



SLIDE 13.1 TITLE SLIDE

VETERANS

Time: 45 minutes

Slides: 9

Purpose: The material in this module is a guide. Local trainers from the community/jurisdiction are encouraged to make this module their own by developing new content or refining the content provided.

Instructor:

This module should be taught by one or two community members who are well-versed in local veterans' issues and resources—ideally, these would be individuals with military service experience. If unable to have a guest speaker or trainer with lived experience, please consider using one of the recommended videos on the list below.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this module, participants should be able to:

1. Explain behavioral health conditions and readjustment challenges that are faced by some veterans;
2. Identify local resources, including resources from the VA and local veterans groups, that can provide services and support to veterans; and
3. Other tailored learning objectives depending upon guest speakers.

Activities:

- Optional Video Activity A: “Veterans Come Home to Civilian Life” (3:46)
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5gsd4FbwH8&ab_channel=AJ%2B
- Optional Video Activity B: “Law Enforcement Response to Veterans” (11:25)
 - <https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Public/guider-blalock-720.mp4>
- Optional Video Activity C: “Andrew Chambers’ TED Talk” (9:01)
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6AYmzunPIQ&ab_channel=TEDxTalks

Additional Materials: None

Module Overview



- Veteran populations
- Issues impacting veterans
- Resources for veterans

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SLIDE 13.2 MODULE OVERVIEW



Trainer Note: Introduce guest speakers (if applicable). Ask them to provide brief introductions including names, titles, and contact information.

- Poll the room: Is anyone a veteran or related to one?
- Local statistics on veterans and service members
- Veterans and service members with behavioral health conditions
- Local statistics on veterans and justice involvement
- Resources for veterans within the community



Local Statistics on Veterans and Service Members



- Insert local statistics on how many veterans and service members reside in your community
- Compare your #s to national averages or other communities like yours
- Discuss common calls for service/frequent encounters with veterans in your community
- Include number of reservists residing in your state or your community
- Include other relevant statistics, such as:
 - # of veterans involved with veteran's court, if you have one
 - # of veterans in the jail
 - # of veterans who are experiencing homelessness

SLIDE 13.3 LOCAL STATISTICS ON VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS



Trainer Note: Tailor this slide with local issues, statistics, and resources. Lead a brief discussion about your community's veterans. Include the local statistics related to veterans involved in the justice system, as well as veterans experiencing homelessness. If time does not permit, then simply introduce the statistics on this slide.



Issues Impacting Combat Veterans



- Alcohol and substance use
- PTSD
- Traumatic brain injury
- Difficulty adjusting to civilian life
- Isolation
- Economic disadvantages (e.g., under-employment, homelessness)
- Family/relationship strife
- Criminal Justice involvement

SLIDE 13.4

ISSUES IMPACTING COMBAT VETERANS



Trainer Note: Briefly highlight each point on the slide, providing local examples as time allows. **NOTE:** Having a veteran with lived experience will make this module more impactful and allow the officers to ask questions.

When presenting this module, please know that PTSD has already been covered in a previous module. Do not repeat what PTSD is and the signs and symptoms. This is not a presentation on PTSD specifics. Try to tailor the discussion of PTSD to trauma issues specific to veterans and the impact PTSD has on their daily lives. You will want to refer back to what the class already learned about trauma and PTSD from the earlier module. Use the content note below to support your discussion.



Content Note: Many veterans do not have PTSD but struggle with other mental health conditions or substance use disorders. About 11–20% of veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) have PTSD in a given year. This section on veterans is meant to highlight their struggles when returning and readjusting to their communities and their families, their struggles with employment and housing, substance use, and possible contact with the criminal justice system due to untreated behavioral health conditions and challenges readjusting.

This module is also meant to address important things for an officer to know and ask if they encounter a veteran experiencing a crisis. Veterans with service-related physical conditions may also have co-occurring behavioral health conditions (e.g., depression that may occur along with a spinal cord injury, or substance use that may take place when experiencing chronic pain).

TBI is discussed in other parts of the curriculum. However, it may be helpful to note that in some cases, TBI can look like mental health conditions or developmental disabilities. The more



officers understand various disabilities, the better able they will be to respond effectively to those experiencing a crisis, including veterans.

This is also a time to talk about services with the VA, Vet Centers (if your community has them), and other resources for veterans, such as housing and peer support.

Some relevant questions an officer might ask:

1. Did you serve in the military? If yes, thank them for their service.
2. Are they connected to the VA for services?
3. Who is their support system?

Sources:

Emily C. Cleveland, Deborah Azrael, Joseph A. Simonetti, and Matthew Miller, 2017, “Firearm Ownership Among American Veterans: Findings from the 2015 National Firearm Survey,” *Injury Epidemiology* 4: 33.

Joseph A. Simonetti, Debora Azrael, Ali Rowhani-Rahbar, and Matthew Miller, 2018, “Firearm Storage Practices Among American Veterans,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 55(4): 445–454.

National Center for PTSD, n.d., *How Common is PTSD in Veterans?* U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, accessed October 26, 2022, https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp.

Veterans and Justice Involvement

- Veterans are no more likely to be arrested than other adults
- Approximately 7% of the jail/prison population are veterans
- Over half of veterans in the criminal justice system have mental health conditions or substance use disorders

SLIDE 13.5 VETERANS AND JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT



Trainer Note: Briefly highlight each point on the slide. Use the content note below to lead a discussion related to veterans coming in contact with law enforcement, reasons for contact, and things to consider that may allow for diversion from arrest.



Content Note: Although veterans are no more likely to be arrested than other adults, when they are involved with the criminal justice system it is often due to untreated mental health conditions and substance use disorders. More than half of veterans who are involved in the justice system have either mental health conditions—namely PTSD, depression, or high anxiety—or substance use disorders, most notably from alcohol or cocaine use. According to Dr. Andrea Finlay, a VA researcher, a large percentage of these veterans experience homelessness or are at risk for homelessness, and many others face challenges with finding work and reintegrating into society. Additionally, veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system may be at higher risk for suicide.

A 2015 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicated that the former service members who are in jail had committed property crimes (21%), drug crimes (18%), violent offenses (16%), violent sexual offenses (12%), and other crimes (26%). About two-thirds of veterans incarcerated in jail and prison were discharged from the military between 1974 and 2000. Though, this finding does not necessarily indicate that veterans who served post 9/11 are not involved in the justice system. Approximately 9% of service members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan were arrested since they returned home.

“For some Veterans, says Dr. Finlay, their involvement in the justice system may start with less serious crimes that do not result in incarceration. But their justice system involvement may



escalate over time. For veterans from earlier eras, they have had more time to be involved in the justice system" (Richman, 2018, para. 15).

Many service members are returning home from serving in Iraq or Afghanistan with serious physical injuries or mental health conditions. Many are living with traumatic brain injuries, PTSD, depression, or musculoskeletal injuries. They may use alcohol or illicit drugs as a coping mechanism. These circumstances can potentially lead to contact with law enforcement.

Sources:

Eric B. Elbogen, Sally C. Johnson, Virginia M. Newton, Kristy Straits-Troster, Jennifer J. Vasterling, H. Ryan Wagner, and Jean C. Beckham, "Criminal Justice Involvement, Trauma, and Negative Affect in Iraq and Afghanistan War Era Veterans," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 80(6): 1097–1102.

Jennifer Bronson, Ann Carson, Margaret Noonan, and Marcus Berzofsky, December 2015, *Veterans in Prison and Jail, 2011–12*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ 249144, retrieved from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/vpj1112.pdf>.

Mike Richman, September 7, 2018, "Veterans and the Criminal Justice System," <https://www.research.va.gov/currents/0918-VA-researcher-examines-Vets-who-collide-with-criminal-justice-system.cfm#:~:text=The%20term%20justice-involved%20Veterans%20is%20used%20to%20describe,court%20involvement%2C%20to%20incarceration%20in%20jail%20or%20prison>.



Local Resources for Veterans



- **For all veterans:**
 - VA Healthcare system
 - Vet Centers
 - List other local, non-profit organizations that provide veterans' behavioral health, housing, and financial support services
- **For veterans involved in the justice system:**
 - Veteran Justice Outreach (VA service)
 - Veteran Treatment Courts
 - Veterans Pods (in correctional facilities)
 - The Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) Program (VA service)
 - <https://www.va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp>

SLIDE 13.6 LOCAL RESOURCES FOR VETERANS



Trainer Note: Use this slide to review resources available to veterans in the community. Also include other resources that serve veterans outside of the VA system. Suggest using the State Department of Veterans Affairs and County Veterans Service Officers as first steps to link veterans to benefits. Consider developing a one-page handout that participants might use when they encounter veterans in their work.



Content Note: There are several resources available to veterans, including:

VA Community Care System – providers who partner with the VA to provide services to veterans in their community. These providers are also likely to support veterans who may not be eligible for services at the VA due to characterization of discharge or other reasons.
<https://www.va.gov/communitycare/>

VA Healthcare System – provides inpatient and outpatient services to enrolled veterans. The services provided address both physical and behavioral health conditions.

VET Centers – Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services, including professional readjustment counseling to eligible veterans, active-duty service members, including National Guard and Reserve components, and their families. Readjustment counseling is offered to make a successful transition from military to civilian life or after a traumatic event experienced in the military.

Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) – The mission of the Veterans Justice Programs is to identify veterans involved in the justice system and contact them through outreach, in order to



facilitate access to VA services at the earliest possible point. Veterans Justice Programs accomplish this by building and maintaining partnerships between the VA and key elements of the criminal justice system. To find the closest VJO go to <https://www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp#contacts>.

Veterans Treatment Courts – Veterans Treatment Courts are specialty courts that are hybrid drug and mental health courts. These courts serve veterans living with behavioral health conditions and aim to divert veterans living with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and/or experiencing homelessness from the traditional justice system and to provide them with treatment and tools for rehabilitation and readjustment to civilian life.

Source: Jim Absher, October 8, 2021, “Veteran Treatment Courts,” *Military.com*, retrieved from <https://www.military.com/benefits/military-legal-matters/veterans-treatment-courts.html>.

Veterans Pods in Correctional Facilities – Also known as barracks behind bars, Veterans Pods is a program where veterans who are incarcerated are housed together in an environment that inspires military culture, values, and a sense of brotherhood or sisterhood. These units are not only to promote safety improvements, but also restoration, healing, and growth in a way that may not have been possible in general population housing.

Source: Bernard Edelman, and Deanne Benos, May 2018, *Barracks Behind Bars: In Veteran-Specific Housing Units, Veterans Help Veterans Help Themselves*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, retrieved from <https://info.nicic.gov/jiv/sites/info.nicic.gov/jiv/files/Barracks-Behind-Bars-508.pdf>.

The **Health Care for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Program** is designed to address the community re-entry needs of veterans who are incarcerated. HCRV services include:

- Outreach and pre-release assessments services for veterans in prison;
- Referrals and linkages to medical, psychiatric, and social services, including employment services upon release; and
- Short-term case management assistance upon release.

For more information about this program, go to <https://www.va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp>.

Additional information about the programs run by the VA can be found at www.va.gov.

NOTE: Also, provide information on other local resources that focus on veterans’ needs.



SLIDE 13.7 – OPTIONAL VIDEO – VETERANS COME HOME TO CIVILIAN LIFE



Trainer Note: It is optional to use this video (as well as the two other options below). Video options B and C are hidden but are still referenced in the slide deck. This slide is shown in the module.

Only consider using a video if unable to have a guest speaker with lived experience. If time permits, this video is good to illustrate some of the struggles that veterans have when returning to civilian life and how getting help is important.



Optional Video Activity: Show video “Veterans Come Home to Civilian Life” (3:46)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5gsd4FbwH8&ab_channel=AJ%2B

In this video, current military service members and veterans share stories about their experiences in the military and the challenges they faced when transitioning back to civilian life.



Ask participants for their reaction to the video, if shown. What did they notice that will help them in their work?



SLIDE 13.7 – OPTIONAL VIDEO – LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TO VETERANS



Trainer Note: It is optional to use this video. Consider the remaining time left in the module to determine if there is enough time to play it.



Optional Video Activity: Show video “Law Enforcement Response to Veterans” (11:25) <https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Public/guider-blalock-720.mp4>

This video shows a press conference conversation in Apex, North Carolina between Officer Jonathan Guider and Nick Blalock (a United States Airforce TACP veteran). The two men discuss Officer Guider’s interaction with Nick when he was called to respond to a 2014 incident in Nick’s home. Nick’s father had requested police assistance when Nick had grown very angry at a small misunderstanding. The men talk about how recognizing someone’s military background and understanding the challenges that veterans face in readjusting to civilian life can support de-escalation. They also discuss how officer training in crisis response can promote effective responses to individuals in crisis who have served in the military.



Ask participants for their reaction to the video, if shown. What did they notice that will help them in their work?

Optional Video:
Andrew Chambers' TED Talk



SLIDE 13.7 – OPTIONAL VIDEO – ANDREW CHAMBERS' TED TALK



Trainer Note: It is optional to use this video. Only consider using a video if unable to have a guest speaker with lived experience.



Optional Video Activity: Show video “Andrew Chambers’ TED Talk” (9:01)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6AYmzunPIQ&ab_channel=TEDxTalks

Content Warning: This video contains audio and content that may elicit an emotional response in some people. Please use discretion before choosing to play this video, and make sure you are prepared to address any questions or concerns about it afterwards. If playing, please preface the video to the audience and allow anyone who may not want to see it to excuse themselves for a break.

This video is of a TED Talk presented at the Marion Correctional Institution—an adult prison in Marion County, Ohio. Andrew Chambers, a United States Army veteran, talks about his experiences during the war in Iraq and how those experiences affected his transition home and contact with the criminal justice system.



Ask participants for their reaction to the video, if shown. What did they notice that will help them in their work?



Tips for Responding

- Ask if the person ever served in the military. If yes, thank them.
- Check for weapons
- Help the person feel safe
- Slow things down
- Gather information
- Know local resources and their different payment options
- It's okay to **acknowledge you did not serve in the military** if they ask; **Offer for them to speak to an officer who is a veteran** to feel more comfortable

QUICK TIPS

SLIDE 13.8 TIPS FOR RESPONDING



Trainer Note: Use this slide to walk through quick tips for responding to a veteran who is experiencing a crisis. Emphasize de-escalation and providing support to make them comfortable.

Encourage participants to research local veterans groups and have those resources and contacts available for officers. Become familiar with who the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) representative is for your respective areas.

It's also important to understand the difference in payment options for services. Example: Veterans Affairs (VA) services vs. local hospital, mental health, or substance use services. A veteran may have services covered at no out-of-pocket expense through the VA, while a local hospital stay will look at private health care insurance and out-of-pocket payment.

VA Health benefits can be found at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/about-va-health-benefits/>.



Module Wrap-Up

Questions?



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SLIDE 13.9 MODULE WRAP-UP



Trainer Note: Use this as an opportunity for participants to ask questions before moving on to the next module.

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