REACHING RURAL VETERANS

Engaging Faith Communities and Food Pantries in Serving Veterans in Rural Areas
Military Culture and Terminology: Enhancing Competence In The Population of Rural Veterans
Learning Objectives

• Recognize the armed service branches of the US Military
• Gain an understanding of military culture
• Identify why understanding military culture is important when working with military and veteran families
• Identify characteristics of the rural veteran population.
Presentation Outline

• The United States Military
  – Armed Forces Branches
• Military Culture
  – Learn the basic elements of culture
  – General Terms and Acronyms
  – Why learn about military culture, why is it unique?
• Rural Veterans
  – Who are they?
  – What do we know about rural veterans?
  – What I can do?
United States Military

The U.S Armed Forces are made up five armed service branches.

- Air Force = Airman
- Army = Soldier
- Marine Corps = Marine
- Navy = Sailor
- Coast Guard = Guardian
United State Military
Military Status

• Active Duty
  – Full Time

• Reserve/Guard
  – Federal/State
  – 39 days/year
  – Typically monthly drills two-week annual training
  – May be called to Active Duty for deployments
  – Lack the support system Active Duty has returning from deployment
Before we begin talking about Military Culture...

• What makes you excited about working with Veterans and their families?

• What makes you most ________ (anxious, uncomfortable, uncertain) about working with the Veterans their families?

• What would you need to know to feel more comfortable working with this population?

• What do you find compelling about working with the military?
Military Culture

Why learn about military culture?

Knowledge and understanding of military culture can lead to:

• Increased ability to relate to and support Veterans
• Improved program success
• Deeper understanding of the context for mental health symptoms and conditions
• Increased appreciation for military service
Military Culture

Learning about military culture includes a deeper understanding of both the:

- Structure of the military such as branches and ranks
- Mission, ideals and core values of military culture
Basic Elements of Culture
Common to All

- Ceremonies, Rituals, Rights, Celebrations
- Symbols, Artifacts, Symbolic Actions
- Language, Technology
- Rules, Taboos, Ethical Codes
- Histories, Stories, Legends, Myths
- Beliefs, Values, Attitudes

Individual, Family & the Environment
Military Culture

• The Military Culture is a Dynamic Culture
  – The Decision to Belong is a Conscious One
    • You don’t wake up one day and determine you are a part of it, to the contrary – you go looking for it

• Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes:
  – Are instilled from day one (Boot Camp)
  – Are passed on without question
  – Are acceptable to the individual
Military Culture

Military Core Values

- Army - Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage
- Air Force - Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence In All We Do
- Coast Guard - Honor and Integrity, Greater Good of the Coast Guard, Innovation, Personal Initiative, Drive for Success, and Teamwork
- Marines - Honor, Courage, Commitment
- Navy - Honor, Courage, Commitment
Military Culture

• Chain of Command (CoC)
  – Is perhaps the most salient feature of military culture
  – Clearly defines individuals’ roles, responsibilities, and anticipated behaviors.
• Military Rank
  – Enlisted Personnel (E-1 through E-9)
  – Warrant Officers (W-1 through W-5) highly specialized experts (2% of military)
  – Commissioned Officers (O-1 through O10)
    • May determine who may speak to whom & when
    • Determines who lives where
    • Defines and shapes roles and responsibilities
Military Culture
Language and Terminology

- Some common acronyms and phrases you should know:
  - **MOS** - Military Occupational Specialty
  - **PCS** – Permanent Change of Station (Relocating)
  - **TDY** - Temporary Duty
  - **Leave** - Off Duty - (usually vacation)
  - **AWOL** - (“A-Wall”) - Absent without Leave
  - **MEB** – Medical Evaluation Board
Military Culture
Language and Terminology

• Some common acronyms and phrases you should know
  – **CONUS/OCONUS** – Continental US/ Outside Continental US
  – **Post and Forts** - Army installation
  – **Base** - Air Force or Navy Installation
  – **Joint Bases** – is a base utilized by multiple military services
  – **Camp** - Marine Corps Installation
    • Marines also use Base for Aviation Installations
Military Culture
Why do they/we join?

- Family tradition
- Transition to man/womanhood
- To serve country
- Support family
- Friend did it
- Get out of trouble with the law
- Do something noble with life
- Give life (death) a purpose
- Get out of Poverty

- Protect people, country and way of life
- Be part of a team- something bigger than self
- Inherent sense of selflessness
- College money
- Free medical care
- Travel
- Leave unhealthy family environment
Military Culture
About the Veteran Community

• Veterans are a unique subset of the U.S population that differ from those who have never served in the military.

• In order to serve in the military, individuals must meet certain requirements which make Veterans a selective population based on characteristics such as education, physical fitness level, health and criminal history.
Rural Veterans

Who are they?
Understanding Rural Veterans

• 24% of Veterans live in rural areas today
• Growing number of female Veterans – fastest growing Veteran cohort (7% of rural veterans)
• 36% of Veterans with a service-connected disability live in rural or highly rural areas
• Higher percentage of rural Veterans report at least one disability compared to those in urban areas
Understanding Rural Veterans

The geographic isolation of rural areas creates different circumstances and challenges for Veterans who live in these communities.

Veterans in rural communities do **not** have easy access to infrastructure within their daily living such as

– Public transportation
– Health care
– Government agencies
– Recreational, health and entertainment outlets
Understanding Rural Veterans

• Homelessness for rural Veterans is becoming more prevalent.

• Increased number of rural Veterans are living in substandard housing

• What leads to homelessness: poor housing quality, insufficient income, poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, PTSD (no different in urban/rural areas)

• Rural Veterans face barriers to accessing health care
Engaging the Culture with Confidence
Talking to Veterans
Some Opening Questions

• What branch of service are you (were you) in?
• What is/was your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC), or Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC)? (Army & Marines both use MOS)
• Why did you join the military? Why did you join the specific branch of service that you did?
• How can I help?
How to help

• Expand access to care and supportive services
• Improve serving Veterans between community and VA
• Expand transportation access
• Increase community based services
• Expand Veteran outreach programs
• Improve cultural competence of providers
• Enhance understanding of the needs of rural Veterans
Questions?