



## ***Guidelines for Care – White Paper***

**INTRODUCTION:** Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, refers to the “Sea of Goodwill,” which is the community’s willingness to care for and support service members, veterans and their families. In Arizona, the focus is not only capturing and channeling this sea of goodwill, but also equipping all sectors of our community to provide the best care and support possible to our military and veteran population. The end result will be that service members, veterans and families will be connected to the right program, resource and/or benefit at the right time. The *Guidelines for Care* project is a focal point of this effort.

**THE NEED:** While military and veteran families experience the same stressors and challenges as civilian families, they also face additional challenges stemming from service, deployment and reintegration. This results in the need for specific knowledge and approaches to ensure they receive the best care possible. Traditionally, caring for these families has been viewed as a military and/or government responsibility. Increasingly, we see the community’s willingness to provide care and support and that this is an issue best addressed by the military, government agencies and community partners working together.

Service members, veterans and family members have expressed how important knowledge, understanding and competency are for them to feel comfortable when accessing care and support. They are also in need of more information about the providers and organizations they are interacting with, so they can make informed decisions as consumers. Given the high veteran population in Arizona (+/- 600,000) and the increased deployment of service members since 9/11 (53,000+ Iraq/Afghanistan veterans in Arizona), there is an increased need for community partners and providers equipped to work with these individuals and their families.

Additionally, these service members, veterans and families are dispersed throughout the state, often geographically separated from military installation and VA facilities. Therefore, when a service member or veteran is struggling with an issue or challenge, it may be a coworker, neighbor or civilian health care provider who is in a position to identify the need for support. As a community, we need to equip these individuals with the knowledge and understanding to effectively intervene with this population and to navigate the complex military and veteran systems-of-care to ensure strong collaboration.

Despite the positive aspects of the “Sea of Goodwill,” unfortunately we have also seen examples in Arizona where organizations put their own interests, financial or otherwise, before the well-being of our service members and veterans. Given this, there is an identified need to



## **GUIDELINES FOR CARE PROJECT**

build upon efforts to help our military and veteran population navigate the myriad programs and resources available to them by instituting a basic vetting process that puts their needs first. *Guidelines for Care* will provide the foundation for this vetting process.

By nature, our service members, veterans and their families are resilient. They are among the most productive members of our community, who serve and sacrifice for the benefit of our nation. The *Guidelines for Care* will build upon this resilience and provide a means for our community to best respond at their time of need.

**THE CONCEPT:** This cross-sector effort will bring together key stakeholders from the military, government and community to establish guidelines for the care and support of the military and veteran population. As far as is known, this is the first such effort to undertake this type of process.

The concept is to involve public and private sector stakeholders in the development of the uniform guidelines and then for each system to implement those guidelines in the best way for their system/organization. For example, in discussion with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), they have a way of internally identifying specialties. With these guidelines, they could create a specialty focused on military/veteran cultural competency. There will also be a broader outreach effort to integrate the guidelines into the community at large.

Through a process facilitated by the Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF), the *Guidelines for Care* will address the following areas:

- **Establishing situational awareness** – Ensuring that providers and organizations understand the scope of the military/veteran population within Arizona and recognize that they are likely already interacting with these individuals and families.
- **Screening & assessment** – Providing guidance on how to identify the service members, veterans and family members they are serving and to assess their needs, according to their type of organization (e.g. this will be different for a health care provider, a faith-based community and a college).
- **Equipping personnel** – Identifying the critical knowledge and skills for working with the military and veteran population, including an increased understanding of military culture and the specific issues that may affect these individuals. For example, in the case of a health care or behavioral health provider providing treatment, they need to have



## **GUIDELINES FOR CARE PROJECT**

knowledge and skills in best and promising practices and Clinical Practice Guidelines for common conditions like combat and operational stress and Traumatic Brain Injury, and recognize how the treatment of these conditions can affect an individual's military career, VA benefits, etc.

- **Connecting** – Increasing cross-sector networking and collaboration by educating organizations on military/veteran systems-of-care and promoting active engagement in the ACMF network of organizations serving the military and veteran population via events, initiatives and the ACMF Online Resource and Information Network (ORIN). It is also important that those working in the military/veteran systems-of-care have working knowledge of what is available in the community to support the individuals they work with as well.

**PARTNERS:** This process of developing uniform guidelines is written into a statewide action plan developed at the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Veterans Policy Academy in Washington, D.C., in June, 2010. ACMF was part of the team representing Arizona and is a key facilitator for the process of implementing the plan. There is already buy-in for the process from entities such as the Arizona Department of Health Services, VA, Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, National Guard, TriWest Healthcare Alliance and Governor's Office for Children, Youth & Families. There will be engagement of additional partners and key stakeholders from the public and private sector as well. Additionally, the process will engage service members, veterans and family members as part of the work group, as well as providing firsthand input and feedback based on their prior experiences with seeking care, their needs and concerns via surveys and focus groups.

**PROCESS:** The process for developing the *Guidelines for Care* will involve three components:

- **Workgroups** – ACMF will convene a series of workgroups including key stakeholders in the military/veteran community. These representatives will include individuals who have a military background, who are the family member of a service member or veteran and/or who have worked extensively in providing care and support to the military and veteran population.
- **Focus groups** – ACMF will conduct a series of focus groups with service members, veterans and family members that will explore their experiences with accessing care and support. The focus group questions will also be available via online survey for additional feedback from a broader group representing the military/veteran population.



## **GUIDELINES FOR CARE PROJECT**

- **Online review process** – Once the workgroups and focus groups have taken place, a draft of the *Guidelines for Care* will be made available via an online review process. Participation in this review process will be open to the community at-large and representatives from the military, government and all sectors of the community will be encouraged to provide feedback on the guidelines.

Once all of these activities take place, the *Guidelines for Care* will be finalized and publicized.

**PROJECTED ACTIVITIES:** The guidelines are just the foundation for what we hope to accomplish as a community. Through the establishment of the guidelines, the intent is to equip the community to provide the best care and support possible for the military and veteran population. The end-goal is to reduce the negative impact of issues such as combat stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, suicide, depression, substance abuse, etc. on individuals and families through improved access to care and stronger collaboration. Once the guidelines are in place, the following activities would be part of implementing the guidelines across the public and private sector during year one:

- Develop training pathways and curricula to equip systems and organizations to provide care and support within the guidelines.
- Communicate these guidelines to the community at large through a coordinated community outreach campaign.
- Conduct training throughout the community.
- The guidelines will serve as the foundation for a vetting process for partners to join the Coalition and be part of the Online Resource and Information Network (ORIN) that is under development. This network is designed to provide service members, veterans and their family members with more information about the organizations they may interact with, so they can make more informed decisions about where to seek care and support.

Going forward into years 2 and 3 of the project, we anticipate the following activities:

- There will be a focus on further integrating the *Guidelines for Care* into the community via training pathways and systems-based training & education. For example, one approach would be working collaboratively with educational institutions to incorporate military cultural competency into programs such as counseling and social work.
- Development of a process whereby providers and/or organizations can document their military/veteran cultural competency in a standardized format, such as a credential in military/veteran culture and treatment for licensed behavioral health professionals.



## **GUIDELINES FOR CARE PROJECT**

Through this project, ACMF and our partners seek to establish a standard of care for the military and veteran population to ensure that they are provided care that is military culturally competent. It is our hope that through this effort, those who have served our country will in return receive only the best care and support possible from our community.

**ABOUT THE ARIZONA COALITION FOR MILITARY FAMILIES:** The Arizona Coalition for Military Families is a public/private partnership focused on building Arizona’s capacity to serve and support the 625,000+ service members, veterans and their families living throughout the state. ACMF was created to meet a specific need in our community—stronger coordination and collaboration between the military, government agencies and the private sector. The focus is strengthening our community’s ability to respond to the myriad needs and stressors of military and veteran families surrounding service, deployment and reintegration so that every service member, veteran and family member is connected to the right program, service and/or benefit at the right time.

ACMF has four areas of focus: statewide coordination and collaboration, regional community capacity building, professional development/community outreach and strategic partnership. In addition to the *Guidelines for Care* project, other key projects include the *Military/Veteran Employment Portal* focused on transitioning service members, veterans and family members and Phase 2 of the ACMF website, which will focus on organizing resource information and system navigation tools in an online format for use by ACMF partners, as well as service members, veterans and family members.

The Arizona Coalition for Military Families is managed by Empowerment Systems, Inc., an Arizona nonprofit organization. As a centralized entity that engages key stakeholders in the public and private sector, the Arizona Coalition for Military Families is uniquely positioned to facilitate a cross-sector effort such as the *Guidelines for Care* project.

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