

The Path to Healthy Homecomings

Findings From the Community Reintegration Summit:
Service Members and Veterans Returning to Civilian Life

February 2009



"As we consider the role that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who at this very hour patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages.

We honor them not only because they are the guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service—a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves."

– *President Barack Obama,
Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009*

"We truly believe this will be the beginning of a new type of effort that will positively impact the reintegration of service members and veterans to an extent never seen before."

– *Jerry White, Founder and Executive
Director, Survivor Corps*

"Reintegration didn't occur for me as a result of orthopedic surgery or expert prosthetic care. It came through months of learning about myself, how I had changed from my experience... and by becoming a productive member of my community. Most importantly, I didn't do it by myself, or with the help of any single organization."

– *Scott Quilty, U.S. Army Captain (Retired)
and U.S. Program Manager, Survivor Corps*

"We're in our eighth year now, and somehow, we have to bring together the best practices, the best understanding of where we are and what we know and what we don't know and how do we move, together, to the future."

– *Admiral Michael Mullen,
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,
U.S. Department of Defense, Community
Reintegration Summit, January 27, 2009*

"What is needed are sustainable solutions. Sustainable solutions require collaborations, collective resources, diverse perspectives, and an openness to working across boundaries, looking for synergies that serve our shared purposes."

– *Reggie Van Lee, Senior Vice President,
Booz Allen Hamilton*

"There are numerous organizations...many of which are represented in this room, who are doing what they can to improve the reintegration experience... On the other hand, many of these very good intentions and best efforts are uncoordinated and can be confusing to those most needing assistance."

– *Harry Walters, Chairman, Veterans'
Coalition and Former Administrator,
Department of Veterans Affairs*

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Executive Summary

More than 1.6 million American service members have deployed in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001.¹ More than 30,000 of them have been physically wounded, and many more experience less visible, psychological wounds.² Recent reports suggest an increase in rates of suicide,³ alcohol and drug abuse,⁴ homelessness,⁵ and domestic violence.⁶ These traumatic effects of war, left unaddressed, could have far-reaching negative consequences for the individuals affected, their families, and our nation. This issue is particularly important as the nation prepares to withdraw many troops from Iraq and deploy many more to Afghanistan.

In August 2008, leaders from Survivor Corps, the Veterans' Coalition, and Booz Allen Hamilton (Booz Allen) began the process of convening and galvanizing a community of organizations to help improve the reintegration experience for service members and veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The initial conveners recognized that they alone could not solve the complex issues of reintegration. The answers to many of the challenges could be identified only through the work of a diverse community of thought leaders—those who are currently engaged in reintegration issues, and others who can offer a new perspective.

This paper briefly summarizes the situation before and the themes of what was learned during the most recent Summit. It also recommends immediate next steps to capitalize on the momentum generated by the Summit.

Where We Have Been

Initial Interviews. In September and October 2008, conveners conducted interviews with 26 leaders representing 21 organizations to learn more about community reintegration issues. Five issue areas emerged:

- ▶ Reuniting with Family
- ▶ Returning to Work and School
- ▶ Accessing Services, Benefits, and Information
- ▶ Rehabilitation
- ▶ Rejoining Community

¹ *Invisible Wounds of War, Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery*. 2008 RAND Report. http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG720.pdf

² Department of Defense OIF/OEF Casualty Status. <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf>

³ *U.S. Army Releases 2008 Suicide Data, Highlights Efforts to Prevent Suicide*. Media Relations Division, OCPA: 29 January 2009.

⁴ *2005 Health Related Behaviors Survey Released*. Department of Defense: 12 January 2007. www.defenselink.mil.

⁵ *Risk and Protective Factors for Homelessness among OIF/OEF Veterans*. National Coalition for Homeless Vets: 2006. www.nchv.org

⁶ R.E. Heyman and PH Neidig. *A Comparison of Spousal Aggression Prevalence Rates in U.S. Army and Civilian Representative Samples*. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*: 1999.

Initiators Conference. On October 21, 2008, conveners held the *Initiators Conference on the Community Reintegration of Service Members and Veterans* to review the issue areas raised during the interviews and revise or expand them as necessary, in order to broaden the community of leaders interested in working together on those issues, and to set the stage for a future Summit. Fifty leaders from 41 organizations representing the public, private, and civil sectors convened in Washington, D.C. for the event. As a result of the Conference participants:

- ▶ Validated the findings of the interviews and identified other issue areas
- ▶ Identified other leaders and organizations to include in future work
- ▶ Generated enthusiasm for the idea of convening a larger summit to broaden participation and chart a path ahead for sustainable progress on the issues

Community Reintegration Summit. On January 26 and 27, 2009, over 150 leaders convened at the Carnegie Institution in Washington, D.C. to participate in the *Community Reintegration Summit: Service Members and Veterans Returning to Civilian Life*. The event engaged participants and challenged them to work together to explore the issues associated with community reintegration. It also challenged them to reconsider the nature of true collaboration and how to work together more effectively to improve the reintegration of service members and veterans returning from war.

What We Have Learned

The Summit offered participants the opportunity to examine the various challenges facing service members, veterans, and their families during the reintegration process. It also provided them with an opportunity to propose new ideas for addressing those challenges. Several common themes emerged:

- ▶ Educate and Engage the Public, Promote the Cause
- ▶ Build a National Network of Peer Support and Mentorship
- ▶ Transform the Care Management Model
- ▶ Modernize Channels for Linking Veterans and Their Families to Resources
- ▶ Align Veteran Abilities, Education, and Business Needs
- ▶ Measure Progress Against Desired Outcomes

A Call to Action: Immediate Next Steps

Eighty-one percent of participants indicated that they were both willing and able to engage in collaborative action. Based on this enthusiasm among Summit participants, the conveners are actively seeking funding to continue this work and recommend three immediate next steps:

- ▶ Establish an Organizing Committee to articulate the mission, facilitate progress, and track outcomes
- ▶ Establish a Pilots Working Group to convene stakeholders at the state-level and identify communities in which to implement reintegration strategies developed by other working groups
- ▶ Establish working groups to examine specific issues and propose solutions

Where We Have Been

Between August 2008 and January 2009, a joint team from Survivor Corps, the Veterans' Coalition, and Booz Allen worked to identify and better understand the issues and current initiatives affecting reintegration and bring together veterans, service members, and leaders of government, industry, and civil society to begin solving these issues together.

The Interviews—Identifying the Issues

In September 2008, the conveners conducted interviews with 26 leaders from 21 organizations representing government, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions, veterans, and their families, to learn more about the issues facing the community and the leaders whose engagement is critical to solving these issues. Five major issue areas emerged from the interviews:

- ▶ Reuniting with Family
- ▶ Returning to Work and School
- ▶ Accessing Services, Benefits, and Information
- ▶ Rehabilitation
- ▶ Rejoining Community

The Initiators Conference—Identifying Leaders, Convening Community

On October 21, 2008, the conveners held the *Initiators Conference on the Community Reintegration of Service Members and Veterans* to broaden the community of leaders working on reintegration issues across organizational boundaries. Fifty leaders from 41 organizations representing the public, private, and civil sectors convened in Washington, D.C. for the event.

The leaders who attended the Initiators Conference expressed a desire to work together to solve the issues veterans face as they reintegrate and were enthusiastic about the idea of convening a larger summit to broaden the community of engaged leaders. The work completed at the Initiators Conference confirmed much of what was learned from the interviews and helped identify some reintegration themes for further exploration at the Summit. Leaders who attended the Initiators Conference also identified other organizations critical to improving reintegration.

The Community Reintegration Summit—Testing Solutions, Galvanizing Community

On January 26 and 27, 2009, over 150 leaders convened at the Carnegie Institution of Washington in Washington, D.C., to participate in *the Community Reintegration Summit: Service Members and Veterans Returning to Civilian Life*.

Participants in this 2-day event included representatives from the public, private, and civil sectors. This group engaged in a dynamic, participant-driven simulation designed to provide stakeholders an opportunity to explore reintegration challenges, and to enhance cross-sector relationships.

Vision: To ensure that service members and veterans have every opportunity to make a healthy return to their families and communities following their service or discharge, so they can thrive physically, psychologically, socially, and economically.
Goal: To convene a community of thought leaders from the public, private, and civil sectors to collaboratively address the critical issues of reintegration that affect service members' and veterans' return to family, work, school, and community.

The Summit was developed with the following objectives:

- ▶ Review themes, issues, and challenges faced by service members returning to civilian life
- ▶ Develop a definition of successful community reintegration
- ▶ Develop action plans to address specific issues of community reintegration that reach across sectors
- ▶ Launch sustainable processes to address specific issues of community reintegration

What is a Simulation?

A simulation is an interactive exercise that takes participants into an alternate environment that reflects real-world issues and conditions, but also allows for changes and modifications in order to explore actions and decisions.

A simulation is not a scripted role-playing exercise, but rather an open-ended process that provides participants with an environment that is conducive to the development of new ideas and strategies.

How Did the Community Reintegration Summit Simulation Work?

Teams of participants representing the Federal Government, business, veteran service organizations, nonprofit organizations, community, healthcare, education, media, and veterans and their families were tasked with addressing the issues related to community reintegration.

Over three moves or periods of simulation play, these teams were presented an evolving scenario that described the changes in the world and issues relating to veterans over the course of 5 years. Three fictitious veteran case studies were used to convey the real-world impacts on a personal level. Then, each team assessed these impacts and took actions as a stakeholder group or collaboratively with others to outline initiatives and programs for addressing these impacts and requirements.

During the event, participants were divided into stakeholder-based teams and challenged to—

- ▶ Identify and review their concepts of “successful community reintegration”
- ▶ Explore what initiatives they could take individually or collaboratively to address specific community reintegration issues
- ▶ Identify potential measures of successful reintegration
- ▶ Outline practical next steps in which to engage separately or collaboratively to achieve specific initiatives

Community Reintegration Definition

Community Reintegration is the process by which service members, veterans, and their family successfully return to work, school, and community following deployment or discharge. This process begins before and continues after deployment or discharge and incorporates physical, social, psychological, spiritual, and economic components.

What We Have Learned

The Summit allowed participants the opportunity to examine the various challenges facing service members, veterans, and their families during the process of community reintegration and to propose new ideas to address those challenges.

During the Summit, participants holding a variety of perspectives shared their insights through briefings and discussions. Several common themes emerged:

Key Features of Community Reintegration

At the beginning of the Summit, participants highlighted several points to consider when defining community reintegration

- Reintegration is a dynamic process with no distinct “end-point
- The process begins before and continues after deployment
- The roots of successful reintegration begin at the community level

Educate and Engage the Public, Promote the Cause

Military personnel who have deployed overseas since 2001 constitute approximately .05 percent of the total U.S. population. This disproportionate ratio between those who have served and those who have not is a product of the all-volunteer force, and it can lead to a lack of understanding of the challenges faced by military personnel and their families before, during, and after deployment. Important aspects of the military service experience, such as why some choose to enlist, the challenges faced throughout an overseas deployment, and the “invisible wounds” that many grapple with upon returning home, are not genuinely understood by the public beyond broad generalities. While positive stories about returning service members often make headlines, less attention is paid to their experience after the parades and military ceremonies have concluded. There is little public awareness—at the national and local levels—of the

scope and urgency of the reintegration challenges faced by many veterans and their families.

Empathy, understanding, and support from everyone in a community would provide a strong foundation for military families to rely on before, during, and *after* an overseas deployment. A national-level strategy of public education and engagement would catalyze a common recognition and appreciation of the challenges veterans and their families face, as well as the extraordinary contributions and potential they bring to their communities.

Summit Participant-Identified Solutions

- ▶ Develop a national education and awareness campaign that fosters a shared understanding of reintegration challenges, engages the public, and provides a positive picture of the contributions and potential of veterans. The campaign should employ a variety of implementation techniques from peer-to-peer outreach, advocacy events, public service announcements, and web-based forums.
- ▶ Ensure that the campaign includes positive messaging at the community level by profiling local veterans who have recently returned home, offering guidance on welcoming and supporting veterans and their families, and explaining what resources veterans might require and ways to make deployment and the reintegration process simpler for the veteran and his or her family
- ▶ Employ tailored messaging at the community level to highlight available local resources
- ▶ Develop targeted messaging for providers of medical, educational, community, and social services so that they may better understand the needs of returning service members and their families
- ▶ Develop specific messaging for children, teachers, and school administrators to educate them about what to expect from a child whose parent is deployed or recently returned

Build a National Network of Peer Support and Mentorship

After returning home from deployment and discharging from the service, veterans disperse to rural, urban, and suburban communities throughout the country. No specific department, agency, or organization is responsible for identifying where veterans are located. This makes it difficult to identify veterans who are in need of services and places the burden of seeking help on the veterans themselves. The feelings of isolation experienced by a veteran who is no longer surrounded by his or her “buddies” with a shared experience, and the well-documented stigma associated with seeking help, combine to exacerbate the challenges faced by veterans returning home after war.

Providing peer support for veterans and service members is a specific goal of the community reintegration stakeholders, and to achieve it, community-based peer support networks and programs must be established across the country. Programs would include an outreach component designed to locate veterans who were not willing to receive or did not require support upon discharge. Veterans who provide peer services should be trained to do so, be familiar with the resources available, and serve as representatives of the program to promote its benefits among the military and veteran communities.

Summit Participant-Identified Solutions

- ▶ Establish community-based peer support programs with an outreach component and publicize them where veterans live, work, and congregate
- ▶ Engage veterans who have benefited from peer support to promote the advantages of the program, encourage other veterans to take part, and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help
- ▶ Establish peer support or mentorship programs in specific environments, such as the workplace or school, to offer recently returned veterans a support group of peers who have overcome reintegration-related challenges

Transform the Care Management Model

For many veterans and returning service members it is difficult to understand exactly what benefits and health care services they are entitled to receive. It can be even more challenging sorting out the application procedures and claims forms needed to begin receiving those benefits and services. Time becomes a critical issue: deserving individuals and their families get caught in extensive procedures and lengthy processes just when they need immediate assistance. Case management is designed to provide a way forward, but even getting into a case management system can be difficult. While the government is working to improve case management for wounded, ill, and injured service members at the federal level, coordination across government agencies and between the public and private sectors continues to require more attention. These issues are further complicated because service members and veterans may not initially require services, yet the need becomes evident after they return to their local communities which are often far away from the concentrations of resources and services. When service members return to less populated areas, the shortage of health providers, social workers, and other clinical experts experienced in the specific needs of returning veterans can significantly add to the difficulty of receiving appropriate services. Extensive travel time to reach providers can compound the problem for many individuals and family members.

Seamless care management for veterans and returning services members is a key goal of many reintegration stakeholders, but achieving that goal has proven extremely challenging. To make progress on this goal, service members need to have a healthcare management process that begins before discharge from the military. When healthcare

services are required at the time of, or following discharge, the system should be able to transition service members smoothly from active duty to veteran status. At the community level, healthcare providers (with consent) should have access to veterans' complete medical histories and patient records and should have training in issues common to returning service members and veterans. A care management system that supports service members, from enlistment through return to civilian life, would provide them and their families a consistent means for better decision-making, a mechanism to discern among disparate services, and a flexible capability to meet the evolving needs of individuals and their families.

Summit Participant-Identified Solutions

- ▶ Develop a local or state-level case management system to provide a “veteran peer” or case manager to help veterans quickly locate and navigate appropriate healthcare resources at the community level
- ▶ Establish federally approved and federally reimbursed private sector care networks for veterans to access services in their communities outside of large centers or clinics
- ▶ Establish educational programs and/or continuing medical education credits for private sector healthcare providers to stay up-to-date on clinical best practices related to specific veteran and returning service members needs (e.g. long-term polytrauma care, combat injuries, psychological health) and on military culture, to better enable private sector healthcare providers to understand their patients' concerns, desires, expectations, and backgrounds
- ▶ Develop and implement a portable, transferable electronic patient-centric, patient-driven public health record (e-PHR) into current public and private sector care management systems to enable veterans and service members to maintain and share all relevant data as they transition through different systems
- ▶ Provide automatic enrollment into veterans' systems upon separation from the military to streamline processes and be responsive to veteran health needs at any point in time (this enrollment would not activate services, but would expedite veteran services upon need) or provide automatic enrollment upon separation into veterans' systems and into a national database of resources (an “opt out” or “do not contact” feature could be added to respect the privacy of those who do not want outreach services)
- ▶ Offer a “re-boot camp,” staffed by individuals and organization representatives who are prepared to offer community reintegration assistance; these could be modeled on existing programs that assist individuals with specific disease conditions (e.g., diabetes camp)

Modernize Channels for Linking Veterans and Their Families to Resources

Many resources and benefits, including counseling, housing, and financial assistance, are available for returning veterans and their families. However, accessing these resources can be a challenge for some because of the amount of paperwork required and the bureaucracies involved. It can be difficult for those providing resources to find veterans and their families because their location after discharge is not always known. Even in cases where veterans and their families are successfully linked to services, the variety of resources makes it difficult to identify which ones best align to their specific needs. The challenge remains to consolidate and streamline the information flow and service delivery, so that veterans can easily identify, access, and use the resources needed for their specific situation.

Summit participants overwhelmingly proposed leveraging technology as the best means for identifying veterans and their families and linking them to the most relevant resources. In a modernized system, veterans could be voluntarily located and regardless of where they reside, they would know what resources are available, which ones are best for their situation, and how to use them. It would be a change from a “demand-pull” system in which the veteran must bear the burden, to a “supply-push” system in which the burden is on the system.

Summit Participant-Identified Solutions

- ▶ Establish a volunteer, opt-in national registry of veterans, which would allow easier and ongoing identification and could be used to provide veterans and their families with the information and local resources they need while filtering out those that are irrelevant or impractical
- ▶ Establish resources locally in places where they are easily accessible such as in libraries, community colleges, local Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), and employment offices
- ▶ Leverage social networking technologies and peer-to-peer support programs through information provided by the national registry to effectively match veterans and their families with needed resources

Align Veterans' Abilities, Education, and Business Needs

Employment and education are consistently identified as critical components of successful reintegration. However, a real or perceived misunderstanding of gaps in veteran knowledge, skills, and abilities by educators and employers weakens demand for veterans. Likewise, veterans' misunderstanding of how their own abilities may or may not align with academic and employment market demands makes it more difficult for them to decide which path to pursue and how to pursue it. But lack of information is not the only barrier to advancing education or securing meaningful employment. Educational institutions and potential employers currently lack incentives and the know-how to seek out veterans and bring them into their organizations.

The combination of accurate and timely information combined with strong and meaningful incentives for educational institutions and employers would facilitate veterans onto the path of successful reintegration. In such a system, these organizations would provide information about their respective market demands to the appropriate federal agencies. These federal agencies would then institute programs for active duty service members that are designed to educate them about the current civilian environment before they are discharged. Upon return to civilian life, they would already have made some decisions and would have a plan in place for how to pursue educational or employment goals. Furthermore, educational institutions and employers would be ready and eager to find and recruit veterans. Incentives, such as tax breaks for employers and federal and state funding opportunities for veteran-inclusive schools, would be in their best interest to seek veterans.

Summit Participant-Identified Solutions

- ▶ Design a mechanism for employers to feed information about market demand to the most appropriate federal agencies, so that service members and veterans can be more efficiently guided toward the job that is right for them
- ▶ While military training and operations are and should always be the primary focus of service members while on active duty, it is crucial to prepare them for a successful transition before they leave the service. Once a service member has decided to leave the military and is approaching his or her discharge date, an enhanced Transition Assistance Program should provide training, seminars, and services to prepare them for the next phase in their life. Command emphasis on such a program would be critical to its success.
- ▶ Establish information programs for key educational and employer staff and administer the programs through appropriate departments to improve the understanding of veterans, their challenges, and the benefits associated with recruiting them
- ▶ Establish federal and state incentives for educational institutions to design veteran-centric curricula, recruit veterans, and ultimately improve their educational status or skill set
- ▶ Expand programs that translate veterans' experiences into civilian job certifications to ensure that veterans leave the service with immediately valuable and employable credentials
- ▶ Extend federally funded healthcare programs for all veterans for a period of time following discharge to allow employers to reduce their hiring and healthcare costs for recruiting veterans
- ▶ Create incentives for businesses to hire veterans

Measure Progress Against Desired Outcomes

Currently, there is no single authoritative source that individuals and organizations can use for determining which programs and services are most effective at improving the reintegration process. Public sector organizations must know how to measure best practices in order to make informed decisions on resource allocation—especially in an environment of tightening budgets. Private sector organizations must demonstrate return on investment to justify the inclusion of veteran-centric strategies in their organizational plans. Civil sector organizations must demonstrate their ability to make a real difference in improving reintegration so they can make the best case possible to potential funders. Most importantly, it is critical to track how successful overall efforts are in helping veterans and their families.

The ideal system would measure the direct impacts on veterans' and their families' lives, not on program or service usage. This knowledge would assist organizations in identifying their current state, best practices, and gaps in performance so that resources could be more effectively allocated. It would also enable the provision of objective feedback, perhaps reducing political or bureaucratic influences, so that organizations could improve their programs and services. Ultimately, veterans and their families would be able to identify the most effective organizations to help them with their particular needs.

Summit Participant-Identified Solutions

- ▶ Establish a measurement system to capture the complexity of issues such as how veterans are returning to families, community, education, and employment—derived from the agreed-upon definition of successful community reintegration, to ensure that the focus is kept on achieving veteran-centric impact, not programmatic output
- ▶ Focus the measurement system on positive measures such as new hires, lasting marriages, degrees earned; the more traditional negative measures such as suicide, homelessness, divorces; and outcomes, such as employment satisfaction and self-perceived health and wellness. This measurement system would provide a more balanced and hopeful view and would assist organizations in ensuring that veterans thrive, not just survive.
- ▶ Build the measurement system so that it is sensitive enough that individual organizations can contribute significantly to outcome reporting

A Call to Action: Immediate Next Steps

Insights alone cannot generate meaningful change or outline exact next steps. As Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, challenged all Summit participants, improving community reintegration for veterans and services members is the goal toward which we all strive. In fact, 81 percent of participants who returned Summit evaluations indicated that they were both willing and able to work together towards this goal. With strong commitment and enthusiasm among Summit participants to chart the path ahead for the megacommunity, the conveners present the following recommendations and invite all interested stakeholders to join in approaching community reintegration in a new, more collaborative way.

Our hope is that veterans and leaders who wish to advance their organizational agendas through collaboration will continue to work together on the critical issues of reintegration and will find a role in the community moving forward—founding the *Healthy Homecoming Megacommunity*.

The conveners are currently seeking funding for this work, and we recommend the following as immediate next steps:

- ▶ Establish an Organizing Committee
- ▶ Establish a Pilots Working Group
- ▶ Establish Issue-Specific Working Groups

What is a Megacommunity?

A megacommunity is a network of organizations, drawn from the public, private, and civil sectors, driven together to engage in solving a compelling problem of mutual interest, such as the community reintegration of veterans and service members returning to civilian life.

A megacommunity is not a static organization with a hierarchical structure, but rather a flexible, living network that is scalable and adaptable to its members.

The current challenge is dynamic in nature and so, too, are the organizational roles within the megacommunity. In this way, the megacommunity is able to adapt to the evolving reintegration needs of veterans and service members over time.

Figure 1: Illustrates the working model we recommend implementing in 2009 to move this megacommunity to action. The sections that follow provide detail for each element.

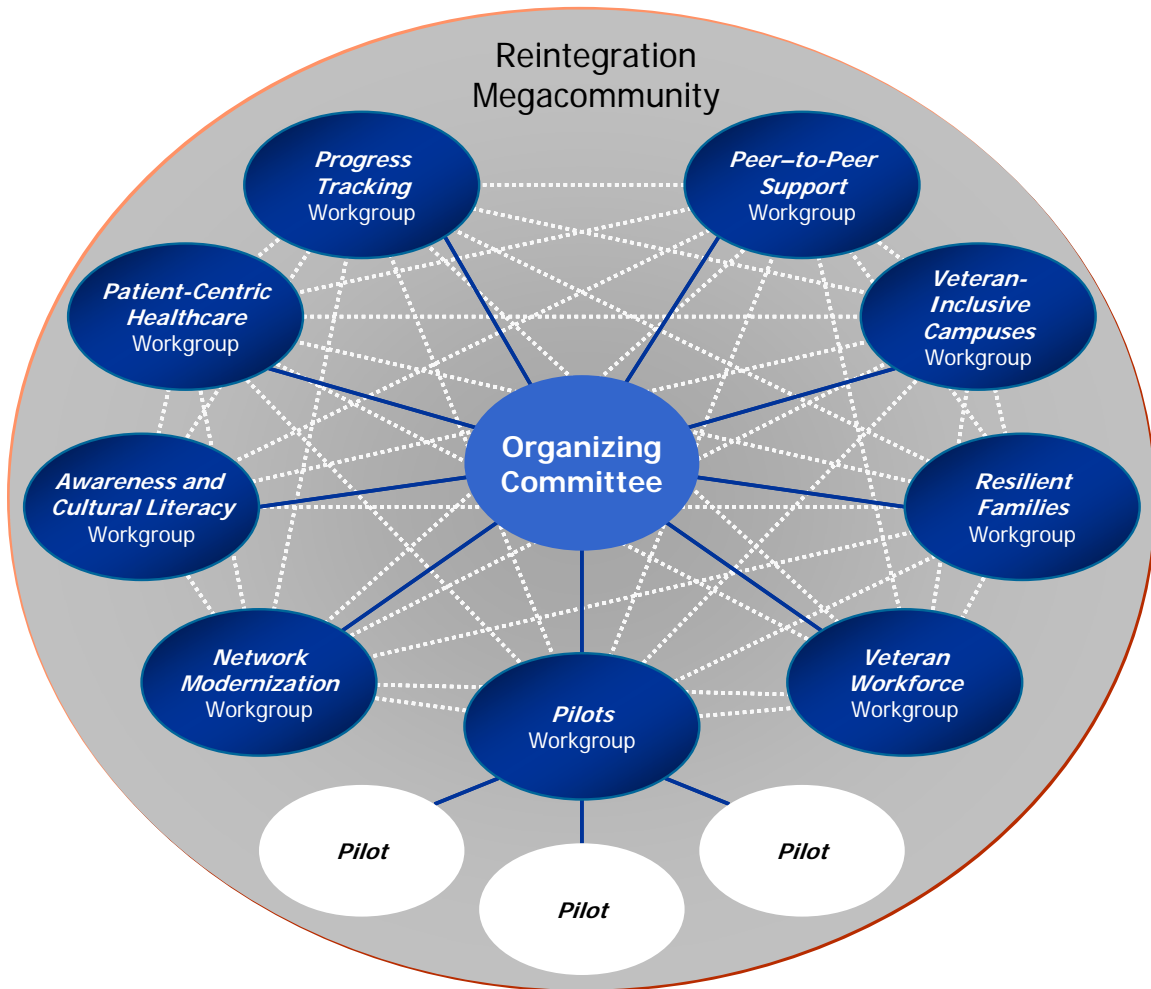


Figure 1: Community Reintegration Working Model

Organizing Committee—Articulating Mission, Facilitating Progress, Tracking Outcomes

While there is an overwhelming desire for action following the Summit, there is also a real danger of duplicating efforts, reinventing existing programs, creating unnecessary bureaucracy, and moving at cross-purposes with other stakeholders. For these reasons, we recommend launching an Organizing Committee to serve a leadership role within the megacommunity.

The Organizing Committee will be responsible for articulating overall direction, facilitating collaboration, and recruiting new members to the megacommunity. It will monitor the progress of workgroups (described below) and oversee the administrative and communication functions that will help megacommunity members work together effectively. For example, the Organizing Committee could set up a website and blog to share related efforts and serve as a gateway for members to reach one another.

The conveners of the Community Reintegration Summit will be among the initial members of the Organizing Committee, but in the spirit of inclusiveness, will look for the participation of leaders from across all sectors to provide diversity of thought, resources, and vision. Leaders should be prepared to articulate a path forward while committing their own and/or their organization's time and resources. This Committee will be a flexible, living network that incorporates members and perspectives in accordance with the evolving needs of the megacommunity.

Pilots Working Group—Moving to Action in Communities

Throughout the Summit, participants consistently struggled with the question of how to align national-level programs, resources, and strategies to the communities to which veterans return. Convening stakeholders at the state-level and choosing communities in which to adapt reintegration strategies developed within the megacommunity may be a way to do this. For this reason, we recommend the formation of a working group to explore the best approach.

The Pilots Working Group should consist of national-level public, private, and civil sector organizations with local reach. The group would explore the feasibility of pulling together resources at the state level to effect successful reintegration in communities. Through this state-level convening, community reintegration efforts would be improved while providing a learning environment in which veterans and stakeholders can raise and understand issues and test new solutions. Ultimately, the goal is that effective concepts derived from the pilots will be shared and replicated nationally, and that the strategies developed within the megacommunity could be implemented locally.

Working Groups—Examining Issues, Proposing Solutions

Many ideas that were identified through the interviews, at the Initiators Conference, and at the Summit, require work across sectors in order to be carried out effectively. Stakeholders of the *Healthy Homecoming Megacommunity* realize that it will take collaboration and vision from a multitude of organizations, and that no single organization can completely affect change or implement all of these ideas.

In 2009, we recommend launching working groups to address the issues most commonly faced by veterans and their families struggling to reintegrate. Megacommunity members who have been working to resolve these issues and members who want to become more involved in solving these issues will come together in facilitated discussions. They will identify barriers and develop plans and strategies to overcome them and ensure veterans and their families have every opportunity to experience a healthy homecoming.

We recommend launching the following Issue-Specific Working Groups:

- ▶ Progress Tracking—Setting Goals and Measuring Outcomes
- ▶ Awareness and Cultural Literacy—Raising Understanding of Veteran Strengths and Challenges
- ▶ Peer-to-Peer Support—Community-Based Psychosocial Support of Veterans and Their Families
- ▶ Patient-Centric Healthcare—Seamless Services and Coordinated Systems
- ▶ Resilient Families—Supporting Spouses, Children, and Extended Caregivers
- ▶ Veteran Workforce—Hiring Strengths, Accommodating Needs
- ▶ Veteran-Inclusive Campuses—Creating Healthy and Empathetic School Environments
- ▶ Network Modernization—Improving Access to Information, Services, and Community Through Technology.

Many leaders in the megacommunity are already focusing on these issues and our hope is that they will engage with us in these workgroups, invite other leaders critical to solving the issues, and advance solutions for each issue.

Conclusion

As service members and veterans face reintegration challenges after returning home from war, the need for more collaborative and effective efforts to improve a healthy homecoming has increased. Though public, private, and civil sector organizations across the country have worked hard to ease the reintegration process, it is clear that more remains to be done.

At the Summit, break-out groups from various sectors examined the obstacles facing veterans as they reintegrate and identified several ways to ease that transition. It is our hope that in moving forward, we, as a megacommunity of stakeholders, can make those ideas a reality. To overcome these challenges and achieve this vision demands a dedicated network of stakeholders to commit their energy, coordinate their efforts, and collaboratively work on behalf of service members, veterans, and their families.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A: Community Reintegration Summit – Participating Organizations

American Association of State Colleges and Universities	Disability Resource Center, University of Arizona
American Council on Education	Families Northwest
American Psychological Association	Florida Department of Veterans Affairs
American Red Cross	Government of the District of Columbia
AmericanLife TV Network	Grant Thornton LLP
America's Promise Alliance	Habitat for Humanity International
AMVETS	Headquarters, U.S. Special Operations Command
Army Emergency Relief (AER)	Health Net Federal Services
Army National Guard Decade of Health	Healthy Humans
Association of Small Foundations	Helmets to Hardhats
Bob Woodruff Foundation	House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Brown University	House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (Observers)
Business Executives for National Security (BENS)	Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers, Brussels (NATO)
C/H Global Strategies	Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)
Catholic Charities Chicago	James Madison University
Center for Restorative and Regenerative Medicine, Brown University	Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
Civic Enterprises	Johns Hopkins University
Concepts, Inc.	Joint Task Force National Capital Region Medical (JTF CapMed)
Defense Centers for Excellence for Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury	LifeCare, Inc.
Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program	

Management & Organizational Psychology	National Military Family Association
Marine Wounded Warrior Regiment	Nazareth College
Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA)	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs
Maryland National Guard	Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services/Statewide Advocacy for Veterans' Empowerment (SAVE)	Office of the Secretary of Defense (MC&FP)
McCormick Foundation	Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Army
Medsphere Systems Corporation	Operation Military Family
MHN "A Health Net Company"	Park University
Military Advantage/Monster Worldwide	Student Veterans of America
Military Child Education Coalition	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Monterey Consulting Associates, Inc.	Susan Davis International
Montgomery College	ThanksUSA
MyVetwork	The American Legion
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU)	The Veterans Corporation
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA)	Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
National Center on Family Homelessness	TriWest Healthcare Alliance
National Chamber Foundation	U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans	U.S. Chamber of Commerce
National Guard Bureau—Army National Guard—Soldier Family Service Support Division (NGB-ARNG-SFSS)	U.S. Department of Education
National Institutes of Standards and Technology	U.S. Department of Labor/Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS')
National League of Cities	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration – Office of Patient Care Services

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Veterans Benefits Administration Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VBA VR&E) Service	Vermont National Guard
U.S. Selective Service System	Veterans and Families (Air Force Reserves, Army, Army National Guard, Army Reserves, Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reserve)
U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Veterans Business Development	Veterans Green Jobs
United Press International	Veterans of Foreign Wars National Home for Children
United Way of America	Vietnam Veterans of America
US Army/Internal Office of the Secretary of the Army (IOSA)	Warrior and Survivor Care Task Force, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
USMC Wounded Warrior Regiment	Witness Justice
USO World Headquarters	Wounded Warrior Project

Appendix B: Links to Further Information

For the complete findings from the interviews, please visit:
http://us.survivorcorps.org/files/images/us/Interview_Findings.pdf.

For more information on the *Initiators Conference* please visit:
<http://us.survivorcorps.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=426>.

For information on the *Community Reintegration Summit* and a detailed briefing book, please visit: <http://us.survivorcorps.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=430>.