

# Have You Ever Served in the Military?

*One question can make all the difference.*

## Law Enforcement & First Responders

### SERVE THOSE WHO SERVE BY:

- Keeping veterans, families, and communities safe in times of personal and family crisis.
- Building trust and rapport with service members in difficult situations.
- Partnering with other providers to help military spouses in crisis.



### Why Ask the Question?

Police officers, fire fighters, EMT's, and other first responders encounter veterans, service members, and military family members, 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-even when they are in some kind of trouble or crisis. Military life can impact an individual's safety in many ways and also the safety of others. The best way to identify and respond effectively to service members and veterans is to ASK!

### Ask the Question

When you respond to a situation-on the road, at a home, or anywhere else, ask, **"Have you or a family member ever served in the military?"**

When the answer is "Yes," you may consider thanking them for their service. You may then also be able to increase your understanding of the situation, and help them identify veteran-specific programs, services, and benefits. Asking further questions will also help you to:

- Build rapport and demonstrate interest and cultural competency
- Identify potential risk factors and better ensure the safety of all involved parties in difficult or escalated situations
- Identify emotional and psychological issues that may impact how best to approach an individual in distress (i.e. how to transport safely while recognizing triggers related to being restrained)
- Link to any needed military and veteran resources and referrals, including both VA and non-VA programs
- Identify individual and family support systems 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?**

- Build rapport with the parent and child and demonstrate interest and cultural competency
- Identify family supports and resources as well as needs for support not yet met

**In what ways may your need for services here be connected to you/your family member's military service?**

- Identify any deployment-related stressors on the child and family, as well as any related behavioral, emotional, social, and academic implications for the child
- Explore deployment and reintegration challenges

**Has your family had a family member deploy or have military duty away from home? If yes, when?**

- Identify any deployment-related stressors on the child and family as well as any related behavioral, emotional, social, and academic implications for the child
- Explore deployment and reintegration challenges

**Are you/your family member enrolled/connected to the VA or other veteran resource or organizations for support or services?**

- Link to any needed military and veteran resources and benefits, including both VA and non-VA programs
- Identify family supports and resources as well as needs for support not yet met

**What types of support are needed but not yet met?**

- Link to any needed military and veteran resources and benefits, including both VA and non-VA programs
- Identify family supports and resources as well as needs for support not yet met

**What reservations did you/your child have about coming in to seek support and assistance? Is there anything that might be a barrier to further seeking assistance?**

- Address perceived barriers to the child or parent(s) in seeking support

**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.**

