

VA Needs Assessment Workshop: On-Site Summary of Breakout Discussions

Preliminary Draft

31 October 2007



Overarching Policy Issues for the Workshop

- **Impact of changes in the veteran population on need for, access to, and utilization of services**
- **Transition to the Community and to VA services and benefits**
- **Outreach to veterans, service members and their families about the availability of services and how to access them**

Workshop Objectives

- **For each of the overarching policy issues, workshop participants considered and explored the following in small group breakout sessions:**
 - **Underlying issues that must be addressed to support sound policy development**
 - **Information needed to make informed policy decisions**

Impact of Changes in Veteran Population

- **Costs**
 - What type of care to provide and who to serve
 - Capacity (staff and technology)
- **Quality**
 - How does VA provide effective quality care to groups with different needs? (recognizing one size does not fit all)
- **Access**
 - Potential uses of technology
- **Disparities across subgroups**
 - Race and ethnicity, language, conditions, culture, etc.

Impact of Changes in the Veteran Population

- **General Information Needs**

- For all veterans--VA users and non-users
- For veterans, service members (Guard and Reserves), families and survivors
- Longitudinal information to track veterans from specific periods over time
- More frequently updated information
- Rapid availability and better dissemination of new information on veterans

Impact of Changes in the Veteran Population

- **Specific Information Needs**

- Demographics
- Proximity to services
- Nature and severity of illness or injury
- Income
- Job status, education
- Conflict or peacetime service
- Access to technology
- Knowledge of VA services
- Other sources of care (private and gov't)
- Preferences for final benefits
- Factors affecting choices and decisions regarding use/nonuse of services

Transition to the Community and to VA Services

- **Transition is a process not an event**
 - DOD/VA coordination
 - Services available in the community
 - Linked to life events
- **Transition differs for National Guard and Reserves**
 - Need to understand the differences
 - Need to understand the impact of the differences

Transition to the Community and to VA Services

- **Timing and content of outreach at transition are key**
 - Matching information to need
- **Role of family members and other social support**
 - Recognize they play a key role
 - Need for outreach and information

Outreach

- **Clarify intent of outreach: education or targeted marketing?**
 - Who needs services? Who likely to use?
 - Clarify definition of “veterans” that are target for outreach
- **Balance security and privacy issues with need for access to information on individuals**
 - Need to assess veterans’ comfort level with sharing and accessing information (e.g. e-mail, phone or home addresses)

Outreach

- **Coordination and information sharing across agencies**
 - Support better understanding of DOD data sources potentially useful for outreach (e.g. data in DEERS)
- **Information needed to design tailored outreach for different veteran populations:**
 - Use/Non-use of VA services and benefits and why
 - Awareness and understanding of VA services and benefits
 - Barriers specific to use of mental health services
 - Better estimate of size of disabled 45-65 y.o. veteran population

Outreach

- **Information needed to expand and improve outreach:**
 - Perceptions of usefulness of past VA and DOD outreach/program information activities, including TAP and DTAP, by veterans and their family members
 - Preferred timing and methods for outreach
 - Identification of trusted community members (e.g. ministers, VSOs, other community leaders)
 - Messages and methods that can be effective to reach family members, other social supports, and survivors