Providing Library Services for Military and Veteran Communities in Texas: Part One, An Overview

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Introduction

Big Picture: National Landscape

Major Organizations and Resources

Why Should Libraries Help?

Resources & References

Contents

- Introduction
- Big Picture: National Landscape
- Major Organizations and Resources
- Why Should Libraries Help?
- Resources & References

Introduction

Veteran/Librarian w/personal experiences and network of friends/families with military experience

Consultant/Instructor networking with leaders of organizations that assist veterans and military service members and their families

Author, Serving Those Who Served, ABC/CLIO Libraries Unlimited, in collaboration with Sarah LeMire, available 1/2017

One of these sisters caused her mother to break a tooth!
National Landscape: Who

- What is a veteran?
  - “Have you served” vs. “Are you a veteran?”
- Military service members
- Types of military service
  - Branches
  - Types of service
  - Some terminology
- Families and caregivers
- Community of support
- What they seek

National Landscape: Military & Veteran Culture

Military Culture:
- On call 24/7
- Sometimes seeking help confidentially
- Coworkers are Family
- Structure in daily life
- Uncertainty
- Separations for training in addition to deployments
- Younger parents
- Leaders in the community

Veteran Culture:
- Loss of structure in daily life
- Prepared to work/learn
- Media can be misleading
- Isolation/depression
- No compass for navigating resources and organizations
- Information seeking behavior...
- “Heroes” vs. “Wounded Warriors” and other myths
- Leaders in the community

There is no community in the United States that lacks someone who has a relative or friend serving in the military. Every community has individuals interested in helping or worried about service members deployed overseas, family members of military service members, veterans, and caregivers of military service members or veterans. (Learn about the Blue Star.)

National Landscape: Studies & Statistics

Military

- “…Uncertainty is the one constant of the military lifestyle.”

Veterans

- “Have you served in the military?” vs. “Are you a veteran?”

1. 1.4 million active duty
2. Parents of active duty military service members 45% feel disconnected
3. 2 children/parents deployed at least once
4. 80,000 children/parents deployed multiple times

1. 21.8 million veterans as of 2014
2. 7.3% of all Americans
3. 50k homeless each night
4. From 3.9M to 6M among post 9/11 veterans by 2043
National Landscape: What Do They Seek:

- Knowledge management
- Caregiver support
- Community support
- Help with paperwork
- Help in getting started
- Parents seek access to information about children
- Children seek community and coping skills
- Spouses seek reciprocity, employment, and caregiver support
- Caregivers seek access to information and community support
- Professionals seek more information.

National Landscape: Summing Up

- 10 for 1
- Parents, spouses, caregivers, children
- Advocate/support organizations

Increase in research findings recommend:

- Creative collaboration at the local level
- Bridging the gap of understanding
- Finding ways for government, nonprofit, and private sectors to work together

New movement among support organizations:

STRONG ASSETS, STRONG LEADERS, STRONG VALUES

Government and Support Organizations

- Federal (V.A. includes VBA, VHA, National Cemeteries)
- State Department of Veteran Affairs
- Congressionally Certified VSOs
- Count Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs)
- Military support organizations
- Researchers (Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University and Blue Star Families of America, etc.)
- Employers, government support, grant funding

Examples: Blue Star Families, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, DOD Family Support Groups, National Warrior Project, Amvets, Got’ your Six... who else? Check out NRD.GOV

Acronyms: VSO, CVSO, DOD, PCS, LSO, PTSD, BIV, VBA, VHA, VSO vs. VSR
Government & Support Organizations: Where to Find

- Testimonials by veterans, all ages/eras (powerful learning resource): http://maketheconnection.net/
- Directory of Congressionally Certified VSOs: http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/
- Directory of County Veteran Service Officers: http://nacvso.org/find-a-service-officer/
- Directory of Veteran Support Centers: http://veteransupportcenter.org/

Why Should Libraries Help?

Libraries are in the unique position...

1. To provide space for organizations to host events,
2. To offer meeting places and community groups for activities that can reduce isolation,
3. To use reference interview techniques to assist with navigating resources.

Why Should Libraries Help?

The Relevant Library of the Future

- Content providers vs. community collaborators
- Relationship builders who avoid duplicating work by other organizations
- Knowledge managers – employees with master's degrees in the science of information
Why Should Libraries Help?

Requests from Blue Star Families:

- Assist with bridging gaps in knowledge about military/veteran culture
- Assist organizations with outreach and community support
- Creative collaboration at the local level so that the United States can continue to support an all-volunteer military
- Information!

How Should Libraries Help?

- Dialogue
  - One Book, War Ink, Veteran's History Project, Care Packages
- Community Building
  - Collaboration or “3rd Place” Events such as a film club for veterans, “Coffee with the CVSO,” or weekly crafts programs to celebrate “Month of the Military Child” by Nat’l PTA
- Literacy
  - (Readers Advisory) Help identify good books for all ages or recommend works for parent/child book clubs
- Knowledge Management
  - Reference interviews to assist navigating the bureaucracy

Starting Point

Do what we already do…

- Greet every person
- Reference interview
- Be flexible
- Be aware of information they seek
- Learn about community goals (their goals!)

- Connect
- Engage
- Collaborate
- Community
Essential Resources

(Start with YOUR community)

- Contacts:
  - CVSO
  - Nearest V.A.
  - Veteran Center
- Directions & Bus Routes
- Phone Numbers
- Crisis Hotlines
- Reference Binder
- Bookmarks

Resources and Reminders

- Make the Connection website,
- Research and attend events in your neighborhood,
- Talk to other librarians online.

Ask questions and keep up the good work!