INSIGHTS INFORMING THE CONCERNS OF POST-9/11 VETERANS AND FAMILIES

Toolkit Element 1:
Effectively Navigating the Landscape of Veteran-Serving Nonprofits
**Be Informed – Own Your Transition:**

*A Tool for Navigating the Landscape of Non-Profits, Serving Veterans and their Families*

The number of nonprofit organizations that currently provide services to veterans and their families is staggering. In fact, the universe of veteran-serving nonprofits is so vast and varied, that you could easily become overwhelmed by the task of identifying those specific organizations – and specific services – that are ‘right for you.’ As a result veterans often have many questions, which usually start with:

**What resources are available from non-profit providers?**

**Where do I start looking?**

**What should I expect?**

One on hand, it’s true to say that only you can answer these questions. Your situation is unique, and one-size-fits-all solutions are unlikely.

It’s for this very reason, however, that it’s critically important to become an *informed consumer* of the resources available to you from the non-profit community. Specifically, you need to understand how to access those resources, and importantly you also need to understand ‘what good service looks like,’ when engaging with a non-profit service provider. For example, it’s true that many veteran-serving nonprofits have similar and generalizable characteristics, and often focus on similar activities and services – but that’s not to say that all these organizations are created equal.

As such, it follows that in order to realize that greatest benefit from what the universe of non-profit service providers has to offer, you need to become an empowered consumer of those services – and the tool we’ve designed and presented here is meant for exactly for this purpose.

Specifically, below you’ll find a customizable roadmap, designed as a pathway to becoming an informed consumer of the landscape of services available to veterans by the nonprofit community. To be clear, this is not a tool focused on ‘ranking’ nonprofit organizations themselves, but instead our focus is on you, your family, and your situation. That is to say that the tool itself is based on the premise that, as a consumer of nonprofit service, you have both the right and the obligation to ask (and have answered) tough questions about the organizations you choose to engage with, and the services, resources, and care offered by those organizations to you and your family.

To that end, the tool is organized around themes and questions; that is, for eight themes typically representative of the types of nonprofit organizations serving veterans and their families (i.e., education, employment, housing, legal services, etc.), the tool provides an overview of the type and nature of services and supports typically offered by nonprofit organizations focused within each thematic area, and information related to how you’d typically go about accessing those services. The tool also offers a ninth theme – inclusion – addressing issues and concerns often uniquely characteristic of this generation of veterans and their families, which high-performing providers will consider when designing services.

Importantly however, the tool is designed to answer the question: *What should I expect from a high-quality, impactful nonprofit, serving the needs of veterans and their families?*

To address this important question, we suggest an actionable, consumer checklist – in the form of a series of focused questions – designed to help you make smart and informed decisions about how to best navigate the sea of veteran-serving nonprofits, across each of the nine themes considered. These
questioning scripts are based on extensive case studies of veteran-serving nonprofits across the U.S., and are designed to be both specific to the type of organization you may engage (i.e. education, employment, housing, legal services, etc.), and also to the nature of the service or support you seek.

As with any tool or resource of this nature, it’s impossible to account for the great variety and diversity represented across the universe of nonprofit organizations serving veterans. This is to say, you should consider this tool as a single resource, in what should be a growing toolbox of resources positioning you as an informed and empowered consumer of the myriad of services, resources, and care offered by the nonprofit community, to you and members of your family.

*Disclaimer: references to specific nonprofits do not constitute an endorsement of services, but rather as examples of the nature and type of potential resources available. Thus, mention of these nonprofit actors serves to give a reference and/or starting point for a veteran seeking that specific service, but not as an endorsement of a particular entity or organization.*

Be Informed – Own Your Transition:

*A Tool for Navigating the Landscape of Non-Profit Organizations Serving Veterans and their Families*

**Provider Service Theme: Employment**

Employment is the #1 cited transition concern of veterans, and as a result a broad range of nonprofits have formed to assist veterans prepare for the civilian world of work. While many of these organizations have similar names (i.e. Hire Our Heroes, Hire Heroes USA, Heroes 2 Hired, etc.), or focus on specific industry sectors (i.e. GetSkills2Work; manufacturing, Veterans on Wall Street; financial services, etc.), be aware that these organizations often offer very different services and supports. As such, it’s critical to understand the nature of the services provided by employment-focused nonprofits serving veterans, and to also match the services provided to your individual situation, aspirations, and needs.

In what follows you will find a listing of the services and supports typical and characteristic of employment-focused nonprofits serving veterans, accompanied by a questioning script designed to provide insight into the nature of the services provided.

- **Provider Service Type: Employment & Job Fairs**

  Since 9/11, one of the ways that the private-sector has mobilized in support of veteran employment, is by hosting job fairs. In fact, over the past 10 years there have been hundreds, if not thousands, of job fairs conducted throughout the U.S., for the purpose of connecting veterans with employers seeking to hire veteran talent. Many veterans have benefited from this initiative. At the same time, it’s also true that many veterans also report frustrations with some job fair programs, as misrepresenting the scope and scale of the employment opportunities available to veterans.

  The key to benefiting from participating in a job fair, it to fully understand the nature of the event (they are not all created equal), and to prepare (and set expectations) accordingly. Some class-leading practices that may serve as an indication of the quality of the event include: 1) having veterans submit resumes before the event for pre-screening, 2) requiring that employers in attendance come to the event with relevant and specific job openings, and 3) providing the opportunity for employers to do
on-site interviewing and/or interview preparation sessions with veteran applicants. One example
organization conducting extensive job and hiring fairs is the US Chamber of Commerce, as part of their
Hiring Our Heroes initiative.

- **Questions to ask (prior to attending):**
  - If your organization has held a job fair in the past, can you share information about
    past employment outcomes stemming from the prior event?
  - How many employers will be represented? How many hires do you anticipate to be
    made on site? Within 90 days?
  - Will I submit my resume prior to the job fair, and how will it be used? Will it be
    shared with employers prior to the job fair to set interviews at the event? Will it be
    used to screen for matches to specific opportunities or companies?
  - Do any of the companies attending have veteran-specific hiring practices and
    processes, as opposed to just generally expressing interest in hiring veterans? If so,
    which companies?
  - What percentage of companies attending the job fair have specific positions they
    are looking to hire for, as opposed to general recruiting and networking?
  - Are the companies prepared to conduct interviews on-site? How many interview
    slots will be available for each company?
  - How many companies will accept complete employment applications and/or
    resumes at the event? Will those that don’t refer directly to recruiters and hiring
    managers?

- **Provider Service Type: Resume Writing & Interview Preparation**
  Many veterans struggle to communicate their military skills and experiences into language that an
  employer can understand – and they sometimes misperceive this difficulty in communication as
  employers not valuing their experience. Many organizations exist to bridge this divide – some of which
  both educate employers and work with veterans to communicate what they have done in the military
  on paper, as well as coach the veteran as to how to dress for an interview, how to describe their
  experiences, common courtesies in the business world (and military jargon to avoid), etc. Some
  indications of the quality of the service include the level of one-on-one interaction, post-training
  support, and the relevant experiences/background of the service providers and counselors. One
  example organization providing these services is Hire Heroes USA.

- **Questions to Ask:**
  - Can you describe for me the process of assisting veterans with resume writing and
    interview preparation?
  - Is there a cost to use the services? If so, how much, and how do they compare to
    the no-cost services being offered by other organizations, including the Transition
    Assistance Program or Workforce Development Programs?
  - What are your outcomes for those you have served in the past? How many
    veterans have you served and what percentage of them have found employment
    after receiving your services? Do you have testimonials from prior participants?
• Do you employ a professional counselor/interviewer on your staff? What is the experience level of your staff? What educational qualifications and professional credentials do they hold?
• Is the resume assistance personalized and holistic or will you provide general training to a broad audience? If general training, is there an opportunity for individual feedback and resume review?
• Can you describe for me the kind of interview training you provide?
  - Are your trainings taped or recorded to review afterwards with a counselor or interviewer? Will I receive a copy of the recording?
  - What type of feedback will I receive?
• How long does the interview preparation take? Is it personalized and tailored specifically to a certain job opening, or is it general to the broad job search process? Is it specific to me and my experience and qualifications?
• In addition to resume and interview training, do you help with planning my transition and the next steps toward my civilian career?
• Do you help with my actual job search, or do your services end when resume and interview training concludes?
• Do you have a database of companies or workforce agencies and other organizations you will link me to for specific job opportunities? Can you describe the process of pairing me with these opportunities? Do you have access to the local Workforce Development Office job opportunity listings?

**Provider Service Type: Career Mentorship/Career Planning**

Many veterans or transitioning service members have difficulty determining what their next steps should be – whether because they are unaware of the range of options that they are qualified for or because they may find it difficult to imagine another career that will provide them the same level of fulfillment as their military service. Other veterans know what industry they would like to work in, but they feel that they could use some advice in understanding how to best network into the role or position themselves for success in the application and interview process. In either case, transitioning veterans would benefit from advice with networking, negotiating salary and benefits, and learning or integrating into corporate culture. Another category of veterans may already find themselves in an industry, but would like a mentor at their company or in their industry to help them learn how to best advance through and manage their career path. For these veterans, a range of options exist—veteran-specific alumni groups at their colleges or universities, veteran affinity groups within their companies, or nonprofits which offer to connect veterans with professional mentors. Veterans should be wary of any organizations which charge them for such services. One example organization providing mentorship services is American Corporate Partners.

➢ **Questions to ask:**

  - Can you describe for me the composition of your staff? What are their qualifications for working with veteran mentoring programs?
  - Do your staff have vocational/career counseling experience or other relevant credentials and experience? Will they understand my career goals prior to assigning a mentor? Can you describe that process?
- Do you have previous participant testimonials or other evidence of the effectiveness and outcomes of your mentoring program?
- Can you describe for me the composition of your group of mentors? What industries do they represent? What levels of experience? Are they usually veterans or not? How are they vetted and prepared for mentoring?
- How much time will a mentor usually spend with me? How responsive will they be to my questions and mentoring needs?
- What is expected from me as part of the mentorship program? Will I provide a resume or other background information to the mentor? How will I communicate my goals to my mentor?
- How will I be paired with a mentor that is right for me? What is the process if my mentor or I don’t feel it is a good match?
- Will someone from your team manage our relationship, or is it my responsibility to ensure that I am keeping touch with my mentor? Do the mentors have to report back on their contacts with me?
- Can you tell me if the mentor’s company employs veterans with similar backgrounds to mine?
- How does the mentoring relationship end? Is there a formal close-out process? What is that process? Will I have an opportunity to provide feedback on the quality and outcomes of the mentoring?
- During or after mentoring, will I have the opportunity to be matched with employers who are seeking alumni of the mentoring program?

- **Provider Service Type: Workforce Development Training**
For some veterans, regardless of their station in life, some type of retraining may be necessary as they plot out their steps toward their next job. Workforce development training helps individuals hone the basic skills of entering the workforce or those required to transition to a new type of employment. For example, veterans who performed a more vocational role, either in the military or in a former career, may benefit from developing proficiency in the Microsoft Office Suite. This type of training is typically supported by education in life skills such as time management, financial literacy, and professionalism in the workplace. For this population, a vast network of workforce development centers exists across the country – some operated by nonprofits, and some operated by government agencies. Veterans can find their local workforce development center [here](#). Additionally, an example nonprofit providing these services is the Goodwill Houston Veterans Workforce Development Center.

- **Questions to Ask:**
  - Can you describe for me any training programs that you provide or that are required at this nonprofit? How are they delivered? In person? Online? A mix?
  - Are these programs for which I can get a certification?
    - If so, how long do they take? (How many hours per week, and how many weeks, on average?)
    - If so, how much do the programs and certifications cost? Are there training dollars available from another source or is the training and/or certification cost paid for by another source?
my responsibility? Have they been approved for GI Bill benefits, and can I use
government benefits or do I need to pay out of pocket?

- Are there any prerequisites?
- Is the certification recognized by the industry in which I’m seeking a job?
  - Is the training job-specific to a particular vocation or employer?
  - Does this organization have a strong network of employers willing to hire people
    with backgrounds similar to mine who complete these training programs?
  - Can you share with me a list of your employer or other organizational referral
    partners?

**Provider Service Type: ‘Dress for Success’**

After learning about how to communicate their military experiences and what to wear to an interview,
some veterans unfortunately do not have the financial means to “dress for success.” Through some
research, you may be able to find an organization which will provide proper interview attire to help
land the job you seek. If you have received employment readiness assistance through a workforce
development program, your case worker will likely be aware of nonprofits in the area which provide
such services. One example organization providing suits for veterans is AMVETS through their Uniform
for Success initiative, in partnership with the Gary Sinise Foundation.

- **Questions to Ask:**
  - Does the program cover professional grooming standards and expectations? Are
    these based on the industry?
  - What proof is necessary to show that the veteran is lacking in appropriate funds for
certain necessary interview clothes?
  - What kinds of services and clothing are provided? For example, is it a full business
    suit? Dress pants and dress shirt?
  - Is it possible to obtain work-appropriate wear such as dress shoes or safety boots or
    other clothing necessary to start a position, regardless of the industry, after a
    successful interview?

**Provider Service Type: Entrepreneurship Training**

For those veterans who are not interested in pursuing traditional employment, but rather are focused
on self-employment opportunities (such as starting their own business or non-profit organization),
there are a range of organizations providing entrepreneurship training and resources. These programs
typically range from classroom instruction, on-line training, business plan support, business plan
competitions, and mentorship by former business executives. Quality is most often determined by
the qualifications of the instructors, and the nature of program instruction (high- vs. low-touch). One
such program is the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities, hosted by the Institute
for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University.

- **Questions to Ask:**
  - What percentage of program graduates have started a business?
  - What percentage of graduates have been in business for more than 5 years?
  - What is the average business income and personal income of program graduates?
- What percentage of the business owners have employees? On average, how many employees do they have in their business?
- After this training, do I get any type of certification or credential?
- What percentage of your instructors are themselves business owners or business school faculty?
- What are the requirements/pre-requisites (if any) required for this training?
- Is there a cost associated with this? Can I use government benefits or do I pay out of pocket?
- What kind of follow-up is offered after the conclusion of this training? Will your organization continue to help me as I begin the process of starting my business? Do you have a network of past participants that I will connect with after the program?
- Can your organization connect me with a mentor to guide me through the early phases of business ownership?
- Can your organization help me find necessary financial capital? Do you have relationships with lenders at all size levels? (E.g., microfinance, small business lending, and larger capital needs?)

**Provider Service Theme: Education**

One of the most important decisions a veteran will make when departing the military is whether to pursue higher education and if so, where. While this generation of veterans is entrepreneurial, highly skilled, and well-served in the workplace by their military experiences, it is practically the case that in today’s civilian world of work, a bachelors or associates degree, or some form of advanced vocational training, represents the minimum standard of entry for many careers that did not require such a credential just 10 years ago. A veteran who chooses to return to school – or pursue higher education for the first time – will encounter a series of challenges, such as applying to and preparing to attend school, funding his or her education, and integrating into the campus community. At each step of this process, organizations exist to help veterans navigate their way from admissions to graduation.

In what follows you will find a listing of the services and supports typical and characteristic of education-focused nonprofits serving veterans, accompanied by a questioning script designed to provide insight into the nature of the services provided.

- **Provider Service Type: Admissions Support**
  When applying to school, veterans will not only have to prepare for and take exams such as the SAT, ACT, GRE, GMAT, or LSAT (depending on their program), but they must also be prepared to write essays to communicate to an admissions committee why they chose to apply to specific schools or programs. Regardless of rank or service experience, many veterans can be out of practice with writing and/or uncomfortable communicating their military experience, and feel like they are “bragging” about their experience in essays. Just like veterans’ difficulty communicating their experience in job interviews, veterans experience similar challenges in the college admissions processes. While often veterans currently attending schools and in student veterans clubs are helpful in the admissions process, nonprofit organizations also exist to help veterans navigate this process, revise essays, prepare for potential admissions interviews, and advise veterans which school will be right for them. One example organization providing these services is called Service to School.
Questions to Ask:
- Are there income eligibility requirements to participate in your programming/training?
- What is the composition of your staff? Is it comprised of individuals who have military experience and experience with higher education, including college advising and preparing admission applications?
- Can you describe the process and/or methodology of identifying the “correct” school for a particular veteran? How will you help me find the best fit? What factors do you recommend I consider in choosing a college or university?
- Do you provide test preparation training?
  - Is there a cost associated with this? Can I use government benefits (e.g., GI Bill), or do I have to pay out of pocket? Are there scholarships available?
- Can you describe the essay preparation process and how your organization advises and helps revise essays? How tailored is support – is it personalized or is it generalized guidance? If it is generalized guidance, will I have the opportunity to receive feedback on my application materials?
- Are your services also available to my family members who are utilizing my education benefits? Is there a fee for this service?

Provider Service Type: College Preparation
Some veterans who joined the military with no prior experience with higher education feel unprepared for college, and need some additional educational assistance before entering school. Federal funding pays for some nonprofits, colleges, and universities to provide college preparatory training for certain veterans who meet income eligibility requirements and are first-generation college attendees. Additionally, other programs exist to encourage veterans to attend elite universities, coaching them to overcome perceived stigma about their academic abilities, providing them with academic training, and preparing them for the culture changes between the military and their potential new academic environment. One example college preparatory program is called the Warrior-Scholar Project.

Questions to Ask:
- Can you describe the qualifications of your staff and their experience with higher education preparation?
- Are there income eligibility requirements to participate in your programming/training? What is the cost of the program? Can I use government benefits or will I pay out of pocket? Are there scholarship opportunities?
- Is your program collaboration with any specific colleges or universities?
- How long does this training last?
- How large are class sizes, and how personalized is instruction? Will I meet other veterans? Non-veteran students? Are college or university faculty engaged in the program and will they instruct me?
• What does the curriculum entail? Is it generalized to a population or is it tailored to my needs based on an individual assessment? If general in nature, will I have any feedback specific to my background and goals?
• Can you describe for me your mentorship/coaching program for higher education?
• Is this training delivered entirely in-person, or is it available online, or is it a hybrid mix of both?
• Is there a component that is delivered on an actual college or university campus?

• **Provider Service Type: Scholarships**
While members of this generation of veterans are eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, this does not always cover the entire cost of their tuition, lodging, books, and other expenses due to high tuition or certain eligibility requirements based on time served. A host of organizations exist to provide veterans with funding for educational opportunities to help them achieve their goals. One example organization is the [Pat Tillman Foundation](https://www.pattillmanfoundation.org).

➤ **Questions to ask:**

• What are the requirements for this scholarship?
  - Is it only applicable to certain types of programs?
  - Are there restrictions for its use?
  - Is it renewable from year-to-year and what are the renewal requirements?

• Along with this assistance, do you partner with schools that provide assistance with additional expenses – e.g., universities participating in the Yellow Ribbon program?
• Does your program coordinate with GI Bill eligibility? With student loan or grant programs?
• Can you describe how the scholarships, loans, grants, and GI Bill interact with or impact each other? Will this scholarship reduce my GI Bill eligibility?

• **Provider Service Type: On-Campus Support**
Once on campus, veterans can often find themselves feeling disconnected from the broader student body, as student veterans are usually older than the general undergraduate population, and often have families. Student veterans also have unique concerns on campus such as processing of their GI Bill or Vocational Rehabilitation benefits paperwork, sometimes requiring flexibility from professors to make appointments at the VA (which can be difficult and inflexible to schedule), or dealing with parking challenges for those students with families who have to commute to campus.

On campus, student veterans clubs exist to provide veterans with the camaraderie and community they need to prevent them from feeling socially isolated, and can provide them with an organizing body to take concerns to university leadership. While some of these groups are informal, a national chapter-based infrastructure has been built to organize student veterans groups across the country, called [Student Veterans of America](https://www.studentvets.org). Some student veterans, potentially concerned about their future college experience, may consider the quality of their on-campus experience when deciding what school to attend, and may want to contact their potential student veterans club in advance to learn not only about its characteristics, but also about the characteristics of the school’s support infrastructure as well.

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Questions to Ask:

- How well are student veterans integrated into the campus community, and how supported are they by campus leadership? Are student veterans encouraged to participate in campus leadership opportunities, e.g., student governance, student clubs, community service, or other opportunities?
- How large, and how active is the student veterans club on campus? Is it well-funded? How is it funded?
- What kind of activities does it host and participate in? Does it integrate with other non-veteran student activities and clubs?
- Does it have its own facility or meeting space? Does it have resources such as tutoring, peer connections or mentoring, computers, printers, or other resources to enhance the student veteran experience?
- Is there a student veteran resource center on campus? What kind of resources does it contain? Is it connected to other veteran-related resources in the community, such as the VA or other nonprofits? Is it engaged with other student programs, such as clubs, career services, and others?
- Are there specific programs for veterans, e.g., a student veteran writing club, an honors program, career services, disability services, or other activities and programs focused on student veterans outside of academics? If not focused exclusively on veterans, do these programs and services competently serve veterans (e.g., student disability services understands TBI impacts on veteran students)?
- What efforts does your university make toward student veteran persistence toward their degree and student retention? Are these tied into student veteran and other campus efforts for degree completion and student retention?
- Is the student veteran community on campus tight-knit, or do student veterans feel disconnected from each other? Are they connected or disconnected from the student body? Do student veterans actively engage with non-veteran students? With faculty or staff? With military-serving programs such as ROTC or others on your campus?
- What staff exists at the university to support veterans? How helpful and supportive are they? Are they well trained/informed as to military/veteran culture and resources for student veteran education? For ancillary services which veteran need (e.g., VA health care)?
- What types of support do they provide?
  - Is the school a Yellow Ribbon school?
  - How quickly are GI Bill and other VA related paperwork processed by the on-campus staff?
  - Are there any unique processes or policies in place for student veterans on campus to support their unique needs and challenges, such as delayed receipt of GI Bill benefits, early or priority registration to ensure they can complete their education within the 36 months of GI Bill benefit eligibility, veteran faculty and staff advisors or other supports?
Are there any unique ceremonies or methods of recognition for student veterans on campus to highlight their military service and contributions to the university (e.g., honor cords at graduations, Veterans Day recognition)?

**Provider Service Theme: Housing**

Veterans can experience a range of housing challenges upon transition, whether due to disability status, natural disasters, financial hardship, or a series of issues which lead to homelessness, whether short term or long-term. While we know that the majority of homeless veterans today are those of earlier conflicts, history also tells us that some post-9/11 veterans will begin to experience more significant challenges several years after service, and they will become increasingly at risk of homelessness. Numerous programs exist to help prevent this process from unfolding and keep veterans in safe, affordable, and stable housing. Many of these are supported by the federal government, which has made ending veteran homelessness a high priority over the last several years, and has seen significant success toward that end, though scores of others are privately-funded. Not all are geared toward those veterans who are ‘on the streets’, as less-severe housing challenges exist for wounded veterans needing alterations to their homes, or other veterans and their families who may suffer the loss of their home in a fire or flood, or find themselves at risk of eviction.

In what follows you will find a listing of the services and supports typical and characteristic of housing-focused nonprofits serving veterans, accompanied by a questioning script designed to provide insight into the nature of the services provided.

- **Provider Service Type: General Homelessness Services**

  While many veterans transition successfully to civilian life, some encounter a series of challenges which leave them on the brink of homelessness or actually on the streets. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor (DOL) have dedicated significant resources to fight these challenges, which fund a broad network of nonprofit organizations across the country. These organizations can provide emergency financial assistance to prevent homelessness; place veterans in temporary housing while they seek treatment for health or substance use issues, or seek employment; or place veterans in permanent housing. These organizations partner with a range of organizations to provide medical and mental health care, financial assistance and training, legal assistance, benefits assistance, and workforce development training, in order to present wraparound solutions to the veteran’s homelessness challenge. One example organization operating in the northeastern United States is Harbor Homes.

  - **Questions to Ask:**

    - Does your organization get federal grant money either from the VA or the Department of Labor – specifically, from the SSVF (Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program) or HVRP (Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program)? (Note for veterans: These are the two major programs funded by the federal government to help homeless veterans get housing and employment training. If an organization has this funding, this is an indicator that they meet a measure of quality high enough to receive government support.)
• If your organization does get federal grant money, are you providing job training, counseling, career placement, and other supportive services? Or, alternatively, are those services executed separately from the federal government funding sources?
• Do you accept all veterans regardless of discharge level?
• Do I have to enter a rehabilitation program before I am allowed to enter your program if I have a substance abuse disorder? Do you have a co-located or collaborative rehabilitation program for substance abuse?
• If I had to stay at your facility, is there a minimum time period for stay?
• What are the requirements?
• What are the compliance standards / code of conduct?
• Is there a formalized treatment program/process?
• Do you provide housing to my family (spouse and/or children) as well?
• Do you have women-specific housing?
• How long will you follow-up with me to ensure my long-term success?

• **Provider Service Type: Home Gift/Giveaway Programs**

Some organizations give mortgage-free homes to veterans, through a range of programs. Some of these programs begin as responses to homelessness (as transitional housing), and once the veteran has proven a record of financial responsibility, the home becomes their permanent home. Other home-giveaway programs are often the result of major banks partnering with veteran-serving nonprofits to provide the mortgage-free home to alleviate a major financial need or to provide the family a sense of comfort in time difficulty, and are the result of veterans being nominated by friends, family members, colleagues, etc., and chosen by a selection committee. One example organization is the Military Warriors Support Foundation.

➢ **Questions to Ask:**

- Please describe for me this particular service that you provide.
  - What are your eligibility criteria?
  - What programs and services are available to me in this program and which ones are required for me and which are required for family members?
- Is the home you will be providing completely mortgage free, or reduced cost? That is, what are the initial costs that I will be responsible for related to the home ownership prior to moving in, for upkeep and reoccurring costs, and so on?
- Do you provide education on home-ownership, to include maintenance schedules and other types of education for first-time home owners?
- How will I be expected to manage reoccurring long-term costs associated with owning my home? (Property taxes, utilities, insurance, maintenance, etc.)
  - Do you offer any financial support in the first year?
  - Do you offer any financial support should I have difficulty managing these costs?
  - Do you offer any financial education and training to help me learn how to manage these costs?
• Will I at any point be allowed to sell the home in the future should I decide to move? What if I decide to move prior to the required time living in the home?
• Will I have to participate in any sort public or media event, advertising, or reporting associated with receiving these services? If my family lives with me, will they be required to participate in any of these activities?

• **Provider Service Type: Housing Accommodation and Housing Assistance**
Veterans suffering from severe physical disabilities often encounter significant challenges navigating the normal tasks of everyday life in their previous homes, or encounter financial burdens in obtaining or retaining housing. They may require modifications to bathrooms, lowering of sinks, installation of chair systems to help them get up stairs, and ramps to get in the front door.

While the Department of Veterans Affairs provides funding for these home modifications, veterans often find this process to be long and sometimes cumbersome. To expedite this process, some nonprofit organizations will retrofit a veteran’s home – or build a new home – to accommodate a veteran’s challenges resulting from their disabilities. One example organization is Building Homes for Heroes.

- **Questions to Ask:**
  - Please describe the specific home modification services and products you provide.
  - Is there a cost associated with your products or services? Can I use any government benefits or do I have to pay out of pocket? Will you help me with any required paperwork for government benefits?
  - Should it be necessary, while the modification process is occurring, will you provide me and my family with temporary housing, or the means with which to acquire it?
  - Will I have to participate in any sort of public or media event associated with receiving these services? If my family lives with me, will they be required to participate in any of these activities?
  - Do you have testimonials from people who were satisfied with the work you’ve done to their homes?

**Provider Service Theme: Financial Supports & Services**
The financial landscape outside of the military can look very different from that faced by the active service member. Among other challenges, families must now pay for health insurance and prescriptions; off-base housing includes costs for utilities; lack of a Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) means that pay is no longer connected to housing costs; moving to a new location no longer includes a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to one’s pay; everything purchased on-base which is now purchased on the economy is no longer tax-free; and service members often must take a pay cut in their first post-service jobs, which is an often unexpected challenge. These changes can sometimes catch veterans and military families by surprise, and they can find themselves in financial trouble during and after the transition. A category of nonprofit organizations exists to help veterans navigate these challenges and establish financial stability.

In what follows you will find a listing of the services and supports typical and characteristic of financial support-focused nonprofits serving veterans, accompanied by a questioning script designed to provide insight into the nature of the services provided.
• **Provider Service Type: Emergency Financial Assistance**
  When veterans and military families encounter acute financial hardship, certain organizations will step in to provide assistance to fill the gap, providing goods, services, or paying for emergency expenses. These organizations will request that veterans provide sufficient evidence of financial hardship and the benefit that their financial assistance will provide. Examples of hardship may be the veteran being served an eviction notice, being several months behind on car payments, or needing emergency surgery and lacking health insurance. While these organizations will at times provide second- or third-time assistance to veterans, they will likely seek further details about the veteran’s financial situation and evidence that he or she is taking steps to improve their financial health (such as trading in for a more reasonably-priced vehicle), or mandating financial literacy training in order to provide additional assistance. One example organization providing this assistance is [Operation Homefront](https://www.operationhomefront.org/).  

> **Questions to Ask:**
> - Is this assistance a loan, or does it come to me without a requirement to repay the assistance amount to the organization?
> - How long does it take before I receive emergency financial assistance or my emergency expenses are paid on my behalf?
> - What information do I have to provide in order to qualify for emergency financial assistance?
> - What, if any, are the eligibility criteria required for consideration?
> - Does the organization require or provide financial literacy or emergency financial planning counseling? How do you help ensure that I can reduce my need for emergency assistance in the future?
> - Am I eligible for second or third-time assistance if necessary? What are the eligibility requirements if so?
> - How do you measure the success of the programs? Do you have testimonials from past participants?

• **Provider Service Type: Financial Counseling / Financial Literacy**
  As mentioned above, the transition to civilian life can be jarring financially, both when encountering unforeseen costs like potentially having to pay income taxes for the first time, and possibly when having to pay the start-up costs of having a first home after living on-base, such as outfitting a house with furniture. The additional month-to-month costs can be difficult to manage and confusing at times to veterans. For all veterans, but particularly for those who find themselves in financial trouble, financial literacy training can be helpful to assist them in either cleaning up poor credit, planning to pay down debt, or simply setting a course for the future. One example organization providing such training is [VeteransPlus](https://www.veteransplus.org/).  

> **Questions to ask:**
> - What are the qualifications of the instructors providing this training?
> - How tailored is this training to me? Will I be provided training tailored to my unique financial situation, which will take into account my debts, bills, assets, etc., or will
In what follows you will find a listing of the services and supports typical and characteristic of health and wellness-focused nonprofits serving veterans, accompanied by a questioning script designed to provide insight into the nature of the services provided.

- **Provider Service Theme: Health and Wellness**

  Veterans experience a range of wellness challenges, from physical health, disabilities, and mental and emotional health, to maintaining physical fitness and nutrition. Each post-9/11 veteran is eligible for five years of free VA health care post-service, and the VA continues to provide care for those below a certain income-threshold and those with certified disabilities. That said, VA medical care does not cover every facet of wellness for every veteran, so a range of nonprofit organizations have developed to fill the gaps. Veterans should understand that health and wellness serves as the foundation from which a host of other positive outcomes can be built – such as employment success, educational achievement, and positive relationships with others – and are encouraged to seek all resources available to manage their own care.

  In what follows you will find a listing of the services and supports typical and characteristic of health and wellness-focused nonprofits serving veterans, accompanied by a questioning script designed to provide insight into the nature of the services provided.

- **Provider Service Type: Clinical Care (general health)**

  While the Department of Veterans Affairs operates a broad network of hospitals, outpatient clinics, and Vet Centers across the country, veterans sometimes decide to seek care outside of the VA system. Additionally, the VA does not serve family members, leaving a gap where there is a critical need. At some of the leading hospitals around the country, privately-funded, nonprofit medical clinics have been founded to augment the VA’s system of care. These clinics, which usually partner with the local DoD or VA medical center, typically specialize in PTS and Traumatic Brain Injury research and treatment, and often provide treatment for family members as well. These clinics are often conducting some of the leading research in PTS and TBI, and employing cutting-edge techniques to treat these conditions. At times, local VA medical centers will send particularly difficult-to-treat cases to these clinics for intervention care, then once on a path to sustainable treatment, the clinic will send the patient back to the VA or DoD for long-term recovery. Veterans should check with the major hospitals in their area to see if such a clinic exists near them. One example clinic is the Steven and Alexandra Cohen Military Family Clinic at the NYU Langone Medical Center.

  - **Questions to Ask:**

    - What kind of services does your clinic provide? What makes your program different than the VA? Different than the DoD?
What are the professional qualifications of your staff? Do you employ Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs), Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMHCs), licensed psychiatrists, or psychologists, as staff members or leaders of the program? How do their various approaches affect or inform my care?

Is my family eligible for services at your clinic? How will they be integrated into my care? Will they be eligible for services, independent of the services you provide to me?

Are there eligibility criteria for treatment at your facility? Given my characteristics (post-9/11, combat veteran or not, PTS symptoms or not, etc.), what services might I qualify for at your facility?

Is there a cost associated with treatment at your facility? Do I need private insurance? Will I need to pay a co-pay? What happens if I don’t have the financial resources to pay?

Please walk me through a typical healthcare treatment program?
- What does it involve?
- How long does it last?
- Is there a plan for continued care?
- What is the pharmacology (prescription medication) plan?

What are your policies regarding confidentiality? Will you share my medical records with the VA or DoD medical systems? What safeguards do you have in place to protect my information?

Does your clinic conduct research that is linked to the treatment that you provide? Can you tell me about clinical trials I may be eligible for at your clinic or at other clinics? (Note for veterans: This is an indicator that the clinic is working to find the best treatments, and changing its treatments in response to lessons it learns from research.)
- If so, are those studies funded from the federal government – e.g., DoD, VA, or another federal healthcare agency? (Note for veterans: This is an indicator of highly-valued research, and a highly-regarded institution.)

Could you tell me a little about the demographics and characteristics of those veterans going through studies? (Note to veterans: Ideally, the people they are studying should be similar to you, so that you know that they are doing their best to identify cutting-edge treatments that are relevant to you.)
- Do they match my peer group?
- Are they post-9/11 generation?
- Are they of other conflicts?

How long have the medical studies been going on?

What are the studies you’ve conducted in the past? Would describe them? Where can I learn about their outcomes? Were there any published papers?

If you are planning to run any studies in the future, could you describe them?

What are the results or, if not yet complete, what are the positive and negative results thus far? How do you measure the success of the programs? Do you have testimonials from past participants?
• **Provider Service Type: Clinical Care (mental health)**
  For those veterans who do not have easy access to a VA medical center, outpatient facility, or Vet Center, do not have access to a privately-funded medical clinic mentioned above, or simply are not comfortable seeking services within DoD or the VA, some mental health providers will provide services to veterans for free. While there is only one organization which provides these services, there are thousands of providers registered online, located in communities across the country who are willing to donate their services to veterans and their families, and each provider’s services will vary. This organization is called [Give an Hour](http://giveanhour.org).

  ➢ **Questions to Ask:**
    - What kind of services does your clinic provide? What makes your program different than the VA or DoD?
    - What are your professional qualifications for providing such services? That is, are you a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC), licensed psychiatrist, or psychologist, and how does that impact your approach to my care?
    - Is my family eligible for services at your clinic? How will they be integrated into my care? Will they be eligible for services, independent of the services you provide to me?
    - What are the eligibility criteria for treatment at your facility or in your program?
    - Please walk me through a typical treatment program.
      - What does it involve?
      - How long does it last?
      - Is there a plan for continued care?
      - What is the pharmacology (prescription medication) plan?
    - How do you measure the success of your treatments? Do you have testimonials from past participants?
    - What are your policies regarding confidentiality? Will you share my medical records with the VA or DoD medical systems? What safeguards do you have in place to protect my information?

• **Provider Service Type: Non-clinical PTS/Mental Health Programs**
  In addition to clinical treatments for physical and mental health, a wealth of organizations has arisen since 9/11 espousing mental health and wellness benefits through alternative therapies, such as yoga, mindfulness, meditation, art therapies, literature or writing programs, peer-to-peer discussion groups, service dog training programs, equine therapy, other animal-assisted therapies, to name just a few. While these programs may demonstrate positive impacts, veterans should understand that in many cases, their clinical value in treating PTS and other mental health challenges has not been validated. That is not to say veterans should not participate in them, but simply to indicate that these should not be a substitute for clinically-based treatment. One example organization is [Warrior Canine Connection](http://warriorcanineconnection.org).
Questions to Ask:

- Could you explain the methods by which your program works?
- What are the qualifications of your staff? Do you employ Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs), Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMHCs), licensed psychiatrists, or psychologists, as staff members or leaders of the program?
- Does your program require insurance or out-of-pocket funding, or is it free-of-charge? If there is a fee and I cannot afford the fee, what are my alternatives?
- Has any research been done to validate the methods and outcomes of your program?
- What are the potential negative side effects to participation in your program?
- How do you measure the success of the programs? Do you have testimonials from past participants?
- Is your program connected to the VA or DoD medical systems? (Note to veterans: this is an indicator that the program has been vetted and approved as a legitimately beneficial resource for service members and veterans).
- If so, what are your information-sharing policies and/or requirements with the VA or DoD medical systems? How is my privacy protected?

• Provider Service Type: Physical Fitness Programs

A critical component of a veteran’s wellness is his or her physical fitness, particularly because many fitness activities involve connections with others; many fitness programs for veterans exist today, which can both help veterans get back in shape and make them feel that they are a member of a team again. Whether a non-veteran specific local basketball league, or a veteran-specific crew team, or sailing club, local communities are full of activities designed to bring people together around fitness – veterans just need to do a simple online search to find them. More nationally prominent programs also exist to take veterans hiking, mountain climbing, or fly fishing. One example organization which brings veterans together with community members for varieties of activities, providing fitness opportunities such as running, yoga, and functional fitness, as well as social activities is Team Red, White, and Blue (Team RWB).

Questions to Ask:

- Are there any charges or fees for your services? Are veterans and non-veterans welcome? May I bring my family members even if they are non-veterans?
- If we are taking a trip to a remote location, camping, climbing, hiking, etc., what qualifications do the guides have for leading such an expedition?
- What policies and procedures do you have to ensure my safety and health?
- How do your programs tie into other community activities? To health and wellness programs?
- Do you provide transportation to and from events (from VA or DoD facilities, from my home, etc.) or am I responsible for providing or paying for transportation myself?
- How do you measure the success of the programs? Do you have testimonials from past participants?
Provider Service Theme: Legal Services

While many veterans experience the same legal challenges as their non-veteran peers, such as divorces or lawsuits, veterans also have unique legal challenges regarding their benefits and discharge statuses which require a specialized knowledge which few lawyers possess. Additionally, in some states, cities, and counties, veterans who encounter legal problems are eligible to be tried in special veterans’ courts which – depending on the nature and severity of the crime – may view treatment options such as counseling or enrollment in other veteran-specific rehabilitative programming, in lieu of or in conjunction with traditional punitive measures. Veterans should be aware of the range of options available to them when encountering the specific legal challenges below.

In what follows you will find a listing of the services and supports typical and characteristic of legal services-focused nonprofits serving veterans, accompanied by a questioning script designed to provide insight into the nature of the services provided.

- **Provider Service Type: Discharge Status Evaluation/Upgrade**
  Veterans receiving other than honorable discharges are declared ineligible for a range of benefits, not only by the Department of Veterans Affairs, but also by many nonprofit organizations across the country, as many donors who fund these organizations do not want to fund services for what they deem “less qualified” veterans. Often these veterans face the same challenges that other veterans face – if not greater challenges – and are left without any support to guide them. There are times when veterans receive negative discharges for reasons which they perceive as unfair – such as self-medicating for combat-related injuries using improperly obtained prescription drugs – and they seek legal assistance to request a discharge upgrade. This is a very difficult thing to accomplish, but certain organizations offer the legal services to file upgrade requests on a veteran’s behalf. One example organization is **Swords to Plowshares**.

  - **Questions to Ask:**
    - Do you employ any licensed and qualified attorneys on your staff?
    - Do you work in conjunction with any nearby legal aid clinics?
    - Please describe the process of requesting a discharge upgrade, as well as an honest assessment of how realistic my request might be.
    - What will your organization conduct the background research necessary to gather sufficient evidence to support my request?
    - How successful has your organization been in the past with requests similar to mine? How do you measure the success of the programs? Do you have testimonials from past participants?
    - Are there any fees for your services? Any costs such as for supplies, phone calls, or other expenses?

- **Provider Service Type: VA Claims Assistance**
  Many veterans need assistance filing for their benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs, as the forms can often be long and confusing. In addition to the initial filing of the claims, sometimes these benefit requests are rejected. If the veteran feels that his or her claim has been rejected unjustly, the claims appeals process can be even more confusing than the initial application – there are multiple levels to the process, which eventually end up in Washington, DC, and without specific
knowledge of the laws and regulations involved, a veteran is unlikely to be successful in his or her case. To assist veterans with these claims, numerous nonprofit organizations offer legal assistance, including legal clinics at law schools around the country. One example organization is the John Marshall Law School Veterans Legal Support Center & Clinic.

**Questions to Ask:**

- Please describe the process of filing for government benefits (disability compensation, education benefits, vocational rehabilitation, healthcare, etc.) which your organization follows.
- What paperwork do I need to provide before coming to the center/service organization or bring with me to a first appointment?
- During the initial filing process, what steps does your organization take to attempt to prevent claim rejection (and therefore avoid the need for an appeal)?
- What background work does your organization do in order to prepare for the appeals process? Will you request (and review) my complete medical records from the VA in order to ensure that my claims appeal has a reasonable chance of success?
- How long does the appeals process typically take?
- What is your organization’s record of success in applying for benefits, and what is your record of success in the appeals process, should an appeal become necessary?
- Is there a fee associated with your organization’s services?

**Provider Service Theme: Community Connection**

Upon separation from service, many veterans feel a sense of disconnection, loss of identity, and loss of purpose. Veterans often feel somewhat alienated from society, as they may feel that their neighbors do not understand them or their military experiences. While many nonprofit organizations aspire to connect the veterans they serve to their surrounding community, through inviting volunteers into the organization, or through sharing success stories, a few organizations have been founded with the express mission of returning this sense of purpose and linking veterans to their community.

In what follows you will find a listing of the services and supports typical and characteristic of community-focused nonprofits serving veterans, accompanied by a questioning script designed to provide insight into the nature of the services provided.

- **Provider Service Type: Volunteerism**
  
  Many veterans wish to continue giving back to their community once they have departed from the service, so they seek organizations which afford them opportunities to volunteer. While these types of organizations can be easy to find, a new category of organizations has recently emerged which creates teams of volunteers specifically comprised of veterans, designed to restore the veterans’ sense of mission while also restoring their sense of belonging to a team. Some organizations provide fellowships with nonprofit organizations, some provide weekend volunteer opportunities, and others provide opportunities to deploy on teams responding to natural disasters. One example organization providing volunteer opportunities is Team Rubicon.
Questions to Ask:

- What kinds of activities are conducted/executed in order to build camaraderie, identity and purpose?
- Does your organization partner with other organizations to help introduce me to non-veterans, or should I expect to be working solely in teams of veterans?
- Can my family members join this organization as well?
- Are there opportunities to volunteer outside of my community, such as trips to other communities?
- Does this volunteerism lead to develop or enhance a particular vocational skill set?
- If so, can I earn any sort of certifications or credentials for the volunteer work that I do with your organization, related to a vocational skill I may learn?
- How often, how long, or how short could I volunteer for?
- If I am selected for a fellowship with your organization, is there a financial stipend associated with this fellowship, or should I expect to maintain my day job while working with your organization?
- Will I have to fund my own travel for activities outside of my community or do you provide that funding?
- How do you measure and track the success of your program? Do you have testimonials from others who have participated in your program?

Provider Service Type: Community Integration

Along with the desire to serve and be a member of a team is the need to be integrated into one’s community. While some organizations provide opportunities to be on teams solely comprised of veterans, others provide opportunities to be on teams mixed with nonveterans in the community to help bridge the civilian-military divide. Other organizations, entirely unrelated to service, exist to create dialogue between veterans and nonveterans – sometimes those who opposed the wars the veterans served in – in order to create mutual understanding. Another category of organizations includes those which encourage veterans to express themselves to the community through art, writing, or poetry, and invite nonveterans to exhibitions to help veterans share their stories and help civilians understand the veteran experience. One example organization connecting veterans to their community is the StoryCorps Military Voices Initiative.

Questions to Ask:

- How do you work to bridge the “civilian-military” divide?
- How do you work to introduce veterans to nonveterans in the community?
- What kinds of opportunities do you provide for veterans and nonveterans to collaborate or work alongside one another, to better foster understanding between the two groups?
- What kinds of forums do you provide to help veterans tell their story – either to each other or to the general public?
  - How do you ensure that this is done in a manner such that if you are intentionally connecting veterans with those who may disagree with the conflicts they served in, dialogue between the groups is respectful and dignified?
How do you spread the word to veterans about the services you provide, and how do you go about educating the public about the programming you provide to veterans?

How involved are you with the media, either in print, online, or television coverage?

Please describe your partnership with other facilities / organizations in the area?

How do you measure and track the success of your program? Do you have testimonials from others who have participated in your program?

**Provider Service Theme: Veterans Services Organizations**

For decades, our country has historically recognized a handful of “brand-name” organizations which provide a range of services to veterans and their families, listed below. These organizations have provided places for veterans to gather; served as focal points for community celebrations; acted as advocates for veterans’ issues; and assisted veterans throughout their interactions with federal agencies. Examples of these Veterans Services Organizations include:

- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
- The American Legion
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- The Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Disabled American Veterans
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- AMVETS

**Provider Service Type: Benefits Application Assistance**

One major function of these organizations is to support veterans as they prepare and file their benefits claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Veterans Services Officers (VSOs) will work with veterans to fill out all necessary forms, then once claims are filed, VSOs will act as a power of attorney to track the claim’s progress throughout the VA system to ensure it is moving through the process. If the claim is rejected, the VSO will assist the veteran with an appeal or direct the veteran to an organization (such as a legal clinic) which can provide assistance with an appeal.

**Provider Service Type: Lobbying/Advocacy**

Veterans Services Organizations are highly active in Washington, DC, advocating on behalf of all generations of veterans to protect and enhance the status of benefits and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs as well as other departments with veteran-serving programming. One example program successfully advocated for by the nation’s Veteran Services Organizations was the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

**Provider Service Type: Convening’s and Social Events**

Throughout our nation’s cities and towns, many of these organizations have established a network of physical locations for veterans to gather together, form social bonds, and host events with the community. One major benefit of these locations is that veterans feeling disconnected have a physical place to go and find other veterans with whom to share the veteran experience.
• **Provider Service Type: Scholarships**

Veterans Services Organizations often provide veterans and their families with competitive scholarships for educational opportunities.

> **General Questions to Ask:**
> - How does your organization work to connect post-9/11 veterans with pre-9/11 veterans? What efforts are underway within your organization to meaningfully integrate the post-9/11 generation?
> - How does your organization bridge the civilian-military divide?
> - What are the eligibility criteria for membership in your organization?
> - Does your organization require the payment of membership dues? If not, how is your organization funded?
> - Generally, what is the purpose and function of the local chapter of the organization? What services does your organization provide to its members? Does the organization volunteer in the community?
> - Could you describe the regular calendar of activities for the organization? Do you have regular meetings, events, celebrations, etc.?
> - What opportunities does your organization offer for my family to be involved?
> - How do you measure and track the success of your organization’s programs and services? Do you have testimonials from others who have participated in your organization?
> - What role does your organization play in local, state, and national politics? (Note for veterans: Many of these organizations are active lobbyists on behalf of their members. You may or may not agree with the organization’s activities, so this question may help you decide whether you are interested in associating with this group.)

**Provider Service Theme: Inclusion**

The face of this generation of veterans is notably different than that of its predecessors – over half are married and almost 20% are women, and this number is growing. Some older organizations have typically been designed to serve only male veterans and are only slowly adapting to the needs of women veterans and family members, so these populations need to be cognizant of which organizations they choose to seek services from, as organizational sensitivity and adaptation to these concerns can matter greatly in determining outcomes.

In what follows you will find a listing of the unique considerations for organizations focused on inclusiveness across diverse segments to the veteran community, accompanied by a questioning script designed to provide insight into the nature of the services provided.

• **Population of Inclusion: Women Veterans**

Research suggests that women veterans are (on average) less likely to seek services from veteran-services providers because they often do not feel welcome and, at times, do not feel safe, among the broader male veteran population. At one end of the spectrum, this is driven by high rates of military sexual trauma and unwanted male attention, and at the other end of the spectrum, it can be driven by organizations simply being blind to the value of their services to women veterans and therefore
the need to market to this population. The best veteran-serving organizations will ensure that they are providing a safe, inclusive environment for women veterans. At times, this means women-specific programming, with women-only locations, and only women staff members.

Questions to Ask:
- How does your organization incorporate women veterans into the population it serves?
- How large is the group of women that you serve? Are they an extreme minority within your service population?
- Among the women you serve, do you feel that the women are individuals, or do you feel that you have a community of women who work together, supporting one another through their journey?
- How does your organization accommodate the unique needs of women veterans?
  - Do you have women veterans on your staff of service-providers? If yes, how many?
  - Do you have female-only facilities?
  - Do you provide childcare services on-site? If not, do you provide vouchers so that I can seek child care services elsewhere?
- What are your policies and procedures in place to protect the rights and privacy of those receiving services?
- Are there any programs you offer that female veterans are not eligible for?
- Do you have staff members that are trained in MST, PTSD, homelessness, substance abuse or “best in class” partners that provide any of these services?
- Could I speak with a female veteran who has utilized your services?
- How do you advertise your programming and services to female veterans?

Population of Inclusion: Family Members
Veterans with family members have a host of additional concerns when transitioning to civilian life. In addition to carrying a higher financial burden, they must also find good schools for their children and adequate employment for their spouses, who have often experienced high unemployment or underemployment during service. Veterans with children often are concerned with child care costs and socializing their children into life in civilian schools. Additionally, the stress of deployments, injuries, and mental health challenges resulting from combat can transfer to family members, making post-service life difficult for every member of the family. However, military families also possess great strength, carrying each other through difficult times, and uniquely understanding the hardships they have faced together. Successful organizations find ways to incorporate families into their programming, provide tailored supports to accommodate the unique needs of families, provide specific programming for family members, and find ways to leverage the strength of the military family on behalf of the veterans they serve.

Questions to ask:
- What accommodations do you make for those in your service population who have family members?
• Are family members eligible for services at your organization? How do you define “family” for eligibility for services?
• How do you welcome new family members into your organization?
• What services and resources do you provide for family members? (i.e. age appropriate services & activities)
• Do you have staff members trained in family counseling and health/wellness?
• Do you provide child care services on site? If not, do you provide vouchers so that I can seek child care services elsewhere?
• How are family members integrated into services provided to the veteran? Are they allowed to participate alongside the veteran? Are they allowed/provided information regarding the veteran’s progress through services/training/counseling?
• What other services and resources do you provide for family members?