

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



Rural Suicide Prevention: Together With Veterans

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Disclaimer

This presentation is based on work supported in part by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), but does not necessarily represent the views of VA or the United States government.



Together With Veterans Mission

The Together With Veterans Program (TWWV) enlists rural Veterans and their local partners to join forces to reduce Veteran suicide in their community.



TWV Partnership

▶ MIRECC

Program
Leadership

.....
Consultation
Resources

.....
Program
Evaluation

.....
Technical
Assistance

▶ WICHE BHP

TWV
Academy

.....
TWV
Implementation

.....
Community
Consultation

▶ Community TWV Teams

Community
Members
and Veterans

.....
Steering
Committee

.....
TWV Action Plan

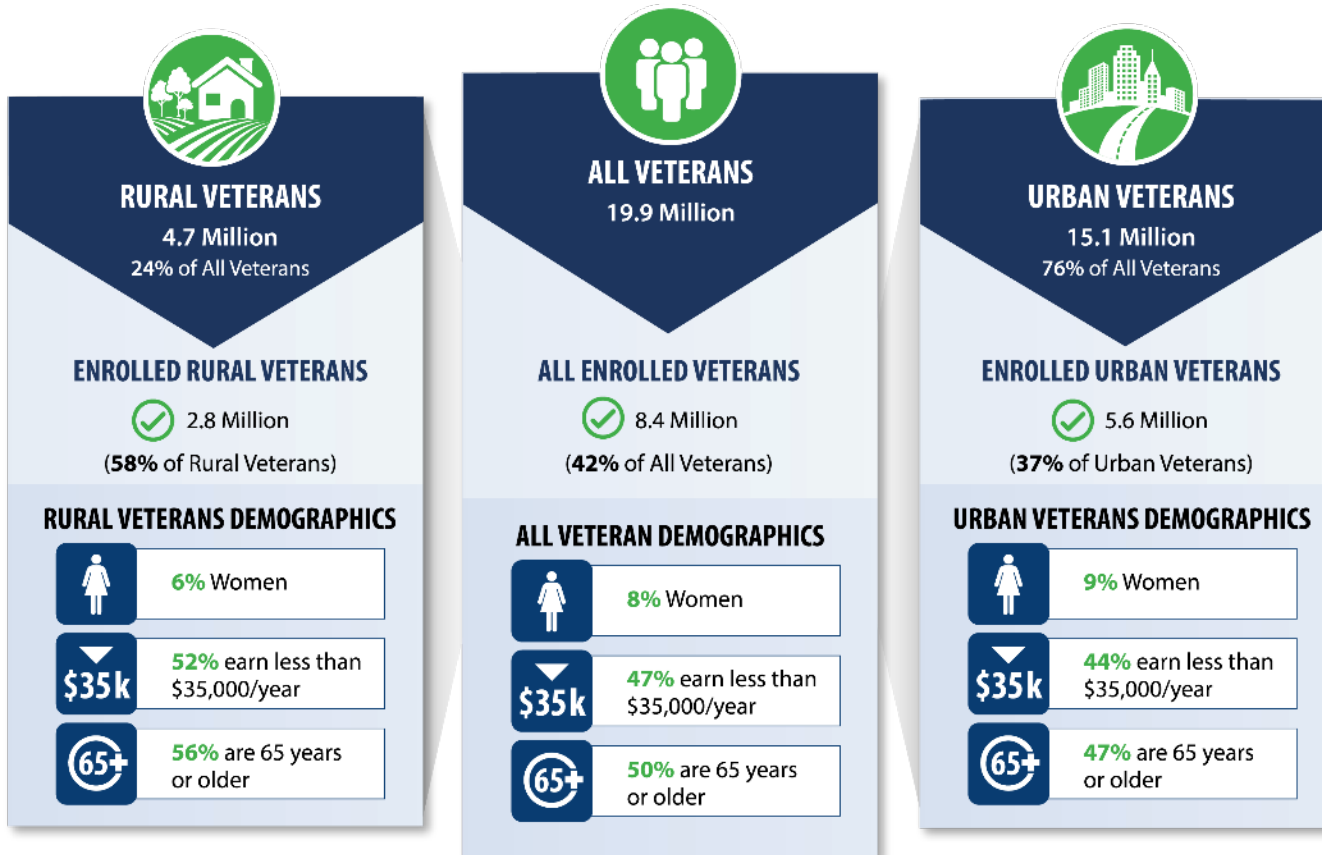
▶ Veterans, Veteran Organizations, Family Members

Participation and
Leadership

TWV is funded by the Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health, as a enterprise wide initiative in partnership with the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.



Veterans in Rural Communities





Rural Life: The Challenges

Health Care

- Workforce shortages in health care and behavioral health
- Rural primary care providers report being less prepared to manage suicidal patients
- Rural residents in need are less likely to receive mental health or substance use treatment
- Rural residents are less likely to have health insurance
- National and state policies and programs are largely designed for urban settings



Rural Life: The Challenges

Socio-Economic

- Higher percentage of individuals living below the poverty line
- Lower college graduation rates
- Higher rates of combined social and economic disadvantage
- Majority of wealth generated by rural economic activity goes to benefit urban areas and residents



Rural Life: The Challenges

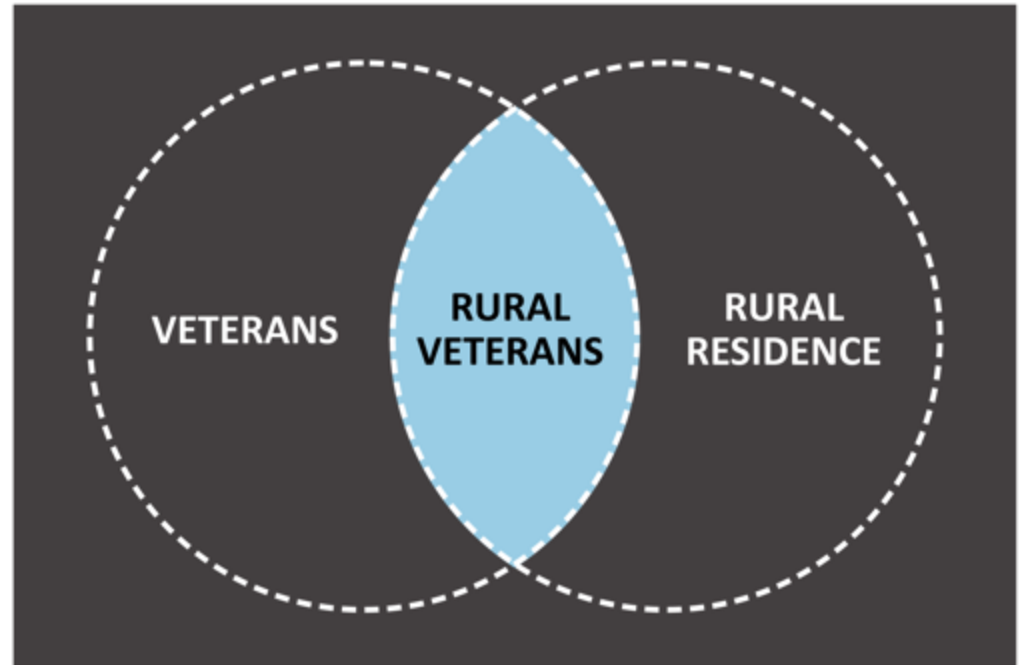
Health

- Rural residents are more likely to report fair to poor health
- Higher rates of significant health issues
- Greater rates of isolation

Rural Veterans

Rural Veterans have a **20% increased risk of death by suicide** after controlling for access to care, demographic factors, and diagnoses.

What could some reasons be?



What do we do?

Leverage the Strengths In Rural Communities



Rural

- More Veterans Per Capita
- Ingenuity, hardiness, and adaptation



Resilience

- Local access to role models and peers
- Culture of local support to survive



Social Capital

- People working in different community systems know each other



Trust

- Community Insiders Must Lead
- By Veterans and for Veterans



Mission

- Strengthen protective factors
- Enhance community supports
- Address health care system needs



What do we do?

Apply best practices from prevention science

- 1. Apply Best Practice Community Change Processes**
- 2. Implement Suicide Prevention Best Practices**
- 3. Attend to and Enhance Community Readiness**

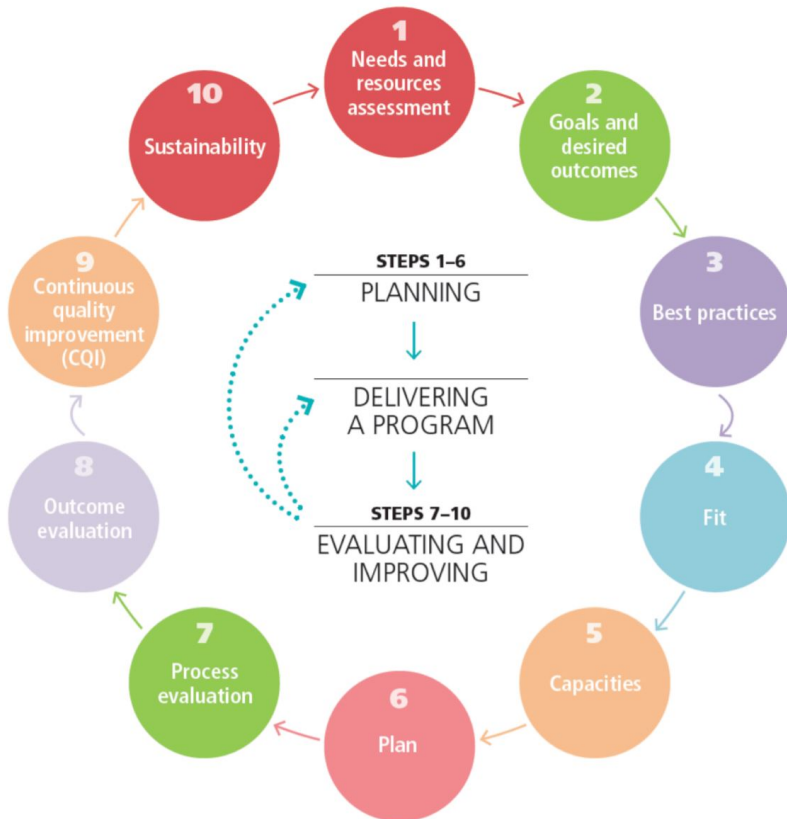


What do we do?

Apply best practices from prevention science

1. Apply Best Practice Community Change Processes

Getting To Outcomes at a Glance

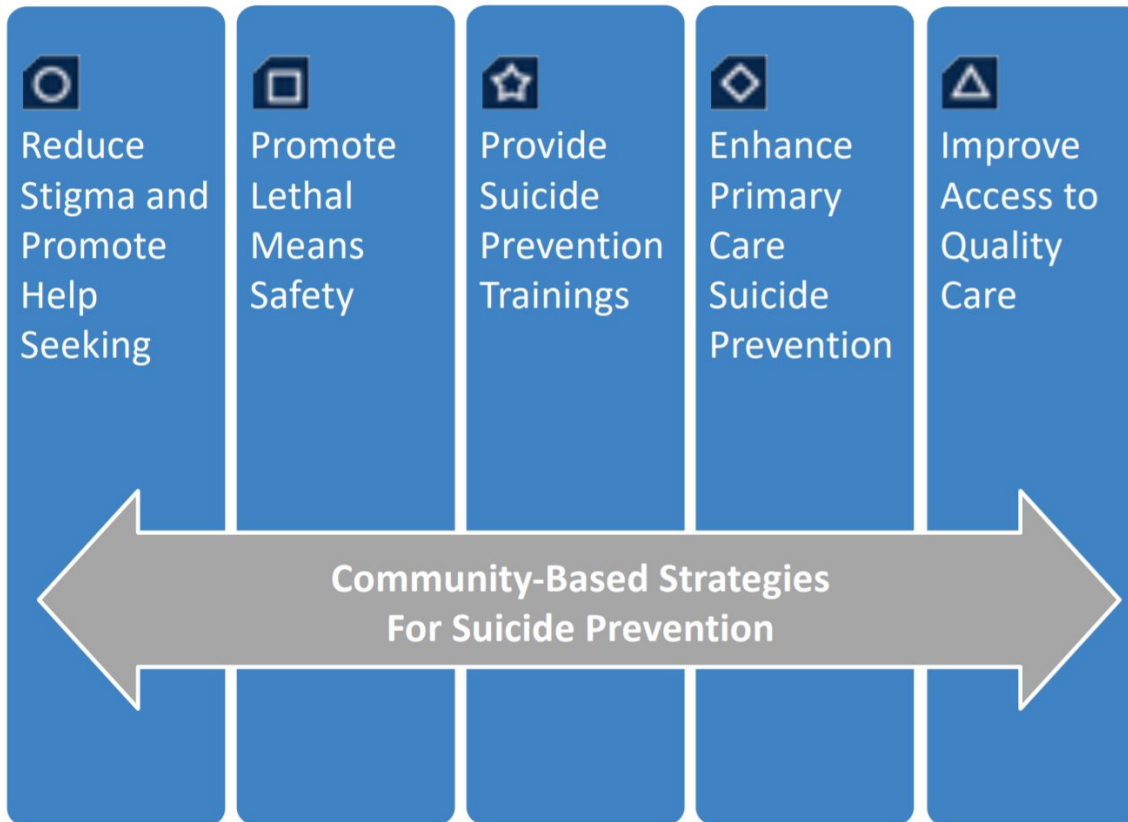


From National Strategy for Prevention Veteran Suicide 2018-2028

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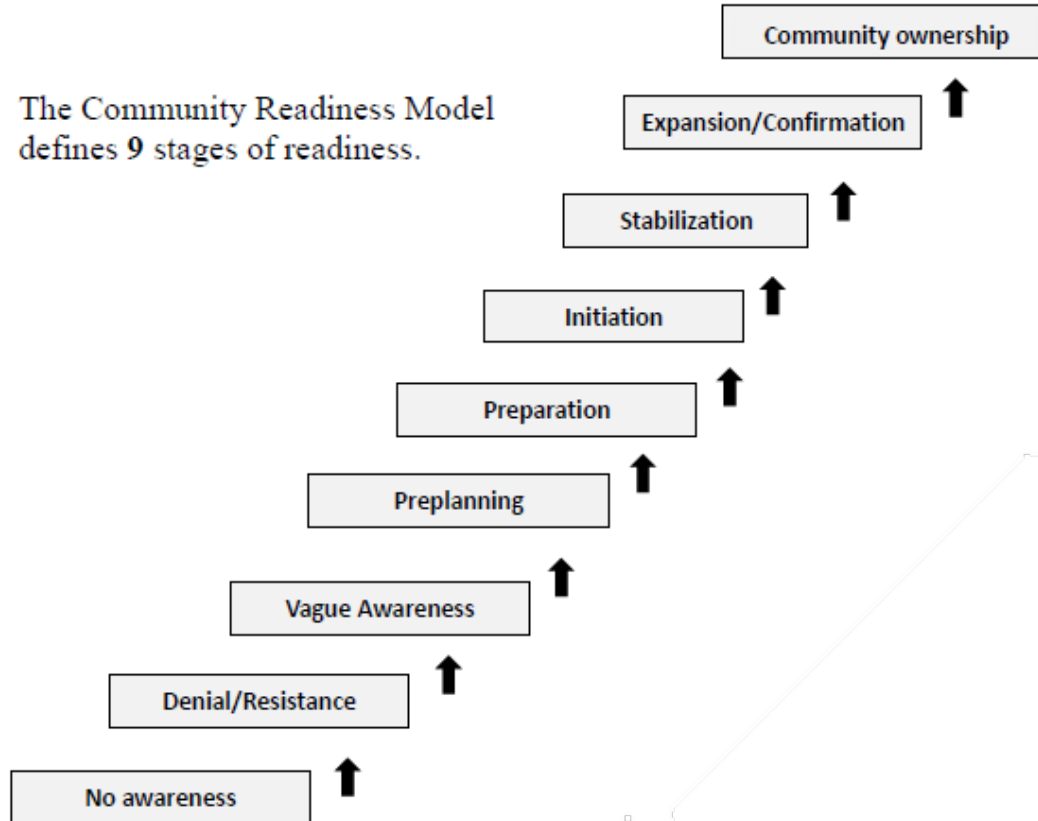


What do we do?

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- 3. Attend to and Enhance Community Readiness**

The Community Readiness Model defines 9 stages of readiness.





Development and Evaluation of Together With Veterans

Two-Phase Development and Proof of Concept

1. Community Based Participatory Research in one rural community

1. Theory of Change
2. Program Model Design

2. Three Demonstration Sites

1. Iterative refinement of model and tools
2. Mixed Methods Evaluation focused on:
 1. Reach & Adoption
 2. Feasibility
 3. Acceptability
 4. Documenting Rural Contexts that impede or support implementation



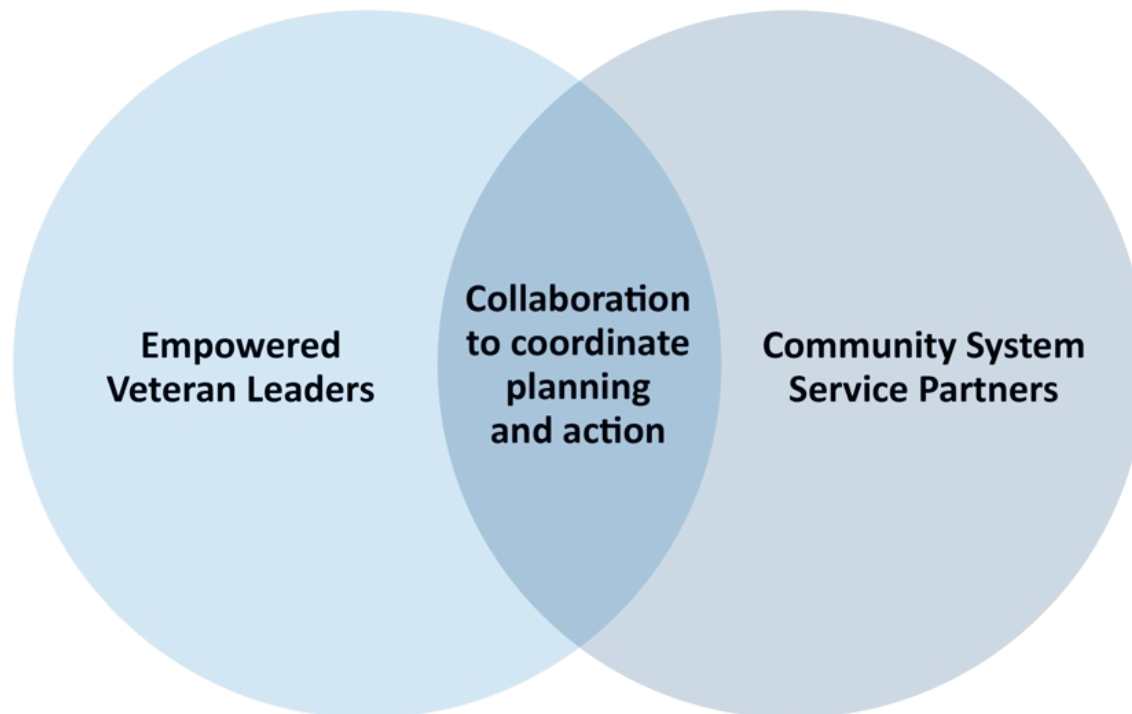
Together With Veterans Mission



TWV enlists rural Veterans and their local partners to join forces to reduce Veteran suicide in their community.

Together with Veterans Program Theory and Design

TWV starts with consent and leadership from community Veterans, then provides tools, resources, and support to Veterans and their partners.





Guiding Principles of TWV

Veteran-Driven

- Veterans provide permission and work together to implement TWV in their community

Collaborative

- Community partners play a key role in successfully supporting Veterans and their families

Evidence-Informed

- TWV strategies are drawn from well-researched models that have shown to effectively reduce suicide

Community-Centered

- TWV partnerships develop a unique suicide prevention action plan based on community strengths and needs

TWV Has Five Phases



Phase 1.
BUILD YOUR TEAM



Phase 2.
**LEARN ABOUT YOUR
COMMUNITY**



Phase 3.
TEACH YOUR TEAM



Phase 4.
PLAN FOR ACTION



Phase 5.
**FOLLOW YOUR PLAN
AND MEASURE RESULTS**

**TOGETHER WITH VETERANS**

RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Implementation Toolkit

PHASE ONE
BUILD YOUR TEAM

- Inform Veterans and community members about Veteran suicide and Together With Veterans
- Establish a Veteran-led Together With Veterans Team
- Begin identifying TWV Steering Committee



TOGETHER WITH VETERANS
RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Implementation Toolkit

PHASE TWO
LEARN ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY



- Continue to build the Team by adding community partners
- Assess community strengths and needs
 - SWOT Analysis
 - Readiness Assessment
 - Interorganizational Social Networks

TOGETHER WITH VETERANS

RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Implementation Toolkit

PHASE THREE
TEACH YOUR TEAM

- Team members learn individual suicide prevention skills
- Team members learn community-based suicide prevention strategies that will be used for developing the Action Plan



- Review assessment results to understand community strengths and needs
- Identify available resources to support community-based suicide prevention strategies
- Develop Action Plan for each community-based suicide prevention strategy

TOGETHER WITH VETERANS

RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Implementation Toolkit

PHASE FIVE
FOLLOW YOUR PLAN
AND MEASURE RESULTS

- Track activity and results of action items
- Review information from TWV Community-Based Suicide Prevention Strategies Presentation in preparation for discussing each strategy
- Continually refine actions as needed

TWV Provides Evidence Based Implementation Support

- Tools: Interactive Online Portal and hard copy toolkit
- Training Academy
- Technical Assistance
 - Community coaching
 - Peer mentoring
- Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement

TOGETHER WITH VETERANS
RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Log In

Implementation Toolkit

The **Together With Veterans (TWV)** program enlists rural Veterans and their local partners to join forces to reduce Veteran suicide in their community.

[TWV Overview](#) [TWV Requirements](#)

The **Together With Veterans** is a six phase process to support rural communities in developing local action plans to prevent Veteran suicide. The six phases in this toolkit guide the community through identifying Veterans and other key partners, learning about suicide prevention and specific community strengths and needs, and developing and carrying out an effective local Veteran suicide prevention action plan.

Phase	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Phase 1	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify
Phase 2	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify
Phase 3	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify
Phase 4	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify
Phase 5	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify
Phase 6	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify	Identify

- 1. Define Your Team**
 - 1.1 Identify Partners
 - 1.2 Develop Roles
 - 1.3 Establish Communication Channels
 - 1.4 Develop a Working Document
- 2. Learn About Your Community**
 - 2.1 Conduct Community Assessment
 - 2.2 Identify Strengths and Needs
 - 2.3 Develop a Community Profile
- 3. Develop Your Plan**
 - 3.1 Identify Key Partners
 - 3.2 Develop a Local Action Plan
 - 3.3 Identify Key Messages
- 4. Plan for Action**
 - 4.1 Develop a Plan
 - 4.2 Develop a Budget
 - 4.3 Develop a Timeline
- 5. Get Your Plan Rolling: Measure and Improve**
 - 5.1 Implement the Plan
 - 5.2 Monitor Progress
 - 5.3 Evaluate and Improve

TOGETHER WITH VETERANS
RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

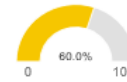
Implementation Toolkit

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration

TOGETHER WITH VETERANS
 RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Test

1: Build Your Team



Activities/Goals

 NO YES

Veterans give permission to implement TWV

 NO YES

Team include at least 50% Veterans

 NO YES

Team includes mental health or health care providers

 NO YES

Team has a Steering Committee?

 NO YES

Hold Meeting 1

Meeting Prep

Meeting 1

1. Follow meeting preparation guidelines
2. Prepare to present Veteran Suicide Data Sheet and TWV Program Summary
3. Print documents to hand out at meeting
4. Use the Introductory Meeting Talking Points — Veterans to prepare for discussing the information
5. Prepare to ask for permission and discuss decision-making process

Documents

Reports

Currently no reports

Meetings

08/28/2019 : 10:00 AM

[Meeting with number \(Meeting 2\)](#)

...

[Create New Meeting : Past Meetings](#)

Trainings

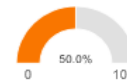
07/16/2019

Evaluations

08/14/2019

[Create New Training](#)

2: Learn About Your Community



Roster



TWV Academy

Awareness of
Veteran Suicide

Implementation
Tools &
Techniques

TWV Summit

Brings representatives of all TWV sites together

- Hone skills to implement TWV program
- Provide input to MIRECC and WICHE about TWV
- Build relationships with other communities implementing TWV





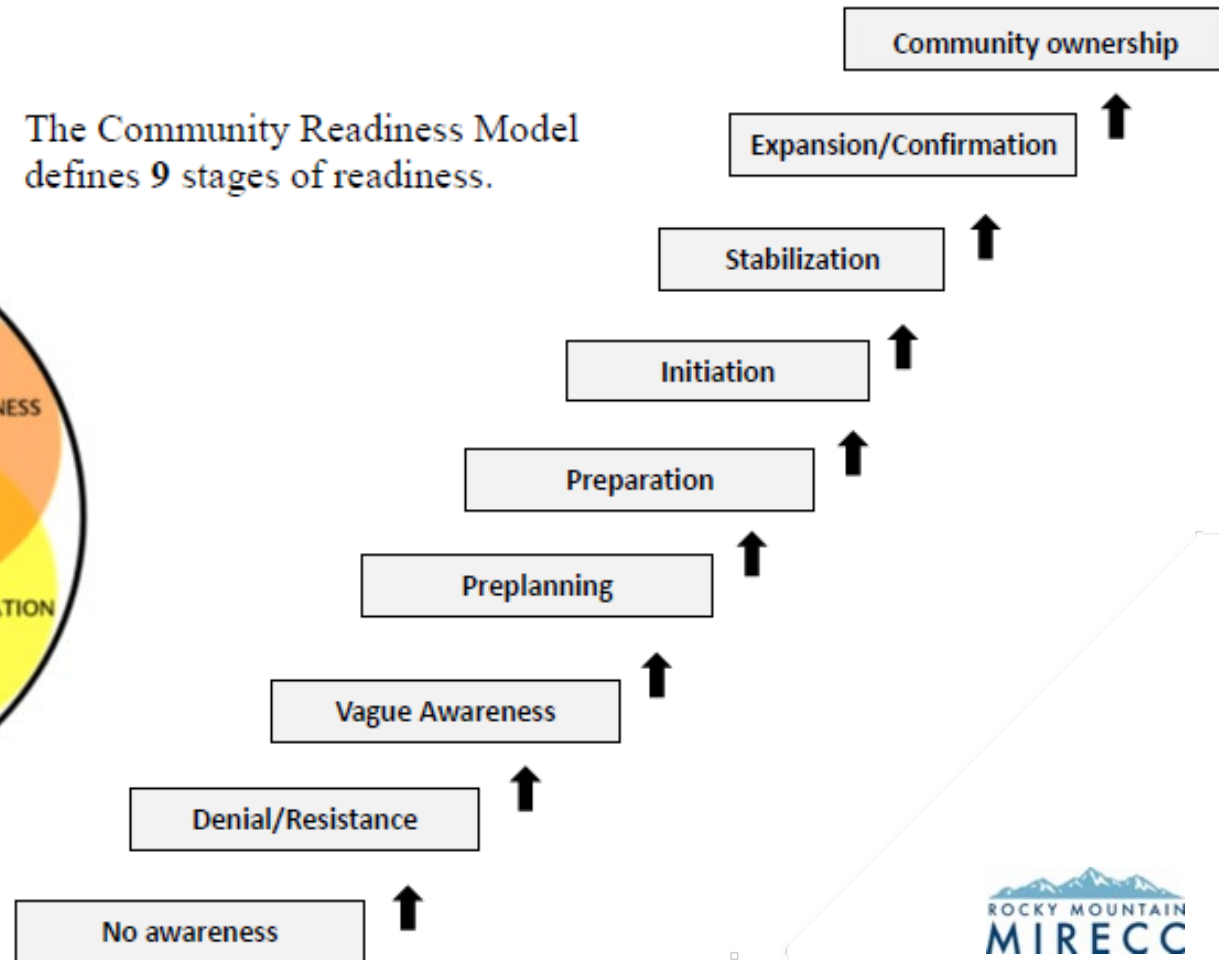
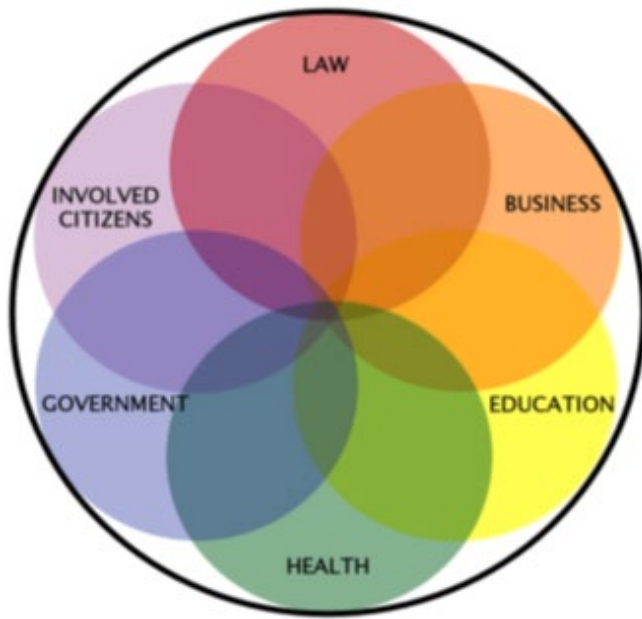
Evaluation of Together With Veterans Demonstration Sites

- **Feasibility**
 - Community Readiness and Social Networks
- **Reach & Adoption**
 - Veterans Served
 - Uptake/partnerships & audiences reached
- **Acceptability**
 - Veteran leadership
 - Key stakeholder perspectives

What is a Readiness Assessment?

Stages of Community Readiness

The Community Readiness Model defines 9 stages of readiness.





Dimension to Assess Readiness

Knowledge of Efforts — programs, activities, or services in your community

Leadership — those who could affect the outcome of this issue and those who have influence in the community and/or who lead the community

Community Climate — general attitudes throughout the community

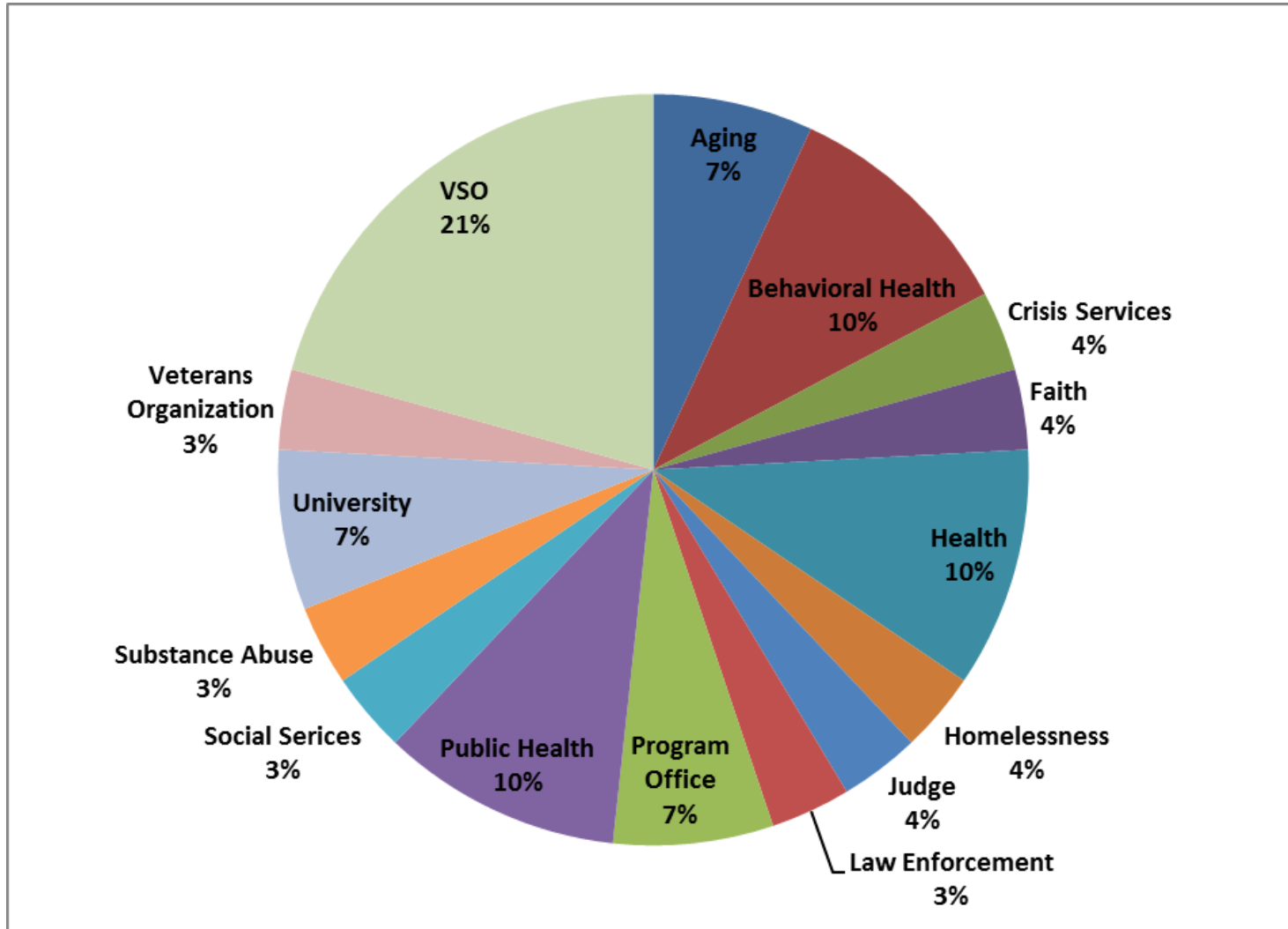
Knowledge of the issue — community members' knowledge of issues

Resources — time, money, people, space, etc.

Community Climate Quotes for a community at Denial/Resistance

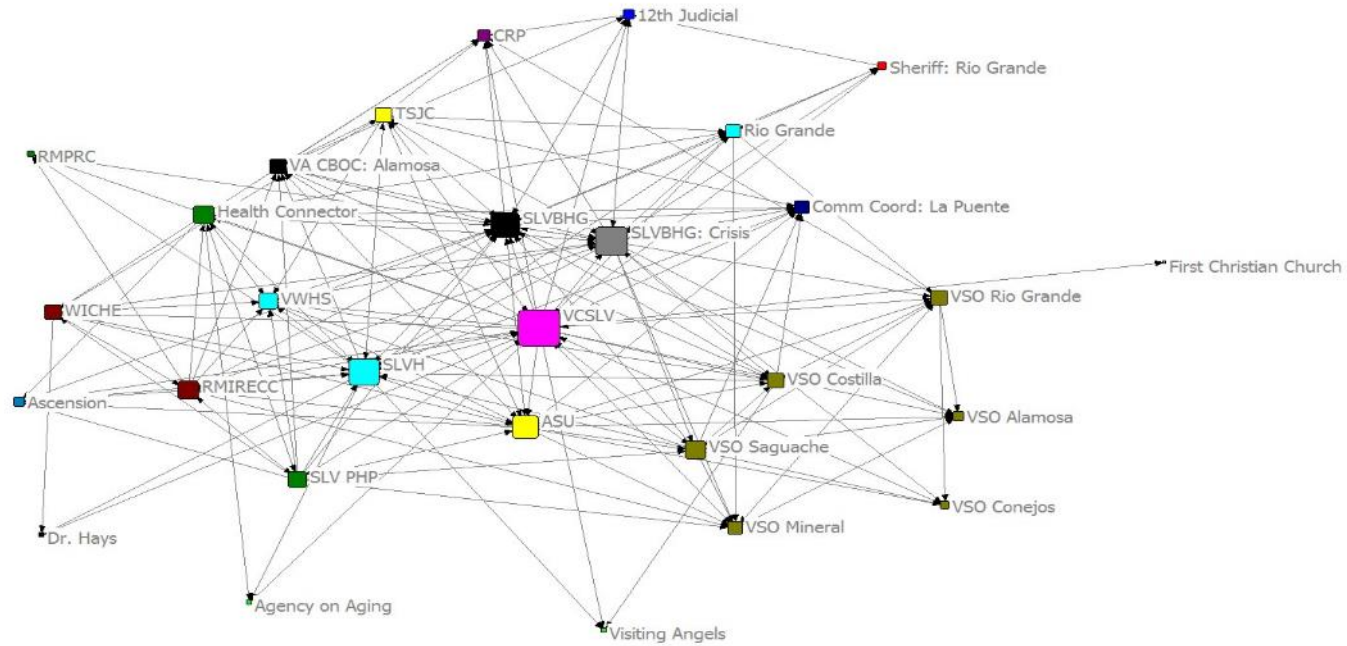
- **“They don’t understand PTSD; they don’t understand MST; they don’t understand the triggers and what brings on the veteran’s suicide, but they don’t want to take the time to do it.”**
- **It’s like cancer in a family. You see cancer all the time but until cancer hits home, it doesn’t hit home.”**

Who is part of the Together With Veterans Effort?



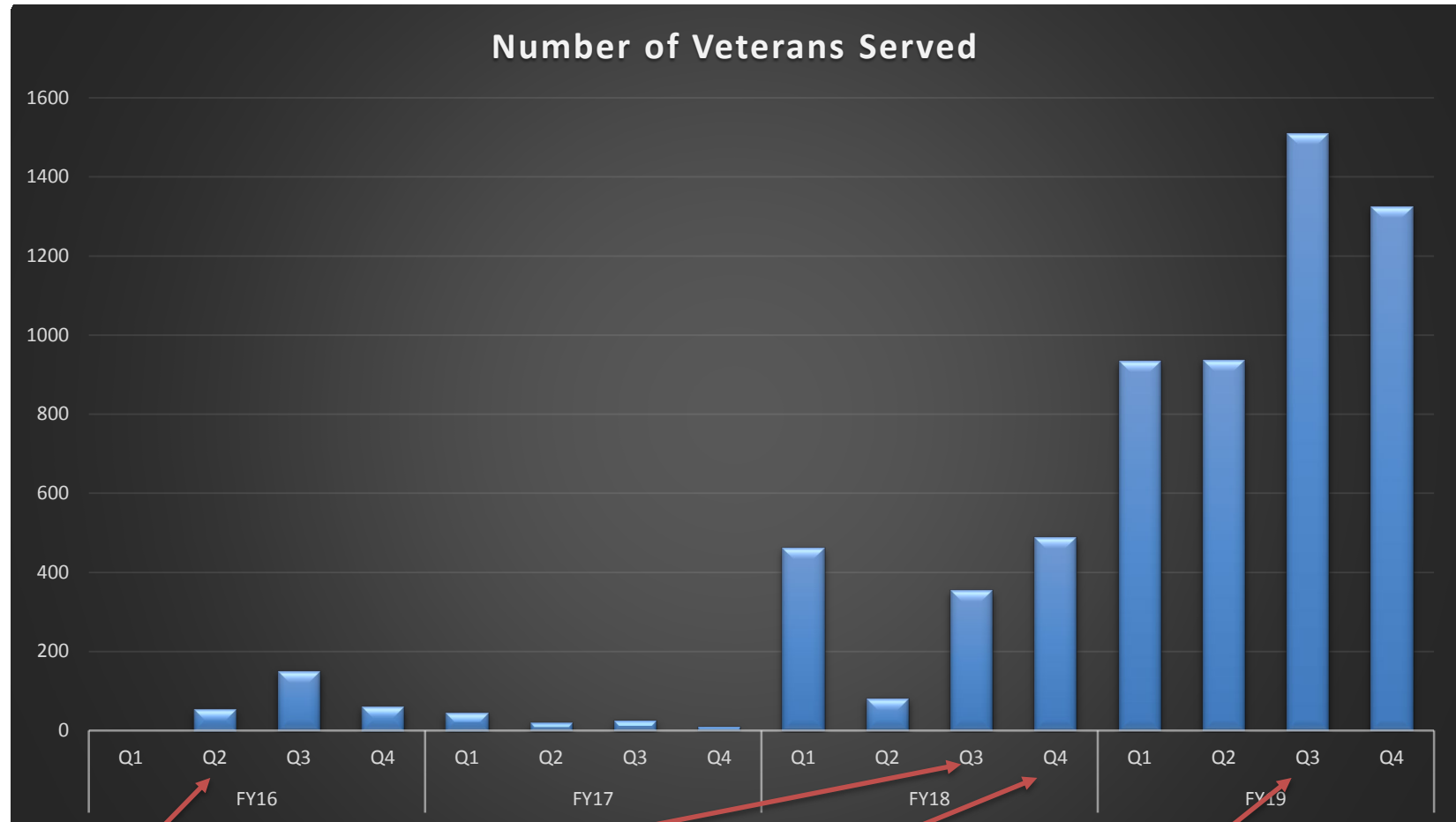


Veteran's Coalition of the San Luis Valley





TWV Reach (Preliminary Data)



Program Launch
in SC Colorado

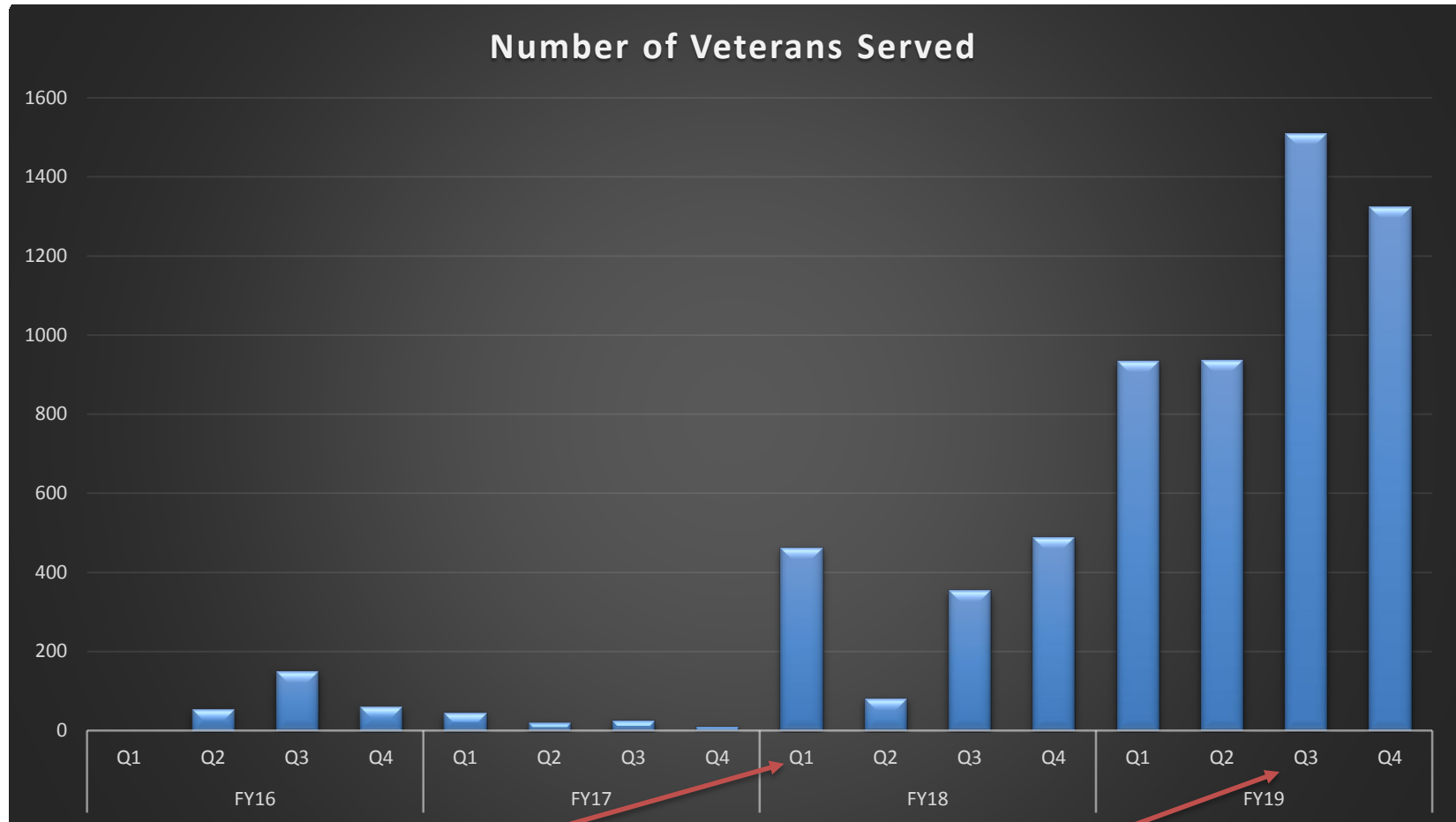
Program Launch
in NW Montana

Program Launch
in North Carolina

Program Launch
in NE Colorado



TWV Reach (Preliminary Data)



South Central Colorado begins
implementing action plan

NE Montana begins
implementing action plan



TWV Veteran Leader Comments

“Even though we are from different organizations, we came together like spokes of a wagon wheel, and now the coalition has become the hub for Veteran suicide prevention.”

“ ... you can't have a gun crew just go in and start shooting; they need to know where to aim, who's doing what.”

“Local, peer-to-peer, ground-up is better: I don't know Veterans in crisis in the state or the region, but I dang sure know Veterans in crisis in my community! It's just us.”



Richard Nagley, President of the VC-SLV

“We built upon individual knowledge and connections to bring awareness to issues beyond the organizations traditionally responsible for addressing them. For example, mental health issues were handled mental health organizations and law enforcement were not being engaged. The Coalition members started reaching out to all organizations and building bridges to getting them involved. We continue to work together because issues for veterans are issues for the entire Valley community.”

“The Together with Veterans project gave us organizational credibility and courage.”



New Kalispell organization aims to prevent veteran suicide

"We would rather do it from the boots on the ground and work up, because it's better to have brother to brother than have a stranger."

<https://nbcmontana.com/news/local/new-kalispell-organization-aims-to-prevent-veteran-suicide>

"Since we've been providing suicide prevention training in March, we know two people's lives were saved because they were referred for services."

-VCNWM Board Member





Summary of Results

Readiness

1. Communities to date have all begun at a Level 2 for Readiness.
 - *In response early activities focus on building awareness and support throughout the community.*

Suicide Prevention Networks

2. One year post implementation, Veterans Coalitions are the most central organizing force for suicide prevention and have established a multitude of collaborative relationships.
3. Two years post implementation, other key network partners begin to improve their collaborative relationships to influence Veteran Suicide Prevention.



Summary of Results

Reach and Adoption

4. TWV to-date has reached over 1000 Veterans in four rural communities; trained 1000 of people in suicide prevention; and successfully engaged health care system partners in implementing suicide prevention best practices.

Feasibility and Acceptability: Key Stakeholder Perspectives

5. Community Veterans express high levels of buy in and describe a change in empowerment/authority to influence their community's wellbeing.
6. Diverse community sectors are engaged and showing up.
7. Action plans include all 5 key best practice strategies, and are being implemented and improved.



Next Steps: Comparative Effectiveness (22 communities)

Evaluate the Implementation of TWV using REAIM

- Reach
- Effectiveness
- Adoption
- Implementation
- Maintenance

Effectiveness of the TWV Program to Reduce community suicide and violent deaths

- Decreasing risk factors such as barriers to treatment and stigma
- Increased protective factors such as social cohesion, community connectedness, and help seeking
- Use of Services (crisis line calls, VHA enrollment, VHA Mental Health Services)
- All cause mortality, suicide deaths and suicide/self-harm-related hospitalizations



THANK YOU



For more information:

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