

# ASK THE QUESTION

Texas Statewide Initiative

LET'S CARE FOR THOSE WHO SERVE.

**Ask : "Have you or a family member served?"**

Healthcare professionals may encounter veterans, service members, and military families, and never even know it.

Veterans, military servicemen and women AND family members do not always identify themselves. This may be due to pride or hesitancy to volunteer information, or a tendency 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 or connection - and its relationship to their health - is to ASK!



## WHEN THE ANSWER IS "YES"...

Consider thanking them for their service.

Also consider asking follow-up questions to find out more about their service experience or connection. This may lead to ease and accuracy of diagnosis, more effective treatment planning, and beneficial outcomes.

## Asking further questions will assist with:

- Building rapport and demonstrate interest and cultural competency
- Connection to any needed military and veteran resources and referrals, including VA and non-VA programs
- Identifying any physical, medical, and/or mental health issues related to service experience that will need further diagnostic work, treatment, or will impact treatment goals
- Exploring which areas of functioning are in need of support
- Identifying individual and family strengths, supports, and resources
- Addressing perceived barriers to seeking support and services

Not sure what follow-up questions to ask? Take a look at some examples provided on the other side of this sheet.

*One question can make all the difference.*

**TEXANS ASK :**

"Have you or a family member ever served in the military?"

# HEALTHCARE + MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

## LET'S CARE FOR THOSE WHO SERVE.

When gathering patient history, ask: "DID YOU SERVE?"

Asking follow up questions can provide 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.

### Follow-Up Questions

- When did you/your family member serve? What service era?
- Which branch did you/they serve in?
- 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?



[veteransmentalhealth.texas.gov](http://veteransmentalhealth.texas.gov)