



# Community Integration

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A Five-Year Survey Analysis

# *Community Integration - A 5 year analysis of a proactive, holistic approach to veteran empowerment at the community level*



America's Warrior Partnership empowers communities to empower veterans. Our foundational program, Community Integration fuels this mission providing communities with the infrastructure and planning they need to implement a customized program that is responsive to local veterans, their families and caregivers. To date, Community Integration has supported over 53,000 veterans across the United States and many more including family members and caregivers. The community-based program is a proactive, solution-focused warrior-centric model, encompassing and emphasizing a four step plan (**connect, educate, advocate, and collaborate**) to holistically support veterans.

Details of the four step plan include:

**Connect:** Build a relationship with all veterans in the community and build a relationship with service providers in the community.

**Educate:** Inform veterans of services and opportunities available to them and educate the community about the value of veterans and how to best support them.

**Advocate:** Advocate for veterans to receive the support they earned and advocate for the community to ensure appropriate services exist that will strengthen support for veterans.

**Collaborate:** Work with the veteran to create a holistic plan to improve the veteran's life. Work with everyone within the community to create a strong network of support.

Each year we conduct a Community Integration survey to determine the well-being of the veteran population and understand gaps in services available to inform community leaders how to best support at the local level. The goal of this report is to offer insight and recommendations based on five years of Community Integration survey data, primarily to veteran serving organizations, community leaders and community members concerned with maintaining a high quality of life for their veterans which in turn will create a stronger community overall.

If you are interested in learning more about Community Integration, please contact Sarah Holzhalb, the Director of Development and Marketing, [sholzhalb@americaswarriorpartnership.org](mailto:sholzhalb@americaswarriorpartnership.org).



## Community Integration Key Findings

### Impact

America's Warrior Partnership's Community Integration program is currently working with 7 affiliate communities across the country serving over 53,000 veterans with an estimated economic impact totaling \$288 million. Since 2016, we have seen the following positive changes from our survey leading us to our ultimate goal of improving the quality of life for all veterans, increasing protective factors, and ending veteran suicide:

- 19% increase in veteran satisfaction with the services they receive at the local level.
- 12% increase in veterans feeling more connected to their community.
- 9% increase in veterans feeling empowered by their community.



### Proactive Outreach and Continuous Engagement

Proactive outreach is one of the most important activities when it comes to the Community Integration Model. Connecting with veterans and building a strong trusted relationship ensures veterans know where to go for support. Through continuous engagement, communities are able to educate their veteran population about the resources and opportunities available to empower them and improve their overall wellbeing.

Over the course of 5 years we have seen the following trends when it comes to outreach and engagement:

- On average veterans are 2x more likely to be engaged through outreach.
- Veterans that are engaged for 3 months or more are 3x more likely on average to feel a sense of wellbeing.
- Veterans engaged once a week or a few times a week feel more empowered by 19% on average and connected by 21% on average than those engaged less often.

# Community Integration Key Findings



## Community Collaboration

Community collaboration is another key element of the Community Integration Model. A community that works together to holistically support veterans, their families, and caregivers, results in a stronger community as a whole. Veterans engaged are seeking access to multiple resources and navigating the intricate systems at the local level can result in veterans falling through the cracks.

For the past 5 years we have seen the following trends when it comes to holistic support:

- On average 68% of veterans feel well integrated.
- 40% of veterans on average expressed a need to be connected to resources to help them overcome barriers or challenges. Even if they are thriving++, veterans are seeking access to 4 or more resources on average. Those who are stuck++ are seeking access to 7 resources on average.
- Veterans are most likely to be seeking access to recreational or volunteer opportunities, access to healthcare benefits, and access to employment. 22% of the population on average are seeking access to resources related to recreation or volunteer opportunities as their only need.

## Quality of Life

The ultimate goal of the Community Integration Model is to **improve the quality of life for all veterans**. By using the four step plan, any community can help connect veterans to resources and opportunities helping them feel more integrated and setting them up for success post service. This four step plan is an upstream approach to suicide prevention and veteran empowerment.

We have seen the following trends over the past 5 years around quality of life:

- The majority of veterans are hopeful, 68% on average are thriving++ or in transition++ and 75% feel they are able to adapt and bounce back according to The America's Warrior Partnership Quality of Life\* measurement.
- Veterans who are not able to adapt, bounce back or are stuck++ are most likely to be seeking access to transportation, financial support, housing or healthcare.



## Community Integration Key Findings

- Connecting veterans to benefits and resources shows a significant increase in their level of hope:
  - Veterans with a reliable mode of transportation were 20% more hopeful on average than those without.
  - Those who participate in community events were 13% more hopeful on average than those who do not.
  - Veterans who have access to health insurance are 13% more hopeful on average than those who do not.
  - On average, veterans who have stable housing are 12% more hopeful than those who do not.
  - Those who have a degree are 11% more hopeful than those who do not.
  - Lastly, the veterans who consider their job a career are 9% more hopeful than those who do not.

### **Recommendations:**

You cannot serve those you do not know. Time and time again, we hear communities wanting to make a bigger impact but still have the mindset to let veterans come to them. Veterans are more likely to be engaged out and about in the community. We must meet them where they are whether it is at the grocery store, at their university, at a sporting event, or within their religious community. Oftentimes veterans do not know what resources and benefits are available to them and they do not want to ask for assistance. Proactively outreach and engaging veterans to educate them about those resources and opportunities can and will make a difference in the lives of those you serve. Creating an outreach plan that works best for your community is important. America's Warrior Partnership believes one-size-fits-one veteran as well as one-size-fits-one community. What works in a rural community may not work in a big city.

*Example: Diné Naazbaa' Partnership, a program of America's Warrior Partnership, performs outreach to Navajo veterans at high school basketball games because they are well attended by community members. Where as in Atlanta, GA one of our affiliates, The Warrior Alliance, often collaborates with local professional sports to reach a wide range of veterans in their community.*

## *Community Integration Key Findings*



**Engagement is relational not transactional.** America's Warrior Partnership recognizes that building a strong trusted relationship is the first step to empowering veterans. In order to holistically support them, you must understand their unique situation. Going beyond connecting a veteran to a single service increases protective factors leading to sustainable growth. Providing meaningful long-term engagement with the veteran population through community events and frequent wellbeing check-ins are shown to help veterans feel a sense of wellbeing and empowerment.

*Example: One of our affiliates in Greenville, SC, Upstate Warrior Solution, regularly creates opportunities for veterans within the community to connect. They partner with other community nonprofits, universities, and corporations to provide outdoor adventures, participate in Clemson games, and host networking events for career development. Upstate Warrior Solution is staffed by veterans and family members making it easy for them to relate to those they serve.*

**Collaboration is the key to success.** Each community has resources available to support veterans and no one organization can empower veterans alone. A community can do more to support veterans by utilizing all of its resources collectively. Our four step plan (connect, educate, advocate, and collaborate) is a solution-focused community model. The plan unites communities to assist veterans, their families, and caregivers in overcoming barriers to success and obtaining access to services and opportunities available to them.

*Example: Our affiliates, the Tierney Center for Veteran Services at Goodwill OC in California and Veterans One-stop Center of Western New York, work collectively with their community partners under one building. The organizations regularly meet with their collaborative partners by hosting round table discussions to identify trends and barriers to success in veteran services. The collaborative meetings are inclusive and encourage open communication with a shared focus of improving the quality of life for all veterans within the community.*



## A Special Thank You

### About America's Warrior Partnership:

America's Warrior Partnership is committed to empowering communities to empower veterans. We fill the gaps that exist between current veteran service organizations by helping nonprofits connect with the veterans, military members and families in need: bolstering their efficacy, improving their results and empowering their initiatives. America's Warrior Partnership is a force multiplier for warrior community integration that enhances communities where great Americans choose to live and contribute. For more information on the organization and how to get involved, visit [www.americaswarriorpartnership.org](http://www.americaswarriorpartnership.org).

*A special thank you to Wounded Warrior Project® for supporting the Community Integration program since inception in 2014. Additionally, a special thank you to our affiliates for their hard work and dedication to empowering their community to empower veterans. Lastly, thank you to all of our partners across the country for all you do to support veterans, their families and caregivers. We cannot achieve our ultimate goal of improving the quality of life for all veterans without each of you.*



#### Footnote:

\*America's Warrior Partnership measures quality of life by a veteran's perception of their ability to adapt when changes occur and their ability to bounce back from injury, illness, or hardship. The questions are based on the Quality of Life Index. <http://www.isoqol.org/about-isoqol/what-is-health-related-quality-of-life-research>

++ Snyder, C.R., Harris, C., Anderson, J.R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L.M., Sigmon, S. T., et al. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 570-585. Thriving is defined as those who received a score of more than 51. In Transition is defined as those who received a score between 39 and 51. Stuck is defined as those who received a score of less than 39.

*Empowering Communities to Empower Veterans*



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