



Military/Veteran Faith-Based Initiative

Overview

Background

Arizona is home to over 600,000 service members and veterans. These individuals and their families live in every community statewide and represent every era of service from World War II to the post-9/11 conflicts. Faith-based communities and organizations are located in every community statewide and are uniquely positioned to serve veterans and their families since they often have existing resources that support their members and their local community that could be extended to veterans and their families.

The Arizona Coalition for Military Families is a nationally-recognized public/private partnership focused on building Arizona's statewide capacity to care for, serve and support all service members, veterans, their families. The Coalition has launched the *Military/Veteran Faith-Based Initiative* to engage and equip faith-based communities and organizations throughout Arizona to provide effective care and support to service members, veterans and their families and connect them to resources.

The goals of this initiative are:

1. **Raise awareness** about the contributions and needs of service members, veterans and family members within faith-based communities and organizations through existing systems, denominations, etc.
2. **Engage** faith-based communities and organizations in providing effective care and support by equipping key staff and volunteers with information, training, and resources, according to Arizona's Guidelines for CARE.
3. **Connect** faith-based communities and organizations into the network of public and private sector organizations that serve the military and veteran community.
4. **Map** faith-based organizations and resources using the Military/Veteran Resource Network and connect service members, veterans, and family members to resources with the resource match tool (under development).
5. **Promote the use of best practices** for programs, services and resources targeted toward the military, veteran and family population in faith-based settings.
6. **Provide training and technical assistance** to faith-based communities and organizations to implement programs, services & resources to serve the military, veteran and family population.

A key aspect of this initiative is to enhance the resources and support already available in the faith community for this population, so that it does not overwhelm the already heavily taxed staff of the faith community. Identification of a volunteer leader (ideally a veteran or military family member) has proven effective in faith communities serving veterans. Just the ability to make veterans and their families aware of and comfortable accessing existing faith community programs and services goes a long way.

This initiative is under the umbrella of a program to connect service personnel, veterans, and their families with the resources in their communities called "Be Connected" (see www.BeConnectedAZ.org).

As part of this program the Coalition has created a system which connects resource providers, including faith based communities, with service personnel, veterans, and their families. Faith communities that join this network receive free training that can help them understand the needs of veterans and better serve them. They also will be connected with other faith communities to share their best practices in serving veterans and have access to the 24/7 Be Connected Support Line for helpers at 1-866-4AZ-VETS.

This initiative is designed to enhance connectivity to existing resources and support already available in the faith community, NOT to overwhelm an already heavily taxed and overburdened staff. Identification of a volunteer leader (ideally a veteran or military family member) has proven effective in faith communities serving veterans. The simple act of welcoming the stranger, and connecting a veteran or their family, to your faith community programs is a BIG first step.

To get started:

1. Fill out a brief pre-application at this web link:

<http://arizonacoalition.org/network/partner-organizations/>

2. A representative of the Coalition will contact you and set up a convenient time to ask you questions about your organization and get you connected to training opportunities.

3. Partners must agree to the guiding principles called "Guidelines for Care".

See: <http://arizonacoalition.org/network/guidelines-for-care/>

Want to know more? Click on the link at <http://arizonacoalition.org/network/partner-organizations/> and complete the 15-minute pre-application. A representative of the Coalition will contact you and set up a convenient time to ask you questions about your organization.