MIRECC Veteran Stakeholders Forum

Ralf Schneider, MA, CPRP
Veteran Stakeholders Forum – MIRECC Liaison
Baltimore Veterans Affairs Medical Center
VISN 5 Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center
Mental Illness Research Education and Clinical Center: Putting Recovery Into Practice

- 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