers, start new programs, and support crea-

tive activities that promote mental health recovery.

We will work with you to develop your application. Apply today! Grant amount can range from \$300-\$5000.

Application Deadlines are the 1st of March, June, and December.

For more information or to receive an application, please contact **Alicia Lucksted, Ph.D.**, MIRECC Recovery Coordinator, at 410-706-3244 or email her at Alicia.Lucksted@va.gov.

Join our Veterans Advisory Panel

To become a MIRECC Veterans Advisory Panel (VAP) advisor, or for more information, please contact **Ralf Schneider**, at 410-637-1874 or email him at Ralf.Schneider@va.gov.

The VISN 5 MIRECC seeks Veterans interested in mental health issues to join our Veterans Advisory Panel. Advisors are volunteers, who have a history of mental health diagnosis and recovery. They meet once a month to hear about current VISN-5 MIRECC research, educational, and clinical

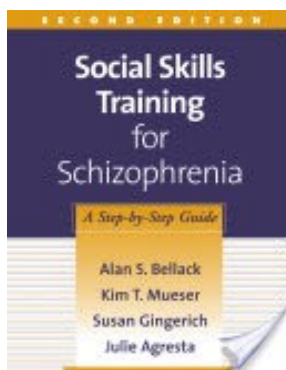
projects and to contribute their perspectives, opinions and suggestions as Veterans. All interested Veterans are encouraged to join!

- Be part of the discussion.
- Help shape MIRECC work in the VA.
- Meet other Veterans with common interests.

- Good on your resume, too.

The MIRECC Veterans Advisory Panel is not connected to a research study. It is an ongoing group of volunteer advisors who help the MIRECC further improve its work.

VA Social Skills Training



Since 2008, the VA Social Skills Training (VA-SST) program has been training VA clinicians nationwide in the delivery of SST for Veterans with serious mental illness. Over the years, the VA-SST program has trained over 948 VA staff across the coun-

try, including 79 Peer Specialists, and more than 48 Master Trainers, and 216 fellows.

Trainings are scheduled by region. **For more information on Social Skills Training, the VA-SST Training program, and upcoming train-**

ings, please visit our website: http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/training/social_skills.asp or email **Elizabeth Gilbert, Ph.D.** at Elizabeth.Gilbert@va.gov.

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Putting Recovery Into Practice



**MIRECC Matters is also
available online:**

www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/

