MIRECC Veteran Stakeholders Forum

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Veteran Stakeholders Forum – MIRECC Liaison
Baltimore Veterans Affairs Medical Center
VISN 5 Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center
The mission of the VISN 5 MIRECC at Baltimore is to support and enhance the recovery and community functioning of Veterans, especially those that have been diagnosed with serious mental health disorders.

Our integrated programs of research, education and clinical training and consultation focus on the development, evaluation, and implementation of recovery-oriented, evidence-based treatments and services for these Veterans.
Major Areas of Research Emphasis

• Incorporating Peer Support Services in Interventions
• Enhancing Veteran Engagement in Mental Health Treatment
• Women’s Mental Health
• Whole Health
• Suicide Prevention
VA Commitment to Patient-Centered Veteran Care

• Veterans are to be involved in their own Care and VA-Wide Care to include involvement in:
  • Planning
  • Developing
  • Evaluating
  • Decision-making
MIRECC promotes: Veteran “Engaged” Research

• Researcher collaboration with those Veterans affected by the issue being studied, for the purpose of creating positive change
• Can include Veterans, family members, community, and organizations
• Can involve a range of levels of involvement
• Veteran roles may be as focus group members, members on research teams, partners and leaders in research development
Who are the Veteran Stakeholders Forum members?

- US military Veterans from all branches of service
- Have received health care services from VA
- Have lived experience and are in Recovery
- Have a variety of professional backgrounds and achievements
- Some are VA employees
- Some are Community Volunteers
- Some are Community Organizers
- Some are Peer Specialists
Veteran Stakeholders Meetings – The Process

• MIRECC Research Investigators and Staff provide background on their proposed project, considerations related to the topic, and their questions.
• The Forum discusses, provides their experiences, views, and perspectives
• Researchers and panelists clarify and review Veteran comments
• The Forum receives updates and further requests
Some Veteran Stakeholders Contributions to Research

• Personal experiences that inform project development
• Diverse viewpoints and candid communication about priorities
• Sensitivity to fellow Veterans’ concerns and needs
• Insights regarding the benefits and/or limitations of mental health interventions
• Knowledge of VA healthcare systems and operations
• Ability to empower research investigators to facilitate treatment innovations
Some Research Topics Brought to the Forum

- Identifying Vulnerability and Resilience to COVID-19
- Decreasing Veteran Isolation during the Pandemic
- Improving Communication around issues of Social Justice
- Pain Management strategies
- Managing Insomnia/Improving Healthy Sleep
- Development of a Peer guided Exercise Program for Older Veterans
- Peer Integration into Primary Care PACT (*patient aligned care teams*)
- Effectively Starting Conversations about Quitting Smoking
- Lethal Means Safety Planning
Benefits for Veteran Stakeholders Forum Members

• Service: The opportunity to “give back” on behalf of fellow Veterans

• Empowerment: Contributing to one’s own Recovery

• Learning: Getting Educated on Advances in Research and Treatment

• Connection: Collaborating with fellow Veterans