

Ask the Question:

"Did you or a family member serve?"

A significant barrier for military-veteran populations when seeking and accessing services is feeling **misunderstood** by those providing services.



The first step in bridging the gap of understanding is identifying whether an individual served our state and country.



With Texans asking, "Did you serve?" within the context of their work and communities, they are committing to supporting those who have sworn in on behalf of the United States. This initiative aims to normalize asking all if they have served and not relying on assumptions. In increasing the frequency of opportunities individuals have to self-disclose their service, the military-veteran population can experience more military-culturally competent services and ensure individuals receive the ample services their service grants them.



Interested in joining the initiative?



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**Ask the Question
Texas Statewide Initiative**

One question can make all the difference.



Veterans Mental Health Department



AT A GLANCE

Transitioning out of the military into a new community means leaving your military culture and relationships behind and entering new communities, circles of friends and employment.

In asking “Have you or an immediate family member ever served in the military?” you begin building rapport and understanding of the unique situations the military-veteran population will face. Both are critical steps in developing genuine relationships leading to community building or successful provisions of services and resources.



How to ask?

USE – “Did you or a family member serve?”
“Have you ever served in the military?”

Avoid asking “Are you a **veteran**?”

↘ **Why?**

Not all who served are considered a “Veteran” for various reasons, so asking this may create a sense of exclusion, push the individual away or shut down the conversation.

Who to ask?

Everyone! Men, women, young adults, older adults, people with disabilities....ask anyone and everyone.

This can be as easy as asking a coworker in casual conversation, or incorporating the question into a membership application, healthcare appointment or screening etc.

Why ask?

Veterans may not always identify themselves, but many will be open to disclosing their service, as this is usually a large component of their life experience. Additionally, others (including women and/or minorities) may not consider themselves a “veteran” and therefore, not identify themselves if asked, “Are you a veteran?”

When the answer is “Yes,” you may consider thanking them for their service. You may also then be able to find out more about their military experience which can help you and your group to provide the best possible services, support, and resources.

Some additional tips when asking:

- Ask follow up questions. See the accompanying “Texans Ask + Follow Up” guide
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues
- Show respect, curiosity and empathy

GET STARTED

REFLECT on where this question may fit into your day-to-day life or work processes. Can this question be incorporated into greeting new visitors or members to your local faith or community gathering? Does the question have merit in the clinical setting as you build rapport with a client or patient?

COMMIT to asking the question where you can, when interfacing with peers, friends, clients, even family members are a great place to start.

FAMILIARIZE yourself with the resources or services available in your area to the military-veteran population and have that information on hand.

ATTEND a Military Cultural Competency or Military Trauma-Informed Care training, provided by the Veterans Mental Health Department of TVC. Learn more and submit a Training Request Form online!

<https://veteransmentalhealth.texas.gov/>



Questions?

Reach out and let our team assist!