

# Have You Ever Served in the Military?

*One question can make all the difference.*

## Health Care & Medical Services

### WHY ASK THE QUESTION?

Providers, when gathering patient history,

**ASK THE QUESTION: "Have you or a family member ever served in the military?"**

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### CARE FOR THOSE WHO SERVE BY:

Building critical rapport with a reluctant patient who served.

Understand the relationship between military experiences and medical symptoms. Collaborate effectively with military-veteran healthcare providers.

Healthcare professionals encounter veterans, service members, and military families, but they don't always know it. Veterans do not always identify themselves. They can be proud and stoic, and tend to be more comfortable helping others than asking for help themselves. They may minimize the effect of military service on their health, which can lead to missed diagnoses and incomplete treatment. The only way to be sure to find out about their military service - and its relationship to their health - is to ASK!



**WHEN THE ANSWER IS "YES,"** you may consider thanking them for their service. You may also then be able to find out more about the service experience to facilitate appropriate diagnosis, treatment planning, and referrals.

Asking further questions will also help you:

- **Build rapport and demonstrate interest and cultural competency**
- **Link to any needed military and veteran resources and referrals, including VA and non-VA programs**
- **Identify any physical, medical, and/or mental health issues related to service experience that will need further diagnostic work or treatment, or will impact treatment goals**
- **Explore areas of functioning in need of support as well as individual and family strengths, supports, and resources**
- **Address perceived barriers to seeking support and services**

Following are some questions that could be asked in the context of gathering information for more effective referrals and services. Pay attention to non-verbal cues, and show respect, curiosity, and empathy. Also be aware that responsiveness and effective follow-up are critical to building trust and rapport.

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- When did you/your family member serve? What service era? Which branch?
- What was your/your family member's job while serving?
- What is your/your family member's discharge type/status?
- In what ways may your healthcare needs be connected to your/your family member's military service?
- Did you/your family member experience deployment?
- If yes, where did you/your family member deploy?
- If yes, did you/your family member experience enemy fire or witness casualties?
- Did you/your family member lose a close friend in combat?
- Were you/your family member wounded, injured, hospitalized, or do you/your family member have any other physical problems related to military service?
- Do you/your family member have a service-connected disability or condition?
- Were you/your family member exposed to excessive noise, chemicals/gases/pesticides, explosions, or other hazardous substances?
- Have you/your family member ever experienced Military Sexual Trauma?
- Have you/your family member ever experienced problems with anxiety/depression/anger management/substance use?
- Have you/your family member ever had thoughts of killing yourself or harming others?
- Are you/your family member enrolled/connected to the VA or other veteran resources or organizations for support and services?
- What needs for support do you have that are not yet met?
- What reservations did you/your family member have about coming in to seek assistance?

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**Please note: This is not a monitored site so should you or someone you know be experiencing thoughts of doing harm to oneself, contact (800) 273-8255, for Veterans press 1.**

