



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences

UF | **IFAS Extension**
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Rural Health

10. Ways Cooperative Extension Agents Can Help Veterans and Their Families

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How Cooperative Extension Agents Can Support Veterans and Their Families

It is essential to understand the Veteran population and their family needs related to mental and physical health services. Agents can support Veterans in several ways:

1. Making referrals
 - Hospitals (inpatient/outpatient services) and Clinics
 - Private practitioners
 - Community services
 - Online resources
 - Family/caregiver resources

2. Providing information on Mental Health resources to Veterans and their Families
 - Having brochures, pamphlets, and other resources on hand. Make sure it shows understanding, respect, and welcome toward Veteran families, such as displaying posters and yellow ribbons, flyers, and brochures for Veterans.
 - Agents can include in their website a Veteran-oriented section with local and national resource listings. All Veterans deserve recognition and appreciation for their service.

Close to one-quarter of the U.S. Veteran population (4.8 million) live in rural areas, with 46% living in the Southern Region of the United States. There are many reasons why Veterans choose to live in rural areas, such as closer proximity to family, friends, and community, open space for recreation, more privacy, lower cost of living, or less crowded towns and schools. While Veterans may enjoy the benefits of rural living, they may also experience rural healthcare challenges that are intensified by combat-related injuries and illnesses.

Spending time with family and friends and engaging with their community can be excellent sources of social support, which can help improve negative emotions related to PTSD and other mental problems. Engaging with nature and wellness practices are also ways rural Veterans can alleviate symptoms.

When possible, inquire about the Military/Veteran status of those you assist so you can refer your clientele to resources to help with their health and mental health issues. Having resources and handouts available in your workspace would be an excellent way for you to support your Veteran clientele.

Important information:

- ◆ Find out the County VA Service Officer in your county

SC County Veterans' Affairs Offices
<https://scdva.sc.gov/county-veterans-affairs-offices>

FL County Veterans' Affairs Directory
<https://floridavets.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/CVSO-Directory-Dec-2021.pdf>

- ◆ Ask the VA Service Officer who is the Benefit Coordinator in your County
- ◆ Ask the VA Service Officer who is the Enrollment Coordinator in your County
- ◆ Invite (for free) the VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator to your office
- ◆ Have a Flyer available from the VA about Community Care Eligibility Criteria

Other useful resources:

- ◆ Health benefits hotline: 877-222-VETS (8387)
- ◆ My HealtheVet help desk: 877-327-0022
- ◆ eBenefits technical support: 800-983-0937
- ◆ MyVA411 main information line: 800-698-2411
- ◆ Veteran's Suicide Crisis line number: dial 988—press 1; Text 838255

[Helpful VA Phone Numbers](https://www.va.gov/resources/helpful-va-phone-numbers/)

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VA Facility Locator:

[VA Facility Locator](https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/rpt_fac_list.cfm)

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