

Presentation to the National Alliance on Mental Illness Conference 2023

“Building Community and Busting Stigma”

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BUILDING COMMUNITY AND BUSTING STIGMA

STIGMA

- What is stigma?
- Types of stigma
- Stigma and Veterans
- Harmful effects of stigma
- Addressing stigma
 - *NAMI's values and strategies and WDVA's shared perspectives and values*



STIGMA: DEFINITION AND TYPES OF STIGMA

- *Definition of stigma*
- *Public stigma*
- *Self-stigma*
- *Institutional stigma: systemic & policies*



STIGMA AND VETERANS

- *Research on current service members*
- *Examples of stigmas with veterans*
- *Stigma and discrimination*



HARMFUL EFFECTS OF STIGMA

- Reluctance to seek help or treatment
- Lack of understanding
- Limited opportunities
- Bullying, physical violence, harassment
- Negative self-view, loss of self-esteem
- Loss of hope
- Despair
- Isolation



ADDRESSING STIGMAS

WDVA and NAMI Shared Strategies and Values Overcoming Stigma

- Talk openly about mental health
- Education
- Being mindful of the language used around mental health
- Encouraging equity between physical and mental health conditions
- Showing empathy and compassion for people with mental health conditions
- Choosing empowerment over shame and being open about mental health treatment
- Don't harbor self-stigma



WDVA's COUNSELING AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS

- Vet Corps (VC)
 - Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC)
 - Suicide Prevention Program
 - Brain Injury and Recovery Program
- Veterans Training and Support Center (VTSC)
 - Veterans Commercial Tobacco Cessation Program (VCTCP)
- WDVA Counseling Program
 - Veterans Farm at Orting
 - Sergeant Fox Grant
 - Veterans Peer Corps (VPC)



STRATEGY:

TALKING OPENLY ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

- WDVA's approach overall
- WDVA's shared approach within the **Suicide Prevention Program**
 - Important Talks
 - Governor's Challenge
 - LEARN Training
 - Services
 - Prevent Veteran Suicide Emblem
 - Grant and donations



STRATEGY: TALKING OPENLY ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

WDVA's shared approach within the
Sergeant Fox Grant Program

- Partnership with the Federal VA
- Serving 8 rural counties
- Prevention
- Screenings
- Services



STRATEGY: EDUCATION

WDVA's shared approach:

WDVA Counseling Program

- 33 providers statewide
- Expertise in military culture and trauma
- Free counseling
- Education to the community

Veterans Training Support Center

- Free training on mental health topics
- Hybrid model and APA-Approved

WDVA Ask The Question Campaign

- “Have you or a Family Member Ever Served in the Military?”



STRATEGIES:

- BEING MINDFUL OF LANGUAGE**
- ENCOURAGING EQUITY BETWEEN PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS**

WDVA's shared approach:

- Language Matters
- Underlying Messages
- Examples of PTSD and Paranoia
- Understanding the connection between physical and mental conditions



STRATEGY: SHOWING EMPATHY AND COMPASSION FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

WDVA's shared approach within the

Peer Support Programs

- Be There for Them
- Take Their Mind off Stress
- Learn About Their Mental Health
- Check up on Them
- Let Them Know They Aren't Alone



STRATEGY: SHOWING EMPATHY AND COMPASSION FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Peer Support Programs

- Brain Injury and Recovery Program
 - Breaking barriers
 - Services
- Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC)
 - Training and experience
 - Connection to healing and purpose
 - Providing opportunities through internships
- Veterans Corps
 - 42 Vet Corps member sites
 - Resources and benefits
 - Education
 - Transition
- Orting Farm
 - Lease farmland
 - Support
 - Resources
 - Business Opportunity
- Veterans Commercial Tobacco Cessation Programs (VCTCP)
 - Education
 - Resources
 - Outreach events
 - Treatment options
- Veterans Peer Corps (VPC)
 - Serving as Peer Mentors



STRATEGIES:

- CHOOSING EMPOWERMENT OVER SHAME AND BEING OPEN ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT
- DON'T HARBOR SELF-STIGMA

WDVA's shared approach:

- **Empowerment:** "I fight stigma by living an empowered life. To me, that means owning my life and my story and refusing to allow others to dictate how I view myself or how I feel about myself." – Val Fletcher.
 - Takes different forms
 - Opening the doors to others
 - Support
 - Disclosure
- **Self-Stigma:** A quote from a veteran *[Stigma] bothers me sometimes, but I'm getting better at [overcoming] it. I'm realizing that I still have to take care of myself, and I still have to consider myself as someone, even though I might have some problems.*
 - Efforts to change stigmas
 - Talking
 - Self-Concept
 - Lessening exposure
 - Supportive people and activities



BUILDING COMMUNITY

What is community?



CONCLUSION

- 3 Asks
- Overcoming Stigmas
- Community
- Appreciation



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Thank You

