

## Tailoring Suicide Prevention Initiatives to the Needs of Student Veterans

Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grantee Meeting

## History & Mission

- The Jed Foundation works nationally to reduce emotional distress and prevent suicide among college students.
- Guided by leading experts, The Jed Foundation's programs target the full range of audiences that can impact college mental health including:
  - Students
  - Campus Professionals
  - Parents

## Veteran Mental Health

- Nearly 20 percent of U.S. service members returning from combat will report symptoms of PTSD or major depression (RAND – rand.org)
- Only 53% of those with PTSD or depression sought help in the past year. (RAND – rand.org)
- More than half of the estimated 300,000 military service members who are suffering from depression, post-traumatic stress disorders, and traumatic brain injury are going without treatment because of the gaps in mental health care and stigma issues. (RAND – rand.org)
- Over half of surveyed soldiers who met criteria for a psychological health problem thought they would be perceived as weak, treated differently, or blamed for their problem if they sought help (DOD Task Force on MH)
- 90% of today's seriously wounded U.S. military service members are surviving (VA)

## Student Veterans

- Estimated 300,000 veterans and their dependents are currently enrolled in American institutions of higher education, representing 4 percent of the total undergraduate population.
- Military undergraduates tend to be younger than veterans in general, but older than traditional undergraduates. In 2007–08, some 85 percent of military undergraduates were aged 24 or older.
- Women represented 27 percent of all military undergraduates in 2007–08, although they made up just 7 percent of all U.S. veterans in 2006.
- 43 percent of military undergraduates in 2007–08 attended public two-year institutions. Twenty-one percent attended public four-year colleges. Private for-profit and private not-for-profit four-year institutions each enrolled about one-eighth of all military undergraduates.



Peabody Award winning pro-social campaign with mtvU launched in November 2006

Seeks to reduce stigma and increase help-seeking through on-air, online and on-campus components

Campaign built on original quantitative and qualitative research commissioned by The Jed Foundation and mtvU



## Half of Us Campaign



mtvU television network reaches 900 campuses with more than 10 million students

Campaign uses on-air, online, and on-campus programs to:

- Destigmatize emotional disorders
- Increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of mental health problems
- Encourage help-seeking



## Key Lessons Learned

- Student veterans should be viewed as an opportunity and not a challenge
- Veteran to veteran resources and support are critical
- Need to bridge the divide between civilian students/faculty and student veterans
- Must understand the mental health issues in the aftermath of *this* war
- Student veterans dealing with mental health issues may need unique accommodations
- Support the warrior, not the war. Today's student vets feel overlooked, unappreciated and misunderstood.

## PSA 1: Common Area

- Veterans as productive students.
- Flashback that isn't overly dramatic. Simple triggers. Reaction is mainly internal.
- Veteran to veteran intervention with civilian involvement.
- Showing discussion and connection between veterans and civilian peers.

## PSA 1: Lecture Hall

- In trying to teach proper communication between civilian and veterans – don't increase the divide by making the interaction intimidating.
- Encourage appropriate veteran/civilian (student and faculty) dialogue.

## Jed Foundation Programming

- PSAs and Online Content
  - Paint a more realistic picture of transition problems and combat stress
  - Bridge the divide between veterans and civilians
  - Redefine preconceptions of student veterans
- Online Training Tool for Campus Health Professionals
  - Better understand the combat to college transition
  - Better understand mental health issues in the aftermath of *this* war
  - Better understand barriers to help-seeking and how to best address these issues

## For More Information

Visit:

[www.jedfoundation.org](http://www.jedfoundation.org)

[www.halfofus.com](http://www.halfofus.com)

[www.ulifeline.org](http://www.ulifeline.org)

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