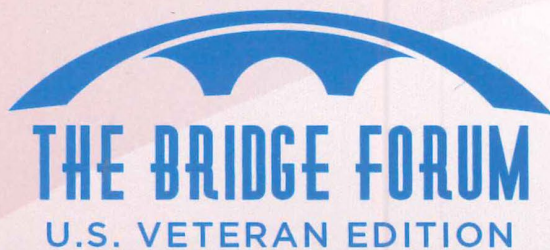


HeroZona National Veteran Summit - 2019





HeroZona National Veteran Summit was created to continue empowering our heroes. This multi-day event features programming that focuses on three pillars - *Entrepreneurship, Employment and Education.*



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Summary of Second Annual Bridge Forum Veterans Edition

Living Together + Working Together = Respect

The Bridge Forum U.S. Veteran Edition will focus on current efforts within the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Arizona Coalition for Military Families, Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police, Arizona Fire District Association, and community resources to ensure our first responders who have served in the military have the capabilities to maximize healthcare and benefits decision making throughout their career after military service.

The Second Annual Bridge Forum Summit occurred on November 5, 2019 in Phoenix, Arizona. During this half day event, a diverse group of attendees convened to discuss these topics through panels of local experts as well as breakout groups to focus on specific themes facing the veteran community. The First Annual Bridge Forum U. S. Veterans Edition was November 14, 2018 and yielded a report with 26 actionable items for law enforcement.

Subject Matter Experts:

The morning panels included subject matter experts that provide services and support to the Veteran community as well as those that work in law enforcement. The panel discussions supported many of the themes and topics from the first year of the Bridge Forum Veterans Edition which can be found in the 2018 report.

Veterans Affairs Panel: Dr. Kathy Doyle, Dr. Jon Rugg, Maggie Talamantes, Rosa Jacobsen, Brandi Luedtke

Panelists discussed common themes for those who receive services from Veterans Affairs. Questions for the panel included privacy for patients and stigma for seeking treatment, as well as symptoms of PTSD. The panelists also discussed services that are available for family members of those who receive care from the VA.

Community Resource Panel: Kelli Donley Williams, Christopher Tafoya, Patricia George, Kelly Anne Wilde, Tenasha Hildebrand, Wanda Wright

Panelists shared resources for First Responders when supporting and responding to the veteran community in addition to the VA.

First Responder Panel: James W. Warriner, Angela Harrolle, Geoff Leggett, Mike Wold, Chief Dan Brown

Panelists discussed resources available specifically to First Responders related to mental health support and services.

Breakout Sessions:

The afternoon transitioned into a working lunch to reflect, identify and collaborate on possible solutions and ideas that improve mutual outcomes for both veterans and law enforcement.

Over a shared lunch, attendees dispersed across seven groups with a facilitator and scribe to discuss specific themes that are facing the veteran community. The topics discussed in this session are intended to supplement the numerous actionable outcomes from the First Annual Bridge Forum in November 2019 for law enforcement and other community groups. These breakout sessions provided an opportunity for open conversation amongst attendees with thoughtful, pre-determined questions related to the focus groups theme. This report will provide highlights of the discussions.

The overall themes of the breakout sessions reflect key items to assist law enforcement.

The breakout sessions were as follows:

- Employment
- Domestic Violence
- Community Resources
- Mental Health/PTSD
- Crisis Intervention
- First Responders
- Suicide Prevention

The Bridge Forum Summit reaffirmed the topics and themes established in the first Bridge Forum Veterans Edition in 2018 and encouraged more discussion amongst attendees in the 2019 breakout sessions. This document will serve to support those ideas and encourage law enforcement agencies to reflect on the topics expressed through the event. The following pages include the detailed notes from the breakout session scribes.

Notes from the breakout sessions:

Breakout Session: Employment:

Discussion began with discussing that it's a low unemployment market, but a high underemployment market. It then proceeded to discuss partnerships that assist both law enforcement and veteran applicants.

- Match skill sets to career fit and goals.
- Step outside traditional recruitment methods and meet candidates where they are.
- Offer night and weekend recruitment opportunities (i.e.. job fairs, interviews, testing, etc.). Underemployment suggests that many candidates cannot participate in recruitment fairs/events scheduled during the day.
- Provide candidates with a feeling of purpose in their targeted job opportunity. Create a feeling of job security similar to what candidates experienced while in the military. Refrain from treating candidates as just a number, demonstrate interest to candidates as people.
- Provide clear expectations of career and promotional opportunities at the onset of the hiring process. The military utilizes linear promotional process which can differ from traditional law enforcement agencies promotional processes.
- Make use of personality assessments to identify level of aptitude and attitude.
- Include current veterans from the organization in recruitment efforts to model that candidates match existing workforce demographics.
- Highlight and include veterans in leadership roles throughout the organization to provide a comradery with applicants and show possible career path opportunities.
- Reduce PTSD as a barrier to employment during the hiring process. Be open and honest about the hiring process, providing clear expectations and an ability to self-disclose information for the candidate. Veterans often leave the service with a history of their career handling all services (benefits, housing, etc.) and clearly articulating the process and expectations after hiring will support long term success and understanding.
- Implement a plan for focused conversations if experience with mental health and/or PTSD comes up and commit to move forward if a candidate appears to be suitable for the career.
- Change the traditional LE process of interviewing candidates such as shifting the interview to post-background. Be willing to engage in open conversation during the interview process to enable the candidates to feel more comfortable during the panel interview. Include group activity in the interview process to determine personality traits.
- The ability to customize employment processes for veterans are crucial for longevity of the veteran employees.
- Services that support veterans should create a directory for LE to include employment resources and points of contact to support veteran candidates in the process to ensure that everyone is providing accurate information.

Breakout Session: Domestic Violence

Discussion began with understanding the outcomes associated with domestic violence but centered primarily on the Veterans Court in that that many domestic violence offenders and victims end up the Veterans Court. Domestic violence is just one of several behavioral issues handled by the Veterans Court.

- Veterans Court was implemented through a partnership between the Municipal Court, Prosecutor’s Office, Public Defender’s Office and the Veterans Administration (Phoenix). The goal of Veterans Court is to restore veterans to being successful, contributing members of the community. The court focuses on ensuring that veterans entering the criminal justice system make contact with specific programs to address the root causes of the behavior that resulted in the veteran becoming a defendant in the criminal justice system.
- The target population consists of defendants (veterans) who served in the United States Armed Forces who are now experiencing treatable behavioral issues such as post-traumatic stress (PTS), traumatic brain injury (TBI), anger management, domestic violence and/or substance and alcohol abuse.
- Veterans Court is a collaborative process that includes the prosecutor, defense counsel, Judge and sometimes the federal or local state's Department of Veteran Affairs and other community-based support organizations. The goal of Veterans Court is to rehabilitate and restore veterans as active, contributing members of their community.
- Veterans Court programs typically focus on veterans who are currently in, or entering, the Criminal Justice System. The Court creates and supervises treatment plans to address the underlying causes of the veteran's behavior and/or substance abuse issues. Issues commonly addressed by the such treatment programs include:
 - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Traumatic Brain Injury
 - Anger Management
 - Domestic Violence
 - Alcohol Abuse
 - Drug Abuse
- By focusing on the root problems that contribute to involvement with the criminal justice system and providing specific rehabilitation programs, the Veterans Court provides an opportunity for the veteran to return to the community in a more advantageous and beneficial manner.
- Trauma Related Care - The first step is to recognize how common trauma is, and to understand that every patient may have experienced serious and/or some trauma as children or during their lifetimes, especially combat Veterans. We don’t necessarily need to question people about their experiences; rather, we should just assume that they may have this history, and act accordingly.

- Trauma Related Care is about providing open-mindedness and compassion that all patients deserve. Anyone can have a history that impacts their encounter(s) with medical, government, law enforcement systems, etc.
- Providers need to recognize that many patients have a history of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, as well as serious illnesses and negative experiences in the medical setting or other settings and the providers or responders need to learn to respond with empathy and understanding.
- Faith based communities (such as churches, religious organizations, local ministers, pastors, bishops, preachers, etc.) are organizations that many, including Veterans, associate with and or attend. It's very common for worshippers, parishioners, members, attendees to listen to what's being preached in these organizations and hear the message being given. "Veterans listen to their minister's message".
- Another key point for Law Enforcement personnel to keep in mind: Is to ask the suspect(s), offender(s) and victim(s) they have contact with, two important questions: "Have you ever served?" and "Are you homeless?" – Because it's very common for Veterans to not self-identify as a veteran or bring the topic of their military service up. Many never saw combat and only served their time and were discharged and often don't consider themselves a veteran (especially if they never were involved in a war). Female veterans tend not to identify at all.
- Referral forms should include a box for Military or Military Service.
- Strength at Home Program:
 - Created approximately two years ago.
 - It is the only standardized, randomized, clinical trial program which proves that program lessens aggressive behavior in those that attend the program.
 - Strength at Home is currently being facilitated in approximately half of the VA Hospitals in the country. The goal of the Veterans Administration is to have it operating in all the VA hospitals.
 - Program runs 12 weeks
 - Groups consist of four to eight people in a group setting so they get individual attention within the group and the smaller group lends itself to good group interaction with all the attendees.
 - Motivates people to change and change their behaviors. It holds them accountable.
- Currently there is no tracking system of recidivism rates for Veterans Court attendees or Strength at Home attendees.
- The goal of the Veterans Court and the Strength at Home program is to stop violent/criminal - behavior, and punish; however, no evidence exists that more punishment will or does stop domestic violent and/or criminal behaviors.
- It was noted that the Strength at Home program could/would work for everyone and other groups (not just Veterans). It could work for all groups of people. Members agreed it would be worthwhile program to take into the inner-city schools.

- Participants agreed it would be ideal if the Military incorporates a policy/procedure or program that would be like a six-month Check-Up, or even later, once the Veteran’s return from active duty and are discharged.
- Veterans Court representative stated that it would likely be beneficial to have separate court rooms for first time offenders. Her goal would be to have separate court rooms and/or courts, however, victim advocate groups would likely pushback on this concept because the State of Arizona and Maricopa County have become “victim heavy”.
- Veterans Court representative stated that she often has victims come forward and participate in the Victim’s Court without issue.
- Resources for Veterans:
 - "[Be Connected](#)" program that offers 24/7 support. You can get more information at <https://www.beconnectedaz.org> or call 1-866-4AZ-VETS.
 - Veterans crisis line 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That number is 1-800-273-8255. Press 1 to speak with a counselor. You can also chat with a counselor at veteranscrisisline.net or text them at 838255.
 - Veterans Center located in Scottsdale. The Northeast Clinic is located at 11390 East Via Linda Road, Suite 105, Scottsdale, AZ 85259
 - Main number: 480-579-2200
 - After hours: 800-554-7174
 - Enrollment coordinator: 602-277-5551, ext. 6508
 - Fax: 480-656-3333
 - Pharmacy: 800-359-8262
 - Patient advocate: 602-222-2774

Breakout Session: Community Resources

Discussion began with understanding the need for community services/support for First Responders. It then proceeded to discuss partnerships that assist both law enforcement and veteran applicants.

- Are there other services in the community that should be available to First Responders?
 - Veteran hotline program that mentors veterans on what their career interests are
 - [TAPS](http://www.taps.org) program (www.taps.org)
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Outlet Program – Brotherhood and sisterhood of first responders
- Are there similar resources within the community?
 - Veterans have [Team Red, White and Blue](https://www.teamrwb.org/) (<https://www.teamrwb.org/>)
 - PISTOL

- Police Officers have Fraternal Orders within the Police Department, Police Officer of Scottsdale Association (POSA) and AZ State Trooper Association. Departments can identify similar organizations within their own community.
- Are there any legions/associations/organizations outside the department/agency in the community?
 - C.O.P.S. (Concerns of Police Survivors) – Take care of all agency personnel- Coworkers and survivors of fallen officers. Holiday parties, fundraising events to bring various agencies together and provide a positive outlet. Trained in CISM, Peer Support, Mentor, talk about death in a safe place. Help Guide with benefits/paperwork, wills and trusts, legal plans. Explain what Police Week is and when loved ones are being honored. Give an orientation what it is and show videos show they have an idea what it is.
 - [Wills for Heroes](#)
 - Law Enforcement Chaplains are an excellent resource for LE personnel.
 - “Be Connected” (also referenced on pg. 7)
 - Help stay and get in contact with resources, resources are vetted
 - Help with Military Deaths within the Police Department
 - Can help with Military death within the Police Department
 - Working with Human Resources and law enforcement agencies to train and find veteran mentors within the agency
 - Recruitments
 - Websites
 - [Evaluate testing times to become a first responder and determine feasibility with military schedule/work demands](#)
 - Get the word out about all the civilian jobs that are offered.
 - Identify veterans and encourage them to sign-up with VA
 - Trainings – [Strong Bond](https://www.strongbonds.org/) (<https://www.strongbonds.org/>)
 - Helps Couples manage their lives
 - Unit engagement
 - Wellness checks
 - Notice when things are off – behavioral changes
 - Be in constant contact and developing changes
 - Breakout Sessions during Police Week
 - Sample topics are Grief and Marriage
 - Testing Centers at the colleges and community colleges – there is a test they can take that will point individuals in the right direction of career choice/path

Breakout Session: Mental Health/ PTSD

Discussion began with understanding that mental health and PTSD affects a large percentage of veterans. It then proceeded to discuss partnerships that assist both law enforcement and veteran applicants.

- 100 Club has benefits to assist more than just fallen officers.
 - When does one mention the 100 Club benefits?
 - The academy is probably not the best place to have the 100 Club give a talk as the trainees are cramming for their test and then it's more training/cramming and they tend to brain dump if it's test related.
 - Suggested that maybe move the 100 Club to speak at the end of the academy.
 - Perhaps they can speak to the family also since someone with PTSD may listen to family and family can recognize the signs before it gets worse?
 - Changes may not be notable due to prior military experience where they tend to hide things.
 - Problems came back and there was no outlet.
- There is a national conversation on mental health and PTSD & Treatment. Talked further about how there is a "Fit for Duty" requirement/paper.
 - Even though the doctors and patients say things are okay, departments still need the Fit for Duty paper.
 - Attendee wouldn't mention if he had PTSD because the interview process stops when it's mentioned. A department wouldn't listen to how he was able to handle or overcome his experience, no further questions were asked on the outcome as he and they knew there were hundreds of other applicants.
- Attendee worked with couple's therapy to help with coping with a PTSD spouse.
 - Said he got his girlfriend (not dating long) to go to counseling early on so she could understand "him" as he had military and LE Experience, and it has helped her understand what he's going through.
- Academy teaches mental health in classes. Example of "Full Tank" of mental health. That helps him determine how he can handle "off work" issues or activities in order make better decisions.
- When handling a person who is a Veteran, would it be appropriate to ask if the Veteran if he/she would like to be taken to the VA emergency room?
 - Take to the VA since they may have specific info on the Vet already in their system.
- Is there a database with veteran information?
 - There is a national archive database for veteran information.
- Veterans who leave the military with a less than Honorable Discharge due to behavior associated with PTSD symptoms are not eligible to claim VA benefits.
 - Can a dishonorable discharge be reversed?
 - Yes, however it could be a challenge, depending on circumstance (e.g. misdemeanor/felony, etc.)
- Coordination of treatment results are not being sent back to the VA.
- There is an influx of requested services when TV Shows feature a particular treatment for PTSD was discussed and then everyone wants it, even though it hasn't been vetted.

Breakout Session: Crisis Intervention

Discussion began with understanding the need for Crisis Intervention. It then proceeded to discuss partnerships that assist both law enforcement and veteran applicants.

- Veterans (VA) Police – LE agencies should be able to request that VA Police transport patients directly to an Urgent Psychiatric Care Facility.
- ERAP Program to introduce therapy dogs will be coming soon.
- Health plans need to consider mental health as part of package.
 - Like a primary care appointment, an annual mental health check.
- Must have buy in from Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) coordinators as CIT coordinators often become the “go to” person because of word of mouth.
- Discussed CIT – mental health training/resources:
 - AZPOST requires class on stress management, talked about academy training and CIT, new recruits “don’t know what they don’t know” haven’t been on the job yet to experience critical incident.
 - Within one year at least 1 new officer will experience a critical incident (some on day 1 of their FTO).
 - AZPOST requirement is 8 hours of continuing education every year.
- More chiefs are encouraging crisis intervention training.
- Surprise PD meets to plan CIT training for following years.
 - Determines which trainings need to occur based on CALEA requirements
- CISM/Peer support programs need to be developed for line-level management (not for Lieutenants and Commanders).
- Once an officer goes through CIT they become more approachable, recognize issues and can help identify resources.
- Mercy Care partnered with Tempe Police and Cigna to host a Wellness Day for First Responders in February. Information will be distributed to agencies soon.
- ASU hosts a Winter Institute which focuses on public safety and behavioral health policy. Next one is scheduled for February 2020.
- Discussion on CIT training for dispatchers – should it be a full 40-hour class? There is a 4-hour introductory course available online.
- Trauma affects more people than we realize – even volunteers.
 - One agency representative reaches out to volunteers early on how they could be exposed to and be bothered by incidents, crime scenes and other unexpected situations.
- How do agencies track calls?

- Often calls are dispatched as one issue that then turns into a mental health or emergency committal call.
- Phoenix and Mesa have a policy in place that if a mental health call does not require an officer it can be transferred to the crisis line.
- It is important that officers understand CIT/mental health training, they can ask for a mobile team to arrive with them to a call.
- An attendee shared their ride along experience with Mesa Crisis Response Team and received many calls during the ride along.
- Discussion on crisis response at high schools:
 - As a society, we aren't teaching kids how to deal with problems. There was a teen who took her own life because of a score received on a test at school.
 - Many calls for crisis response occur when school is in session.
 - What do we equip the schools with to deal with this issue?
Utilize humor to connect with men about mental health issues by way of posters, stickers.

Breakout Session: First Responder

Discussion and feedback focused on the today's Bridge Forum and low attendance due to the following:

- Insufficient advertising. Technology issues with the website and electronic registration.
- Representatives from peer support groups and corporations should have been invited. Last year's forum focused more on connecting veterans to resources as compared to this year.- Last year's Bridge Forum report should have been posted on the forum's website
- An interest was expressed to have a panel with Detention Officer representatives.
- "Brain State" sounds innovative but is perceived to only offer relaxation techniques.
- Veterans Administration offers good programs for suicide prevention (e.g., Baby Jessica responder attempted suicide).
- Call of Duty and U.S. Vets Together – programs that offer- uniform and clothing allowances
- Transition Readiness at Camp Pendleton is an excellent option for recruitment (<http://www.mccscp.com/transition/>).
- There continues to be a tremendous need to recruit candidates to fill both law enforcement and military positions.

Breakout Session: Suicide Prevention

Discussion began with understanding that Veterans are at risk for suicide and continued with outlining ways to reduce the risk. Progress being made to understand PTSD and mental health issues. Hope is to way the way for future generations.

- How can we get Veterans to access VA services?

- The Veterans Administration is a large agency that can be a challenge to navigate. His group is trying to get the word out that there is a patient advocate program available to help with this, and he personally volunteers to walk newcomer's through the facility.
 - Phoenix VA also has several outpatient buildings that are much smaller.
 - Stigma attached to mental health issues keeps some from seeking assistance or employment.
- Experienced many employment turndowns with LE agencies due to his disclosing of seeking mental health treatment. His current agency is the only one that inquired as to whether he sought help, and then looked past that.
- Her group connects officer to officers in a different agency for EAP/Peer support issues, so they don't feel uncomfortable talking to someone they know or don't trust. Also, the 100 Club offers monetary support when off duty due to mental or physical injury.
- Question was presented as to if there is a known module for follow up with officers who suffer PTSD related issues after they gain employment.
- More education is needed in the LE field on PTSD and related issues.
- PTSD is not a lifelong disability. It can be overcome.
- LE agencies tend to be very discriminatory to applicants who have met with a mental health professional. In comparison, those employees already in LE who develop symptoms are provided with resources.
- How do you change the culture?
 - Academies are not conducive to new recruits for information pertaining to PTSD and mental illness. They are focused on getting and retaining new recruits through academy training.
 - Presentations associated with PTSD and Mental Health issues would likely be most effective towards the end of the training academy.
 - Discussions about well-being and mental health were widely used at a recent LE conference. A question raised on how do effectively handle issues of mental health and Fit for Duty releases.
 - Such awareness is a positive start in the right direction.
- Group works with families of officers to teach them to observe personality changes and relay that to their care provider or superior, if they feel they are a danger to themselves.
- Great success with their family group sessions. Their crisis team will respond to LE calls where a vet is involved but doesn't need to be arrested. They prefer an alternative to arrest when possible, such as taking them to the VA, where they will receive help and a follow up.
- Veteran status can be confirmed via a letter to Congress.

- Group also helps dishonorably discharged Veterans noted that discharges can be overturned.

Next Steps:

This document serves as a starting point for a committee of stakeholders (including veterans, law enforcement departments, industry experts and service providers) to review the conversations from this event and identify actionable items to incorporate into strategic initiatives. Continued partnerships amongst these stakeholders is integral to the success of our organizations, supporting both our employees and veterans as well as how we provide service to our communities.

About the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police (AACOP)

The purpose of AACOP is to promote and enhance cooperation and coordination between public and private entities in the interests of law enforcement in Arizona. AACOP provides members with a forum to listen to legal and legislative updates and discuss law enforcement issues with the other police chiefs. For more information, visit <https://www.azchiefsofpolice.org/>.

About the Checkered Flag Run Foundation:

The mission of Checkered Flag Run is to provide diverse educational programs that impact underserved students. Our belief is access to quality educational opportunities ensures the investment of every student getting to cross the “finish line”. For more information, visit <http://www.cfrf.org>.

About HeroZona Foundation:

The HeroZona Foundation has a strong focus on veteran initiatives and honoring those who have served our country and their family members. The nonprofit’s name reflects that messaging to focus on empowering and celebrating America's veterans. For more information visit www.hnvbs.com, www.heropreneur.com or www.herozona.org.



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