

WELCOME BACK VETERANS



A Program Steps Up to the Plate to Aid Vets, Families with Mental Health Care—and Offers Future Playbook



As federal, state, and local agencies work with the philanthropic community to create models to outsource or leverage potential efficiencies from the private sector, RAND research has found that a unique partnership and grant-making program to support veterans and their families has value and could guide future efforts.



The initiative has assisted six academic medical centers' efforts to expand access to high-quality mental health care for veterans and their families.

THE CHALLENGE

Welcome Back Veterans (WBV), with the backing of Major League Baseball Charities and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, was launched in 2008 to support more than 2 million Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families across the United States. The initiative, in its most recent funding, has assisted six academic medical centers' efforts to expand access to high-quality mental health care for veterans and their families. Significant numbers of returning service personnel suffer from posttraumatic stress, anxiety, trauma, and traumatic brain injury. Mental health care is critical for them and their families to reintegrate into their communities.

IN THE FIELD

Each initiative site, RAND researchers found, touched the lives of many veterans and families with varied approaches and services, programs, and activities, including:

- Outreach and dissemination, both to educate and inform the public about mental health issues faced by veterans and to let vets and their loved ones know about available resources
- Education and training to both veterans and their families, as well as to providers, practitioners, and those interested in serving vets
- Delivery of clinical and nonclinical services
- Developing and building partnerships to build capacity

WBV SUCCESSES

THROUGH THEIR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS,
RAND RESEARCH SHOWS, INITIATIVE
PARTNERS HAVE:

Provided clinical services (screening, referral, and
treatment) to more than

3,600
individuals

with military and veteran affiliations

Networked with

188
organizations

Conducted

228 training
sessions or
workshops

to build new skills and capacities among veterans,
organizations that serve them, and community-based
providers.



CREATIVE SOLUTIONS ARE NEEDED

Several sites established strong working relationships with local Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities or Department of Defense (DoD) installations, especially when strong personal connections were at play. But others struggled to build or formalize important ties, despite sustained efforts to do so, RAND researchers found.

Engaging veterans and their families in services and research proved to be a notable challenge, as hurdles were encountered in finding data on where vets and their families reside and how best to reach out to them, the researchers found.

While the initiative launched an array of commendable efforts, these ultimately depend on outside funding to sustain operation. The sites sought creative ways to piece together support with foundation grants, government research grants or service contracts, fee-for-service arrangements, or incorporation into VA or DoD provider networks. They also sought to ramp up awareness about their work among the public and among local, regional, state, and federal policymakers; some pursued advocacy efforts, meeting with officials at various levels, the researchers said.



THE SIX PARTICIPATING CENTERS

- BraveHeart Southeast Veterans Initiative at Emory University, with key partners the Atlanta Braves and the VA
- Duke University Veteran Culture and Clinical Competencies (V3C) initiative, with key partners the Duke University Evidence-Based Practice Implementation Center (EPIC) and the Center for Child and Family Health
- Massachusetts General Hospital's Home Base Program, with key partner the Red Sox Foundation
- University of Michigan's Military Support Programs and Networks (M-SPAN), based at UM–Ann Arbor
- Weill Cornell Medical College Department of Psychiatry's Program for Anxiety and Traumatic Stress
- University of California at Los Angeles's Welcome Back Veterans Family Resilience Center

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