



Ask the Question

In various surveys, veterans indicated one of the top barriers to receiving care was that they “do not feel understood by the providers who serve them”. Opportunities to help veterans and their families are often lost simply because the connection is not made.

KEY MESSAGE: Service providers in various state agencies can have a profound impact on Service members, veterans, and families by connecting them to services and care through asking the simple question: “Have you or a family member ever served in the military?”



DISCUSSION POINTS:

State veterans affairs organizations (department, commission, office, bureau) may provide exceptional services to the veteran who self-identifies/seeks those services; however, veterans who approach other state agencies may not receive these services if they don't self-identify and if the agency service provider isn't aware of what the veteran can receive.

- Many state veteran affairs/military staff provide training to expose agency service providers to military culture and applicable veteran services in order to improve their understanding of the veteran/family member and how to meet their needs by engaging the right agency.
- Fewer states have instituted processes across state government to engage veterans and family members to connect them with services.
- This initiative encourages states to engage all helping agencies (including healthcare, social services, education, and others) to:
 - Ask the question, “Have you or a family member ever served in the military?” and have the question on all intake forms.
 - Provide information and assistance to providers regarding what to do when the answer is “Yes.”
- Through increased awareness and understanding, providers from all sectors – can make a real difference.
- Connecting the military connected member/family to federal services reduces the burden on state and local resources and brings federal resources into the state in the form of benefits and funding.
- This process can be initiated through procedural change (adding a question to intake forms in various state agencies), legislation and/or executive order, to include helping some agencies respond to the “Yes”.

A county agency asked the question of an older woman, discovered she was a military widow, and helped her access insurance coverage through the local VA Medical Center, saving her a precious \$300 a month.

A professor at a state university asked the question in one of her classes, and made a customized plan for course completion to help an overwhelmed student whose husband was deployed.

During a home visit, a service coordinator asked the question of a client in hospice care with lung cancer; learned he had served in the Navy for 10 years and been exposed to asbestos; and had not applied for any VA disability compensation. The coordinator connected him with the local Veteran Service Officer who helped him file for disability benefits. After he died, his 62 year old widow received a pension based on this disability which will help her for many years.