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## *TOGETHER WITH VETERANS*

### *Rural Veteran Suicide Prevention Program*

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## **Together With Veterans Partnership**

The Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education Mental Health Program (WICHE MHP) is proposing to work with the local community in Carteret County, NC to launch a Rural Veteran Suicide Prevention program. We have attended the NC Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Military and their Families meetings, and talked with key stakeholders at the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, the Durham VA Medical Center, and Carteret County Health Department. We would like to meet with local stakeholders at the county level, particularly health, behavioral health and Veteran organizations to discuss strategies to reduce Veteran suicide rates. We hope to engage Veteran organizations in a partnership to assess the community's strengths, recourses and needs regarding Veteran supports and services, and implement strategies to enhance the Veteran serving system. Carteret County was selected to approach as one of three sites for piloting the Together With Veterans program. The other two sites are in the San Luis Valley of Southern Colorado, and a site in Northwestern Montana.

## **Facts About Suicide**

- Nationally, suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death
- 20 Veterans die by suicide every day
- The death rate due to suicide in Carteret County of 17.8 per 100,000 exceeded North Carolina's rate of 12.4 per 100,000 2010-14<sup>1</sup>

## **Suicide Prevention Strategies**

Together With Veterans is designed to work with local Veterans and health care stakeholders to:

- Increase community awareness about Veteran suicide prevention strategies
- Improve the community's capacity to respond to Veterans in need
- Make it easier for Veterans to reach out for support

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<sup>1</sup> Carteret County 2016 Community Needs Assessment

## Together With Veterans Process

1. Engage Veteran Community

Veterans know what Veterans need. And Veterans are best equipped to support Veterans. Our team hopes to work closely with Veteran service organizations to assess the local Veteran-serving system and develop a plan to improve community response to Veterans and their families. WICHE hopes to contract with a local Veteran service organization to provide program coordination in Carteret County.

2. Assess Community Capacity to Serve Veterans

We recognize there are many gaps in services throughout the health care system, nationally and at local levels. Many of these gaps and challenges are beyond the scope of this project. Our hope is to identify opportunities to improve coordination of care, train Veterans and community members to respond to Veterans at risk of suicide and look for opportunities to support Veterans in ways that reduce their risk.

3. Develop Community Action Plan

We will work with Veterans and other community stakeholders to develop an action plan to address those areas identified in the assessment.

4. Support Implementation of the Action Plan

Together With Veterans provides technical assistance, community training and limited financial support to implement the community action plan.

5. Program Evaluation

Together With Veterans is a research project to learn how to support rural communities in implementing Veteran-specific suicide prevention strategies. Throughout our process, researchers will evaluate the strength of community partnerships, the process we use to develop our action plan, and the impact of our results.

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Together With Veterans (TWV), an evidence-based Veteran suicide prevention intervention, is a community partnership with the US Department of Veterans Affairs' Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC); the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Mental Health Program (WICHE MHP) and local organizations run by or serving Veterans.