



# MIRECC Veteran Stakeholders Forum

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Veteran Stakeholders Forum – MIRECC Liaison

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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