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VHA National Center for Healthcare  
Advancement and Partnerships

# Improving Veterans' Health and Well-being

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Veterans Health Administration  
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# A Note From the Nurse Executive



We at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships (HAP) hope you have had a safe and joyful start to the new year. VHA and its partner organizations are hard at work providing services to Veteran, families, caregivers, and other stakeholders in the communities. In an inspiring demonstration of resilience and adaptability, many partners have modified how they offer their services ([p. 6](#)) to reduce health risks during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

HAP also continues our work to protect and improve Veterans' health and well-being with a focus on providing access to positive social determinants of health (SDOH), which are the social, economic, and physical conditions in the environments where people live, work, socialize, and play. In this edition, we are highlighting VHA's social work services that support Veterans' quality of life by addressing SDOH ([p. 8](#)) in honor of National Social Work Month this March.

Partnerships are critical to HAP's focus on SDOH because outside organizations can help bridge gaps in existing VHA services—like helping Veterans access more healthy food ([p. 3](#)).

Another example is VHA's partnership with the Marcus Institute for Brain Health, which we are highlighting during National Brain Injury Awareness Month this March ([p. 5](#)). The partnership builds on [VHA's extensive](#) traumatic brain injury (TBI) care resources to provide Veterans a smooth transition back to VA care after the Marcus Institute's three-week, comprehensive outpatient program to treat TBIs and mental health concerns.

VHA partnerships can also establish best practices for Veteran health care and inspire others to take action—that is why HAP spreads the word about successful partnerships through the annual VHA National Community Partnership Challenge ([p. 10](#)) for the Office of the Under Secretary for Health.

HAP also addresses SDOH in Veteran communities with initiatives such as the Veteran Sponsor Partnership Network, which helps Service members transitioning home access employment housing and more. In this newsletter, we share the story of why one community organization in Staten Island's staff decided to join the network ([p. 4](#)).

At the heart of our office's work is helping VHA improve Veterans' health and improve trust with VA, be that through partnerships or health care advancement initiatives. In this newsletter, you can read about my work on a new Discovery, Education, and Affiliate Networks (DEAN) initiative ([p. 7](#)) to expand the pipeline of diverse clinicians and researchers as part of VA's goal to increase inclusion, diversity, equity, and access opportunities for and in VHA's workforce.

As we kick off the new year, HAP is excited for these and more opportunities to continue improving the health and well-being of all Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors.

In good health,  
Dr. Tracy L. Weistreich  
*Nurse Executive, VHA  
National Center for  
Healthcare Advancement  
and Partnerships*



# Veterans can learn about kidney disease during National Kidney Month and National Nutrition Month

March is National Kidney Month and National Nutrition Month—the perfect time for Veterans to learn how to manage and prevent kidney disease.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) offers [many resources](#) to help Veterans diagnosed with kidney disease. VHA also expands on those resources thanks to its partnership with the [American Kidney Fund](#) (AKF), a non-profit dedicated to supporting people with kidney disease at every stage in their journey and raising awareness of kidney disease. These March observances are an opportunity for Veterans to learn about how VHA and AKF can help with kidney disease and [nutrition resources](#).

“As a group, Veterans have higher rates of chronic kidney disease (CKD) than the general U.S. population,” said Michael Spigler, AKF’s vice president of patient services and kidney disease education.

Research [indicates](#) that one of every six Veterans is affected by kidney disease. There are currently 40,000 Veterans enrolled in VHA receiving care for the disease.

Kidney disease can cause kidneys to function improperly, causing waste and fluid to build up in the body. Over time, this build-up can cause heart, bone, and other health problems. If the disease is not managed, it can also lead to kidney failure, which means a person might require dialysis or a transplant.

VHA offers Veterans specialized kidney care, including [dialysis services](#) at many VA medical facilities nationwide, and VA [offers benefits](#) for patients. Veterans can now also read [nutrition guides](#) and [resources](#) for different stages of kidney disease on the AKF’s website. AKF also offers a [free kidney-focused recipe database](#) with [video demonstrations](#).

“Partnering with AKF has enabled VA to share its professional expertise with the professional



VHA offers Veterans specialized kidney care and nutrition resources.

community at large as well as augment and extend the reach of patient-centered educational resources to Veterans, family members, caregivers, and survivors,” said Georgeanna Bady of VHA’s National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships (HAP) which facilitates partnerships.

Spigler noted that close to 1,000 Veterans have downloaded AKF’s guides and resources. Additionally, AKF’s [Know Your Kidneys videos](#)

about kidney disease and diabetes have aired more than 1,700 times on the YouTube channel [Veteran News Network](#).

While kidney problems can affect anyone, people with diabetes and high blood pressure are at especially high risk because those conditions can cause kidney disease. The CDC [reports](#) that 1 in 10 Americans have diabetes and [nearly half](#) of U.S. adults have high blood pressure. Today, Spigler said kidney disease has become the fastest growing noncommunicable disease in the country.

Spigler added that with the right knowledge and resources, Veterans can manage and even prevent kidney problems. Spigler recommended that Veterans speak with their doctor about their kidney health, ask what tests they should have and how to develop a balanced, kidney-friendly diet.

“What you eat and drink affects your health,” he said. “A healthy diet, being active, and taking medicine can help manage diabetes and prevent health problems like kidney damage. Additionally, keeping your blood pressure under control can help prevent kidney disease or help keep it from getting worse.”

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*For more information on HAP’s initiatives and partnerships, please visit: [va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp](https://va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp).*

## One New York organization is joining a HAP initiative to help Service members transition home

One New York City organization has joined a growing network of community partners helping Service members and Veterans transition home.

Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships (HAP) created the Veteran Sponsor Partnership Network (VSPN) initiative to help Service members, Veterans, and their families' transition back into civilian communities after concluding their military service. The VSPN initiative helps transitioning Service members and recently separated Veterans connect with VA benefits and services, access community resources, and achieve goals about employment, housing, and more. Community organizations within this network are called [Community Integration Coordinators](#) (CICs).

CICs pair pre-transition Service members and Veterans joining their community with trained volunteer sponsors living in the area who can help them through the transition process. CICs also provide Service members and Veterans with information about their local community and resources they can access before, during, and after transition.

The [Staten Island Performing Provider System](#) (SIPPS) is a network of 70 local organizations dedicated to improving health care in Staten Island, a New York City borough. This has included developing a borough-wide Veteran suicide prevention program. Most recently, SIPPS joined the VSPN initiative after becoming a CIC in January 2021.

"When you are serving, you have a team you support above, below. You have a sense of your brothers and sisters covering your back," said SIPPS' Director Veterans Programs Michael Matthews. However, when

Service members transition home, this loss of support and direction can be destabilizing.

Helping transitioning Service members and Veterans join the community is key to SIPPS' suicide prevention program. [Research indicates](#) the risk for suicide was nearly three times higher immediately following separation than during active duty.

In 2020, SIPPS began a partnership with the city's Department of Veteran Services (DVS) as part of their efforts. That same year, SIPPS joined the VSPN initiative in December of 2020 by signing a Memorandum of Agreement with their [regional VHA system of care](#) for Veterans. Since January of 2021, six Staten Island sponsors have been trained and 6 civilian partners have been trained about military culture.

SIPPS also surveyed 2,137 Staten Island Veterans in 2021 about [social determinants of health](#)—the social, economic, and physical conditions in the environments where people live, work, and play. They used this survey to guide services to the Veteran community, including 31,476 meals delivered. The survey also helped connect 125 Veterans to health and social services, 23 to utility and income support, 19 to housing, and 16 to behavioral health.

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Matthews noted that SIPPS becoming a CIC and joining the VSPN taught him about the Veteran culture inside his own organization as well. He realized Veteran employees carried a strong work ethic and focus on teamwork that he appreciated in a new light.

"The process for me in getting involved in Veteran spaces has been quite incredible," he said, adding later that, "This is something really worthwhile getting involved in."

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*For more information about the VSPN, please visit: [va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/VSPN.asp](https://va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/VSPN.asp). For more information on HAP's initiatives and partnerships, please visit: [va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp](https://va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp).*

# During National Brain Injury Month, highlighting VHA partnerships supporting Veterans' recovery from head injuries

March is National Brain Injury Month and a good time to learn how Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and its community partners help Veterans with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs).

TBIs are caused by head trauma. They can result in people experiencing headaches, blurred vision, and difficulty remembering things, in addition to becoming easily angered or frustrated. VHA provides [clinical care](#) for Veterans diagnosed with TBIs and partners with community providers who also treat TBIs.

One such partner, the University of Colorado's [Marcus Institute for Brain Health](#) (MIBH), offers neurological and psychological treatment to Veterans with co-existing TBIs and psychological conditions in a no-cost, three-week outpatient program. The intensive program helps Veterans with mental and physical health and integrates spiritual, family, and artistic programming to help patients holistically.

"The constellation of symptoms associated with brain injury can have multiple physical and psychological components," said MIBH's Associate Director of Clinical Operations Tina Fanello. "These overlapping symptoms may significantly impact a Veteran's quality of life and teasing them out can be complicated, often requiring an interdisciplinary team to treat."

In May 2020, VHA embedded a VA Liaison for Healthcare at MIBH to ensure Veterans receive ongoing care at VHA after leaving the program. Since that time, there have been 168 referrals to the VHA Liaison and VHA staff have coordinated care for all Veterans who wished to receive ongoing treatment from their local VA medical facility. These referrals ensure eligible Veterans are educated about VHA health care and have care coordinated closest to their homes.

The VA Liaison also ensures MIBH has appropriate access to VA or other medical records necessary to inform Veterans' care at MIBH.

The VA Liaison has provided more than 258 clinical



An art therapy piece titled *Burdens We Carry*, made by MIBH patient Mason H., U.S. Army EOD.

consultations and 127 educational briefings to ensure that MIBH staff are educated about VA care, benefits, and services.

Veterans are at a higher risk than the general population for brain injuries from their exposure to combat and military training exercises. The Military Health System [reported](#) nearly 414,000 TBIs among U.S. Service members worldwide between 2000 and late 2021. More than 185,000 Veterans who use VHA for their health care have been [diagnosed](#) with at least one TBI. The majority of those TBIs were classified as mild. TBI and its associated conditions are also a significant cause of disability outside of military settings.

From when the MIBH began in May 2017 through September 2021, the program served a total of 353 Veterans and anticipates serving another 324 in 2022.

VA Liaison for Healthcare to MIBH, Catherine Schmidt, said MIBH's residential component helps Veterans. "They are there solely to focus on their mild to moderate TBI and underlying mental health concerns, versus having to do that and maybe go home at the end of every day and dealing with the day-to-day aspects of life which can be extremely overwhelming," she said.

After treatment, Fanello said many MIBH alumni have written to share how the treatment improved their lives and relationships with loved ones. "We frequently get letters from people sharing pictures of them reengaging with their families, vacation trips that they've not been able to take for 20 years with their family," she said.

Veterans can be referred to MIBH from their VA or civilian medical provider. Veterans can also request to participate in the program themselves by calling (303) 724-4824.

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*For more information about MIBH, please visit: [mi4bh.org](https://mi4bh.org). For more information about the VA Liaison Program, please visit: [va.gov/POST911VETERANS/index.asp](https://va.gov/POST911VETERANS/index.asp). For more information on HAP's initiatives and partnerships, please visit: [va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp](https://va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp).*

# VHA Nutrition and Food Services partners with MAZON and FRAC to help Veterans and military families struggling with food insecurity

In 2021, a [study](#) among Veterans showed that food insecurity was associated with medical- and trauma-related events and unmet social needs. This demonstrated the importance of screening Veterans and military families with questions about their food security, so health care providers can offer interventions and support more frequently if needed.



insecurity,” Dr. Utech said. “FRAC has been especially helpful in providing data, statistics, and policy direction.”

The winter months can be challenging for families due to a smaller supply of fresh produce available, utility bills increasing in colder regions due to heating homes, and gift giving during the holiday season. Recently, there is also the additional pressure and economic losses related to the coronavirus

pandemic. Dr. Utech shared that it is common for families to spend larger amounts of money on cleaning and sanitation supplies to help keep their families and home safe.

By using screenings, NFS is confronting these challenges and providing programs and resources to Veterans who health care providers determine are food insecure. The office also plans to release new toolkits early this year on how to navigate food insecurity and will recommend connecting Veterans to dietitians for nutrition education.

“We’re looking forward to providing more guidance to the field on establishing partnerships, whether they’re food distribution programs directly or more tailored interventions such as fruit and vegetable prescription programs,” Dr. Utech said.

The VHA video series, #VetResources Check-In, completed a video on NFS and its work surrounding food insecurity and social determinants of health. View the video to learn more on the topic here: [veterans.us.com/vetresources-check-in-food-insecurity-and-social-determinants-of-health](https://veterans.us.com/vetresources-check-in-food-insecurity-and-social-determinants-of-health).

To become food secure, individuals need access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. Screening for food security is an important step in the clinical workspace and takes place before Veterans are connected to treatments and resources.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) took steps to improve the screening process for Veterans through its partnerships with [MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger](#) (MAZON) and [Food Research & Action Center](#) (FRAC). The partnership between VHA and MAZON—formalized September 2020—increases awareness about the risks associated with food insecurity and options to address it through outreach. With VHA’s collaborations with MAZON and FRAC, the partnerships have improved the nutrition, health, and well-being of Veterans and military families.

VHA also has existing [resources created to promote food security](#), such as [nutrition tips for Veterans without a home](#) and [food delivery services](#).

“The partnerships [MAZON and FRAC] have been very important to bring us the voice of the customer [Veterans],” said Dr. Anne Utech, the national executive director for VHA’s [Nutrition and Food Services](#) (NFS). Dr. Utech’s office manages a national partnership with MAZON and an informal partnership with FRAC.

“MAZON brings in perspectives from the Veteran, and from their organization as an advocate group for what needs to be done as a systems-wide approach to food

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*National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships (HAP) supports these and other partnerships within VHA. To learn more about how HAP builds effective partnerships across VHA, please visit: [va.gov/healthpartnerships](https://va.gov/healthpartnerships).*

# Leverage diversity of VHA's workforce to better serve Veterans

Veterans are diverse individuals with different pasts, life experiences, and origins who have a shared history of military service and culture. To honor that and provide the best service, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Veterans Health Administration (VHA)



promote inclusion, diversity, equity, and access (IDEA) among current and future employees. The VHA [Office of Discovery, Education, and Affiliate Networks](#) (DEAN) has several initiatives to increase the pipeline of scientists, researchers, academic staff, and clinicians and raise awareness of the contributions of this culturally rich future and current staff members.

Dr. Tracy Weistreich is the Nurse Executive of VHA's National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships (HAP) and is serving as the executive sponsor of the DEAN IDEA team. She said, "DEAN is exploring multiple avenues to increase the diversity of the workforce of today and the future, ensuring the Veterans' needs are addressed in a culturally sensitive and informed manner, reflective of the diverse population we serve."

One initiative targets recruitment activities across multiple minority serving institutions. The Office of Academic [Affiliation](#), the largest U.S. education and training program for health professionals, has had summits to increase awareness about available scholarships and employment positions. The Office of Research and [Development](#), one of the nation's leaders in health research, has a scientist training program and participates in raising awareness about research opportunities across the country with VHA. Both offices within DEAN have been leaders in hiring and promoting diversity across VHA. VHA is taking additional steps to diversify its workforce, including analyzing VHA employee and patient demographics, developing a plan to integrate IDEA values into talent acquisition and executive coaching, and expanding communications into more communities nationwide.

Another initiative involves collaborating with the

[Workforce](#) Management and Consulting team to update language, pictures, and distribution of written recruitment materials to include research, clinical practice, academic work, and other roles that are available within DEAN and VHA. Team members finished

updating a series of brochures in August to include the IDEA values as a priority. Pictures include current employees and highlight the varied backgrounds of the staff. Recruitment fairs include current employees within DEAN to describe the benefits and resources available to interested applicants.

A third initiative includes working with the Center for [Development](#) and Civic Engagement to promote awareness of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) opportunities for high school students. Raising awareness of the diverse employment opportunities within VHA may help these students decide to pursue a STEM career. While this initiative is in pilot phase, VHA anticipates significant growth in the future.

Within DEAN, HAP is continuing to focus on underserved and underrepresented populations through partnerships with nongovernmental organizations to increase awareness of VA services and augment services VA may not be able to legally provide. Additionally, these partnerships help share the importance of Veteran-informed care, such as with [the American College of Emergency Physicians](#). HAP ensures these collaborations allow VHA to continue its outreach and [training](#) about suicide prevention among Veteran populations, community providers, caregivers, and the public.

Ultimately, Weistreich said the goal is to ensure that VHA recruit and retain the best, brightest talent to continue to provide all Veterans with the quality and compassionate care they have earned and deserve.

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*For more information on HAP's initiatives and partnerships, please visit: [va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp](https://va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp).*

# March is National Professional Social Work Month: VA Social Workers supports Veterans' quality of life

Each year, National Professional Social Work Month recognizes the dedication and empathy social workers across the country bring to Veterans and other people they assist. With more than 17,000 Masters-prepared social workers across the enterprise, the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) is the largest employer of social workers in the nation.



VA social workers focus their efforts and training on the [social determinants of health](#) (SDOH), which are conditions in the environments where Veterans live, learn, work, play, worship, and age. Some positive SDOH, such as opportunities for physical activity, socialization, employment, and food security, are connected to better health and quality-of-life outcomes for Veterans and reduced risk of suicide.

“Our goal is to really get in-depth and have a big-picture understanding,” said Ms. Jennifer Silva, the national social work program manager for the [National Social Work Patient Aligned Care Team](#) (PACT) [Staffing Program](#) at VA. PACT social workers implemented the VA Social Work Practice Model in 2010 with a more dedicated approach to SDOH.

The model helps social workers focus on six main SDOH—access to care, psychological status, functional status, housing, financial security, and social support. These domains help social workers determine if Veterans are at risk for any challenges or barriers and the best ways to support them, their families, and their caregivers.

Ms. Silva explained that if a Veteran has challenges in one area of their life, it can lead to challenges in another. For example, if a Veteran loses their job (the “employment” SDOH), they might not have enough

money (the “financial security” SDOH) to buy enough healthy food (the “food security” SDOH).

By incorporating this proactive outreach approach, social workers can provide care and treatment options before Veterans experience crisis situations. These proactive approaches focus on the Veterans’ [Whole Health](#), which is a health care approach that prioritizes what is important to

a person based on their values, needs, and goals, not just the health care issues they have.

“We are focused on making sure that we respect their individual preferences,” Ms. Silva said. “We see ourselves as partners in care and not the person who is telling them what to do.”

The Whole Health approach fosters an understanding of what is happening in Veterans’ physical body, mind, spirit, surroundings, and relationships.

“We want them to have self-determination and really give us a solid understanding of what they value and what is important so that we can best create a plan for them,” Ms. Silva said.

A Veteran, their family, or their caregivers might find themselves in similar challenging situations and need support with SDOH. Take a moment to reach out to see how they’re doing and remind them of the [resources](#) available through the VA including [fact sheets](#) and [research](#).

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*The Veterans Health Administration’s [National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships](#) (HAP) helps Veterans access positive SDOH through partnerships that offer food security, social connectedness, employment, financial security, and health care. To learn more about HAP partnerships, please visit [va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/partnerships.asp](#).*

# A U.S. Navy Reservist shares how Pet Partners positively impacted her life during the coronavirus pandemic

Ms. Jenny Peters, a U.S. Navy Reservist and volunteer animal handler, joined [Pet Partners](#) in January 2020 and registered as a therapy team with her dog Clayton, a vizsla. Only a few months later, the coronavirus pandemic changed how therapy teams, facilities, and clients interact with one another.

Due to COVID-19, the non-profit organization adjusted its services so therapy teams could continue providing Veterans and community members with animal-assisted interventions. They began offering services—like virtual and window visits, parades, and written letters—that provide relief for people recovering from the effects of the pandemic.

“When you first leave the service, there are a lot of hardships regarding figuring out who you are,” Ms. Peters said. “There is a bit of an identity crisis that occurs there, especially when you are used to being around the same people all day. Working with Clayton brought me a lot of that camaraderie that I was looking for after I got out of the service.”

Since joining Pet Partners, Ms. Peters completed multiple virtual and in-person visits with children in school and at a local assisted living facility. She shared that her visits to the assisted living facility allowed her to connect with other Veterans and help them heal through time spent with animals and open discussion.

“It has been nice because not only do they like hanging out with Clayton, but it also gives me the opportunity to interact with them and give them a chance to kind of discuss what they have gone through with somebody who actually understands and has been there,” Ms. Peters said.

With additional guidance and information about COVID-19, residents feel more comfortable shaking Clayton’s paw and

interacting with him. Pet Partners also offers COVID-19 [resources](#), so everyone involved in Pet Partners activities can remain safe.

In between visits, Ms. Peters continues socializing with the residents by emailing them photos and stories about Clayton, so they know they are always thinking of them and are excited for their next time together.

“It is nice to go out in the community and do something for somebody else,” Ms. Peters said.

The [Veterans Health Administration](#) (VHA) [partnered](#) with Pet Partners in 2019 to share the benefits of the human-animal bond to improve Veterans’ quality of life and social engagement by increasing access to animal-assisted interventions, including animal-assisted therapies and other activities and events. They also offer a [Working with Veterans](#) course that highlights strategies used to interact with individuals experiencing symptoms from posttraumatic stress disorder.

The partnership aims to bring Veteran patients the benefits of the human-animal bond, which can positively influence their health and well-being.

[Research](#) shows that human contact with animals

can lead to lower blood pressure, lessened anxiety and pain, and decreased feelings of loneliness and isolation. As of today, 162 Pet Partners volunteers self-report as being Veterans.



Jenny and Clayton after passing their evaluation to become a Pet Therapy Team.

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*The VHA National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships (HAP) supports the partnership with Pet Partners. To learn more about HAP partnerships, visit [va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/partnerships.asp](https://va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/partnerships.asp).*

*For more information about the therapy animal program and how to become a handler, visit [petpartners.org/volunteer](https://petpartners.org/volunteer).*

## 2022 VHA National Community Partnership Challenge is accepting submissions until March

Submissions are open for this year's Veteran Health Administration (VHA) national partnership challenge, which will culminate in awards from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary and VHA Under Secretary for Health.

The Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) annual National Community Partnership Challenge (CPC) is now accepting submissions from VHA employees until March 11. The 2022 VHA National CPC will recognize three winners this fall who demonstrate how VHA staff and community organizations successfully partner to meet Veterans' needs and honor a foundation of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access (IDEA).

"The CPC is designed to highlight 'best practices' across VHA to address and meet gaps that have been identified," said HAP Health Systems Specialist Georgeanna Bady, who has managed CPC for the past four years.



Georgeanna Bady

Each year, the CPC highlights partnerships based on a different theme. In 2019, for example, the CPC focused on partnerships that demonstrated increasing Veterans' trust in VHA. In 2020, the CPC theme was [social determinants of health](#)—the social, economic, and physical conditions in the environments where people live, work, and play. Last year's theme focused on [adaptability in our changing world](#).

This year, the theme is **G.R.O.W.**: how do these partnerships show a **Goal-oriented** approach to collaborations? How do they build **Resiliency** across social determinants of health? How do they create **Opportunities** to increase access to care or services

through an innovative approach? And how do they improve the **Well-being** of Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors?

As of the end of January, HAP had already received several submissions to the Challenge and expects many more to come based on the 44 entries last year. When it comes to submitting an entry, Ms. Bady recommended that VHA staff focus on how their partnership is benefiting Veterans and VA's mission. Ms. Bady also recommended that staff:

- Review submission guidelines
- Address the G.R.O.W. theme
- Explain how their partnership demonstrates a culture of acceptance (IDEA)
- Document lessons learned and achievements

"Over the years, the CPC has been able to share those best practices across VHA in order to take the guesswork out of where to begin addressing a Veteran need or how to shape a community partnership that addresses this need," she said.

Since it began in 2014, CPC winners included a [Californian partnership](#) with a civil legal aid provider to help Veteran patients address underlying legal issues like access to benefits and housing and a [South Carolina partnership](#) aimed at preventing Veteran suicide by coordinating post-discharge care for Veterans who had checked in with a community hospital for inpatient mental health care.

"CPC allows VHA staff to grow as a community of health care systems working to achieve the best for Veterans," said Ms. Bady. "It allows staff to realize they are not in the struggle alone but have partners within striving and moving toward the same mission and who are willing to share the journey to make it better for Veterans and for each other."

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*For more information about the 2022 VHA CPC, please visit: [www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/docs/VSPN\\_CP\\_FactSheet.pdf](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/docs/VSPN_CP_FactSheet.pdf). For more information on HAP's initiatives and partnerships, please visit: [va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp](http://va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp).*



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
National Center for Healthcare  
Advancement and Partnerships

To share a partnership opportunity or consult with HAP on a non-monetary partnership, please contact our office via email: [VHA\\_Partnerships@va.gov](mailto:VHA_Partnerships@va.gov)  
[va.gov/healthpartnerships](http://va.gov/healthpartnerships)