

AHEC Veterans Mental Health Project

Speakers Needed

If you are using either of the curricula provided in this toolkit, these are the recommended speakers needed. See Speaker Criteria on page 2 of this document for more information on speaker expertise needs.

4-Hour Curriculum: 3 or 4 Different Speakers – one for each of these content areas:

1. Military Culture
2. Scope of the Issue and Behavioral Health
3. VA Overview
4. Boots on the Ground (can be the same speaker as Military Culture if necessary)

1-Hour Curriculum: 2 Different Speakers – one for each of these content areas:

1. Military Culture
2. Scope of the Issue and Behavioral Health

General Information

Speakers' introduction

Instead of taking time from the class to introduce each speaker, it helps to put a biographical paragraph on each speaker with your program handouts and reference it during the welcome.

Using Active Duty Speakers

Active duty speakers must get permission from their Command Officer (CO) to participate in the training. See the example of a permission letter included in the toolkit.

Vetting Speakers

Don't hesitate to vet your potential speakers. Ask them about their experience teaching the topic and content they are assigned. It is appropriate to ask for evaluations from previous presentations they have done. Review the talking points that are to be emphasized in the training (see list of 5 below), and be assured they agree with those points. If they are not using the slides provided in this toolkit, then review their slides at least **1 week** prior to the training so you know what they will say. If they tell you they want to "talk off the slides" – meaning talk about topics not included in the slides – get a list of those talking points as well. Inform them that if they start discussing a topic that 1) is not consistent with the goals of the training, or 2) not in agreement with the philosophy behind the training, that they will be asked to move the discussion on to a relevant subject.

Even if the speakers are using the prepared 1 hour or 4 hour curriculum, vet them as you would any other speaker.

There are 3 Required Topics to be included in all trainings:

1. Military culture
2. Identify service members – ask about military service
3. Behavioral/mental health issues related to deployment

There are 5 Take Home Points that are important for the participants to understand:

1. There should be no wrong door for a service member or family member looking for help.
2. Health professionals should know something about military culture.

3. Post deployment behavioral/mental health should not be just about PTSD.
4. Most post deployment issues among service members and their families are functional issues, not clinical issues.
5. Ask each patient/client “the question”...”Are you or someone in your family a current or former service member?

Make sure all speakers agree to the basics of the presentation. If there are any questions about the appropriateness of a speaker, contact Sheryl Pacelli at sherylpacelli@charter.net.

Content Specific Information

Color Guard

The presentation of colors is a powerful component to the beginning of the program. The color guard works in tandem with the singing/playing of the national anthem. Junior ROTC programs from high schools are usually happy to assist. Other organizations to contact are American Legion, local military post, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), your state’s National Guard, or even Boy Scout or Girl Scout Troops. Many participants comment on how much they appreciate the program's "opening ceremony".

Singer for National Anthem

Minor league sports teams often ask people in the community to sing the national anthem before the games, so that could be a resource. Professional sports teams may be willing to provide the singer, in which case you would announce at the training that the singer was provided courtesy of that team. High school singing groups and local or university music schools are another possibility. Church choir members have also been used. If a singer is not available, there are many YouTube videos of singers or an instrumental recording of the national anthem can be played.

Speaker Criteria

Introduction and Welcome

This speaker should be a representative of the sponsoring AHEC.

Scope of the Issue

This speaker can be a health professional with clinical experience with service members, guard, reserves or veterans and their families or a representative from an organization such as Veterans Service Organization (VSO), American Legion, VFW, VA, military base, National Guard/Reserve unit. The key is that he or she has credibility with the audience. For the 1-hour curriculum, this can be the same person who speaks on Behavioral Health.

Military Culture

This person should be someone in military uniform - active duty military or in the National Guard or Reserves. It is easier to start by contacting the National Guard or a Reserve Unit as they will have a local office/contact in or very near your community. If contacting a military base or unit, start with a Public Affairs/Public Relations office. Give them your request, and they can advise you. It is preferable to have an officer present this section, but not a requirement.

Behavioral Health

It is essential for this speaker to have clinical experience with service members, guard, reserves or veterans and their families. They may be employed by the Veterans Administration (VA), work in a counseling capacity on a military base (hospital, counseling center, deployment health center, chaplains office), in private practice or a

community agency. This may be the most challenging speaker to find and the most important one to assure a quality program.

Evaluation

This is facilitated by a representative of the sponsoring AHEC.

Overview of the VA (4-hour curriculum)

This speaker should come from the VA, or a VA outreach clinic/program. When contacting the VA, start with the Public Affairs Office. If they do not respond, contact the OIF/OEF Officer.

Overview of TRICARE (4-hour curriculum)

This presentation is done by following the link on the TRICARE slide that goes to a 23-minute webinar on this subject.

Call to Action (4-hour curriculum)

This is a discussion section about how civilian providers can change their practice to provide culturally appropriate treatment. The leader should be an AHEC staff person or the champion/leader for this project in the local area.

Boots on the Ground (4-hour curriculum)

This talk is a personal account of deployment to combat so the speaker needs to have experienced deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan at least once. Preference is for the speaker to be in uniform. The best presentations are given by those with a rank of Sergeant or under. The stories should answer 3 questions: What was life like for you during your deployment? What was your experience transitioning back to civilian life (if reserve, retired or discharged) or back to the base (if active duty)? What is your life like now? The ideal situation would be to find a couple who 1) have both been deployed so they can talk not only about their combat/military experience, but about the lives of their children and families before, during and after their deployment; or 2) one was deployed so they can talk about the transition to and from deployment from a military perspective and a civilian point of view. Contact VFW, National Guard stations (ask for a training NCO or a readiness NCO), Reserve stations, and military bases. Since many people are related to military members or know someone who is military and who has been deployed, ask your co-workers, friends or neighbors as well.