

Veteran Community Reintegration Research Agenda

A product of the ENCORE Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP) on Veteran Community Reintegration Research



MSP Mission:

"To maximize Veteran and family community reintegration by working collaboratively to share information seamlessly, promote innovative research, and inform equitable Veteran policies and programs."



MSP Vision:

"Every Veteran and their family has the opportunity to live and thrive in their desired community."

ENCORE
Enhancing Veteran Community Reintegration Research

Overview

The [Enhancing Veteran Community Reintegration Research \(ENCORE\) project](#) was designed to:

1. mobilize Veteran community reintegration (CR) research for transformation and impact
2. promote innovation, relevance and acceleration of Veteran community reintegration research and knowledge translation.

The following evidence-based, stakeholder-driven research agenda is a product of ENCORE's Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP) and is aligned with the project objectives. The MSP includes Veterans and caregivers, representatives from community-based organizations, VA program offices and community reintegration research experts. The MSP stakeholder engagement process was designed to establish trust, create a sense of legitimacy with regard to the research findings, and encourage the uptake of research findings.¹ The MSP's Veteran community reintegration research agenda is designed to be inclusive, innovative, & maximally meaningful to all stakeholder groups.

The Need

Community reintegration (CR) is a VHA priority². Many Veterans report difficulties with CR following discharge from military service^{3,4}. These difficulties can lead to poor social and family relationships, unemployment, financial strain, homelessness, and poor physical and mental health.⁴ There are some important gaps that need to be addressed in the current body of work on Veteran CR. Future research must include diverse populations, standardized measures, and identification of successful CR strategies.

MSP Values

The MSP identified shared values to guide this research agenda.

Collaboration

We engage stakeholders as partners to make decisions.

Diversity

We commit to equitable and inclusive Veteran community reintegration research.

Innovation

We promote research that offers creative and resourceful solutions.

Integrity

We conduct honest, ethical, and transparent research.

Veteran-centeredness

We empower and amplify Veteran voices.

Principles for Inclusive Veteran CR Research

The MSP developed the following four principles to ensure that research is relevant to the Veteran community (i.e., Veterans, their families and caregivers, Veteran service-providers, and members of the communities in which Veterans live and work). These principles are recommended to guide funders, researchers, and stakeholders as they develop inclusive Veteran CR research.

1. Ensure CR research programs reflect the makeup of the Veteran population (e.g., race, culture, language, etc.).
 - a. Prioritize research that samples women and minority Veterans (American Indian/Alaskan Native Veterans, LGBTQ Veterans, Veterans of Color, religious minorities)
 - b. Promote research that samples geographically diverse participants.
 - c. Invest in research that samples Veterans at risk for adverse social circumstances due to physical or mental health status, employment status, economic status, or legal status.
 - d. Design longitudinal research programs that follow Veterans along the CR continuum.
 - e. Promote research that includes innovative strategies for accessing and sampling Veterans who are not enrolled in the VHA.
2. Focus CR research programs on the interests of the Veteran community, addressing issues that matter to them.
 - a. Invest in research that uses community-based, collaborative, or partnered research methods.
 - b. Support research that includes opportunities to engage the Veteran community in the research process. This can include creating Veteran Engagement Groups, to co-develop research proposals, and data collection procedures, and informing feedback on findings.
3. Access and represent the views and experiences of the communities in which Veterans live and work.
 - a. Identify opportunities to develop research that involves non-Veteran members of Veterans' communities.
 - b. Prioritize research that focuses on or includes Veterans' families and caregivers.
 - c. Prioritize research programs that create and sustain partnerships with other national, state, and local government agencies, community-based Veteran service organizations, non-profits, and businesses.
4. Engage Veterans and members of the community in meaningful dissemination in accessible formats.
 - a. Promote the dissemination of research findings through non-research and non-academic sources.
 - b. Encourage researchers to work with publishers and science journalists to frame research findings in terms of impact.
 - c. Promote the use of Veteran engagement groups and advisory boards to identify 1) how to share the most relevant findings with Veteran communities and 2) preferred information sources.

MSP-Driven Working Definition of CR

Many definitions of Veteran community reintegration exist⁵⁻⁹. We needed a shared understanding of this concept to facilitate our work:

Veteran community reintegration is an individualized process by which a Veteran transitions from one functional role/status to another, sometimes resulting in changes to the Veteran's personal identity. This process can be cyclical and extend across the Veteran's lifetime. The process is collective and necessarily includes the Veteran's family, caregivers, and communities of choice. Successful community reintegration is determined by the Veteran's own goals for achieving wellbeing as they transition; can be challenged by barriers that exist within the Veteran's social, cultural, or environmental context; and requires connection to a broad system of resources and supports.

MSP's Research Priorities

Veteran community reintegration is integral to the VA mission¹⁰. VA is the largest integrated health care system in the United States, serving over nine million Veterans. Research is critical to support VA's mission and help the organization meet its [strategic goals](#). The mission of VA's Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) is "to identify, evaluate, and rapidly implement evidence-based strategies that improve the quality and safety of care delivered to Veterans."¹¹ The MSP has identified 3 priorities to advance VA HSR&D's Veteran community reintegration research.

- 1) What are the comparative outcomes and costs of Veteran CR services, programs, and interventions at every stage of the CR continuum?
- 2) What screening tools, clinical assessments, and measures are needed to evaluate Veteran CR processes and risks in clinical and non-clinical settings? And how can these tools be appropriately translated into practice?
- 3) What are the personal, social, and environmental conditions that predict Veteran community reintegration or dis/integration?

In addition to the priorities listed above, the MSP proposes that impactful CR research offers reciprocal benefits to the Veterans and stakeholders who engage in research. Thus, CR research will include the following cross-cutting principles:

- 1) Include coordination and collaborative partnerships across agencies
- 2) Support effective and evidence-based policy
- 3) Include efforts to connect Veteran participants to CR resources

References

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