

Concerned Significant Other (CSO) Engagement Guide: All Hands on Deck for Improving Research on Veteran Suicide Prevention (2021)

RESEARCH BRIEF

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It goes without saying that veteran suicide prevention efforts cannot be accomplished without involvement from those who are impacted most—veterans, and the CSOs in their lives

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

- The All Hands on Deck: Community Convening to Improve Research on Veteran Suicide Prevention (AHOD) project was designed to **create opportunities for concerned significant others (CSOs)** to share their voices and lived experiences related to veteran suicide prevention.
- **CSOs** are a consistent presence in veterans' lives who **provide ongoing emotional and physical support** in daily life and in times of crisis.
- When **CSOs** are able to engage with and support veterans' health care, they **can create a bridge across military and civilian healthcare cultures** and help increase understanding between the veteran and the provider.
- CSOs are an underutilized resource for identifying high risk behaviors and **supporting veterans who are at risk for suicide.**

WHO WAS INVOLVED AND HOW WAS THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

- Three main strategies were used to engage CSOs, researchers, and providers throughout this project: **1. Formation of an advisory group 2. Hosting a virtual two-day Community Convening** and **3. Hosting three monthly work groups with Convening participants.**
- **Each step of the process was informed by CSO feedback;** including development of convening topics, participating in working group discussions, and providing guidance on the creation of the **CSO Engagement Guide.**
- The advisory board included 16 members.
- The two-day virtual convening welcomed **78 participants from across the country,** including researchers, providers, and CSOs (veteran family members, spouses, and caregivers).
- The three work groups addressed the main themes from the Convening discussion with 7-14 participants in each meeting meeting. Groups met once a month from December through March.
- All data was collected and transcribed either through recording or through notes from researchers.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

- **System and provider limitations are a barrier to engaging/empowering CSOs** in veteran suicide prevention research and practice.
- Promising engagement/prevention strategies included the **need to ensure accessible, collaborative engagement from providers through transparent, person-centered care.**
- Researchers must involve veterans and CSOs in co-creating research questions while ensuring there is a **streamlined way to disseminate information that is gathered.**

ACTION STEPS

- Be **strategic with outreach** by building on partnerships and existing services.
- Establish and apply **collaborative approaches** to conducting research.
- Build **cultural competency on military informed care** for providers and researchers to honor the veterans' sense of identity.
- Improve systems of care, crisis management and safety planning by identifying **high risk behaviors** and **lethal means risk management.**

