Military Culture

Understanding Military Culture in order to better serve our Military Communities

Presented by:
Jo Moncher, Bureau Chief, Community Based Military Programs, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services

Mission Statement
To collaborate, coordinate and communicate with military and civilian provider groups in the delivery of services to New Hampshire veterans, services members and their families.
Culture

- Culture is the set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group.

- Culture is the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations and concepts of the universe.

- Culture is communication and communication is culture.

- A culture is a way of life for a group of people – the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

Military Culture
Possible Definitions and Discussions

Values
Attitude
Goals
Beliefs
Heirarchy
Communication
Experience
Organization

History
Heritage
Behavior
Religion
Practices
Knowledge
Roles
Integrity

Sacrifice
Loyalty
Hardwork
Teamwork
Respect
Self Control
Patriotism
Pride
What is Different About the War Today?

- 1 in 4 Americans have a connection to the Military
- 1.5 million service members have served in this war
- High % coming home with PTSD and TBI
- Nearly half experience multiple deployments
- 49% of National Guard members report having psychological symptoms
- Psychological issues rise with repeated deployments
- Civilian Soldiers

*Army One Source Fact Sheet*

What Soldiers and Marines Experienced

- Were attached/ambushed 92.5%
- Saw buddy wounded 23.9%
- Had hand-to-hand combat 15.8%
- Caused death of enemy 55.7%
- Caused death of non-combat 20.2%
- Saw bodies/remains 94.5%
- Knew someone injured/killed 85.0%
- Have handled corpses/human remains 50+%  
- Saved soldier or civilian 20.2%
- Were wounded or injured 11.6%

*Source: Walter Reed Institute Research*
Risks of Ignoring the Need

• Potential for Increase in:
  – Divorce rate
  – Alcohol abuse
  – Drug abuse
  – Spousal abuse
  – Child Abuse
  – Suicide
  – Vehicle Accidents/Death

Today’s Military

“No one comes back unchanged.”

Colonel (Dr.) Tom Burke
Department of Defense
Director of Mental Health Policy
NH Deployment Cycle Support Program
Introduction

- Unique partnership between the NH National Guard, NH Department of Health and Human Services, and Easter Seals Veterans Count.
- One of a kind program that provides comprehensive Care Coordination Services to veterans, service members and their families who are engaged in the deployment cycle.
- Care Coordination is provided by skilled clinicians from the civilian social service network.
- Emergency funding is provided by Veterans Count.

NH Deployment Cycle Support Program
Care Coordination Services

- Counseling
- Employment Assistance
- Emergency Financial Assistance
- Housing
- Childcare and Respite
- Transportation
NH Deployment Cycle Support Program
Summary & Success

• 3 Years Ago: 12 Care Coordinators
• Today: Over 80 Care Coordinators
• October: Served 636 Cases (SM/Family)
• Total Served Since January 2007: 1719
• October: Referrals to Non-DCSP: 109
• October: Financial Assistance: $18,609

Military Branches - Personnel

• Army – Soldier
• Air Force – Airman
• Navy – Sailor
• Marine Corps – Marine
• Coast Guard – Guardian

PTSD 101-Military Culture
National Center for PTSD
Active Duty

• Considered full-time employees
• During deployments of 6-15 months; may have periods of working nearly 24 hours/day, 7 days/week
• During wartime, may be separated from family for long periods even when not deployed due to long training cycles.

PTSD 101-Military Culture
National Center for PTSD

National Guard and Reserves

• Considered part-time employees
  – ~39 days/year
  – Typically monthly drills two-week annual trainings
• May be called very suddenly to Active Duty (full time) for deployments
  – Leave family, regular job, community
• Transition from Active Duty back to part-time status can be difficult because of lack of support system

PTSD 101-Military Culture
National Center for PTSD
Air Guard vs. Army Guard

“Army people are far more inclined to automatically follow orders of those above them; whereas in the Air Guard, the officer/enlisted relationships are different. There is much more comfort for enlisted people communicating with officers and sharing ideas.”

Major General Kenneth Clark (retired)
Former Adjutant General of the NH National Guard

Military Rank

- Enlisted Personnel (E-1 through E-9) – includes noncommissioned officers and petty officers
- Warrant Officers (W-1 through W-5) – highly specialized experts
- Commissioned Officers (0-1 through 0-10) – highest ranks, similar to managers/leaders of a company

See separate listing of Armed Forces Insignia Sheet
What is a Veteran?

A Veteran is someone who, at one point in their life wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount of up to and including their life.

General George Washington
November 10, 1781

“The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by this country.”
Suggestions for Serving our Military
Provided by NH Deployment Cycle Support Program
Care Coordinators

• If you say you are going to do something, do it. And don’t have pity for their circumstances.
• They are people just like me and my family (with the same needs). We share many of the same basic values – they choose to serve in a different way.
• They are also moms, dads and spouses – and when they are not working – I leave their ranks at the door.
• Knowing the lingo helps the service member feel comforted that you know more about them.
• I have some red, white and blue in my office now.
• I try not to complain about any hardships or inconveniences I might personally experience, like working late or on weekends. I think that is a turn-off for most of them, who have learned to stuff it.

U.S. Army Values

• Loyalty – Bear truth, faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other soldiers.
• Duty – Fulfill your obligations.
• Respect – Treat people as they should be treated.
• Selfless Service – Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own.
• Honor – Live up to all the Army values.
• Integrity – Do what’s right, legally and morally.
• Personal Courage – Face fear, danger, and adversity (physical or moral).
The Soldier’s Creed

- I am an American Soldier.
- I am a warrior and a member of the team. I serve the people of the United States of America and live the Army Values.
- I will always place the mission first.
- I will never accept defeat.
- I will never quit.
- I will never leave a fallen comrade.
- I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my Warrior tasks and drills. I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.
- I am an expert and I am a professional.
- I stand ready to deploy, engage and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.
- I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.
- I am an American Soldier.

Proud Men & Women

Difficult to Accept Help

“These are generally very good people, eager to help, feel awkward and embarrassed asking for help. It took enormous courage for them to walk into your office. Forgive them if they cancel an appointment. Give them time to find the words for their entire story. They probably feel that you can never understand. Do not mention political beliefs. They did what their country asked of them. That’s more than 99% of Americans are willing to do. They can be guarded, not trusting. That trait has kept them safe.”

NH Deployment Cycle Support Program – Care Coordinator
Common Stressors in the Military

• Life Threat
• Loss
• Inner Conflict

Many have lived through life-altering spiritual trauma and will find the quest for peace and reconciliation more difficult than fighting the war.

Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal

• Wear and tear/lack of control

PTSD 101-Military Culture
National Center for PTSD

Army Battlemind

• Buddies (cohesion) vs. Withdrawal
• Accountability vs. Controlling
• Targeted Aggression vs. Inappropriate Aggression
• Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance
• Lethally Armed vs. “Locked and Loaded” at Home
• Emotional Control vs. Anger/Detachment
• Mission Operational Security (OPSEC) vs. Secretiveness
• Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt
• Non-Defensive (combat) Driving vs. Aggressive Driving
• Discipline and Ordering vs. Conflict

PTSD 101-Military Culture
National Center for PTSD
Iraq Veteran

“The three weeks ago I was driving Humvees and kicking down doors, and now after three weeks of demobilization, signing papers and getting medical checkups, I am suddenly back on the streets at home, but I can’t yet make myself understand it or believe it."

Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal

Afghanistan Veteran

“After returning home, I find that I get frustrated easily with others. People here at home get upset so quickly over the little things – long lines at the grocery store, busy traffic. Don’t they know that these are small things and we all need to be simply grateful that we live in a free country.”

NH Army National Guard
Vietnam Veteran

“When in uniform, you follow orders, no matter how you feel. When given a command, you use whatever force is necessary. Then you come back to civilian life and those things land you in jail.”

*Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal*

Iraq Veteran

“When I was overseas, life was simple. I protected my buddy and kept my weapon ready. The rules were easy to understand. Now that I have returned, there are too many rules and so much that I don’t understand.”

*Massachusetts Army Active Duty*
Spouse of Veteran with TBI

“When we are standing in line at a fast food restaurant, my husband takes a long time to order his food. People have no patience. I wish my husband would always wear his TBI Shirt that says, ‘I have a Traumatic Brain Injury because I served YOUR country.’ ”

Brain Injury Center of NY

Persian Gulf War Veteran

“For seven month, (after my return), I was like a zombie. I was in a haze. I couldn’t work. I could hardly function. Finally, I don’t know why, I just gradually came out of it.”

Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal
Persian Gulf War Veteran

“I will only speak to another combat Marine about my experiences in the Desert. No one else can understand what it means to be a Marine or what it means to be a combat Marine.”

*Marine Veteran, Wisconsin*

Iraq Veteran

“I was just happy to see my girlfriend. I thought we would pick up where we left off, get engaged, and marry. Little did I know we would be separated in less than two months.”

*Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal*
World War II Veteran

“I went with my wife to a new church. I sat down in the pew. All of a sudden, I was in a different church in Germany – in the middle of the war - and there were lots of bombs going off. The roof of the church was blown off and there was a woman singing.”

*Manchester VA Medical Center*

*Parking Lot Conversation, 2010*

---

NH Prisoners of War (mostly World War II)

**Suggestions & Support**

Young NH Veterans are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with mental health issues, post traumatic stress disorder, combat stress, marital issues, family concerns and financial responsibilities.

1. What suggestions do you have for these veterans?
   
   #1 Answer: *Confide with your spouse and children what you went through.*

2. What suggestions do you have for their families?
   
   #1 Answer: *Listen. Be patient. Encourage them to seek help.*
A Community Challenge

Finding Help & Accessing Services

Fallen But Not Forgotten
In Memory of Travis Disiato

Report By Keith Dyment
College Composition, University of New Hampshire

Supporting the Mission

“The most important thing I’ve learned is the whole focus on the “the mission”, which was a foreign idea to me. I found that even the families talk about the mission. Families left at home can think about what they can do to support the mission, which is essential to giving their sacrifice a sense of meaning.”

NH Deployment Cycle Support Program – Care Coordinator
A Few Military Acronyms and Terms

- PMOS = Primary Military Occupational Specialty
- FRG = Family Readiness Group
- ARNY = Army National Guard
- FAC = Family Assistance Center
- TAG = The Adjutant General
- MOBEX = Mobilization Exercise
- ANG = Air National Guard
- TDY = Temporary Duty
- VA = Department of Veterans’ Affairs
- VAMC = Veterans’ Affairs Medical Center
- VBA = Veterans Benefits Administration
- OIC = Officer In Charge
- PAO = Public Affairs Officer
- PDQ = Pretty “Damn” Quick
- PX = Post Exchange
- JAG = Judge Advocate General
- KIA = Killed In Action
- MRE = Meals Ready to Eat
- NCO = Noncommissioned Officer

Important Lessons in Understanding Military Culture and Working with Military Communities

1. Soldier vs. Marine
2. Army Guard vs. Air Guard
3. Bureaucracy of VA Medical Center (be patient & assertive)
4. Importance of Rank
5. Every VA is different
6. VA, National Guard and Vet Centers all do an amazing job in serving our military communities; We need to continue to improve the collaboration and communication between these organizations.
7. Mental Health Issues are Huge: State structures, resources and staffing are not equipped to serve our military communities
Important Lessons in Understanding Military Culture and Working with Military Communities

8. Need to improve ACCESS for all military communities.
9. National Guard positions/responsibilities can change frequently according to who and how many are deploying.
10. Say “thank you” – not “sorry you have to go”.
11. Say “I look forward to seeing you soon” – not “I disagree with the President; you should not have to go”.
12. Be patient (yet assertive) when working with the National Guard; their first priority is always taking care of their service members, veterans and their families.
13. When military/civilian partnerships overlap with taking care of our troops, it is always a “win-win” situation.

New Definitions of Military Culture

Now I think of military culture as the quiet 1%, who don’t get much recognition, and help’s not always there when they could use some. They sacrifice so much. They know how to defend, protect and serve. They are well organized and have all learned to fight because, surprise, there are bad guys out there. They are also a lot like us, therapists, in that they genuinely care about people.

*NH Deployment Cycle Support Program, Care Coordinator*
New Definitions of Military Culture

I’m not sure how I’d define military culture in words, but overall, now I mostly feel that they are just human beings like you and I, and they just have a different career than we do. They make a huge sacrifice for our country.

NH Deployment Cycle Support Program, Care Coordinator

For More Information

Jo Moncher
Bureau Chief
Community Based Military Programs
Department of Health and Human Services
603-271-4402
Jamoncher@dhhs.state.nh.us