



Building stronger relationships on the homefront for returning Veterans and their family.

Preventing Interpersonal Violence Initiative

Interpersonal violence (IPV) within veteran families (this term is inclusive of active duty, guard and reserve families and includes caregivers) is largely attributed to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or to a prior history of trauma. Military methods of conflict resolution are poorly suited to family life. Veterans with traumatic stress issues, compared to civilians, are:

3x the rate of interpersonal violence

3x more likely to be unemployed

2x more likely to be divorced

Blue Shield of California Foundation is helping to prevent IPV and improve the resiliency of our veterans and their families by bringing the nationally recognized *Strength At Home*, a ten (10) session Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to the Central Valley of California. This CBT intervention pairs the veteran with friends/roommates (in some cases peers from veterans programs i.e., transitional housing, substance abuse programs etc.)



or spouses/romantic partners or family members (parents, grandparents, siblings, etc.). This demonstration is also a research project based on informed human consent protocols with a research design approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Cambridge Health Alliance, a Harvard University teaching hospital affiliate. Those who do not wish to sign the informed human consent forms are allowed to participate and receive all the benefits of the intervention but are excluded from the research.



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Preventing Interpersonal Violence Initiative

Project Design

Goals

- **Prevent IPV** within veteran families where there are traumatic stress issues and relationship distress but no current incidences of violence.
- **Train community based clinicians** in the manualized *Strength At Home* ten session CBT and research protocols, assist in their NIH Informed Human Consent Certification.
- **Produce evidence** of the efficacy of *Strength At Home* and then:
 - **Influence Policy** by submitting an article for publication in a peer reviewed journal; presenting results at conferences for Federal, State, County and Municipal employees as well as community based organizations
 - **Improve Practice** by submitting the results and the intervention for inclusion in SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) and disseminating a tool kit for program replication.

Measures/Metrics

The metrics for the dyadic *Community Circles Strength At Home* CBT:

- Unique Identifiers assigned to each dyad
- Pre and post intervention assessment
- Longitudinal survey

Outcomes

The program seeks to enhance communication, closeness and happiness in relationships. Results from the program are helping to improve services to veterans and military families.

Central Valley, CA Partners

San Joaquin Valley Veterans (SJVV), a project of **WestCare of California** leads the initiative locally. SJVV creates partnerships including but not limited to, Alliant International University, California School of Professional Psychology, Fresno City College, the VA, county and municipal veterans services, faith based and community based organizations to provide the outreach services for referrals as well as partnerships to train clinicians to provide the intervention and gather the research data. SJVV coordinates the concurrent operations of cohorts providing the *Community Circles Strength At Home* groups in Central Valley locations such as Clovis, Fresno, and Visalia, California.

Who We Are

Established in 1988, **The National Center on Family on Family Homelessness (The National Center)** is the nation's leading authority on the impact of trauma, poverty and homelessness on families and children. With a diverse team of researchers, social scientists, clinicians, and community organizers, The National Center designs innovative family-oriented programs that improve the lives of vulnerable families and strengthens the communities in which they live. Our partner, Dr. Casey Taft, Associate Professor, Boston University School of Medicine, National PTSD Center and Boston VA Medical Center, adapted his *Strength At Home* group clinical intervention with The National Center staff to specifically meet the needs of this initiative.



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What does the Central Valley, CA Community Circles *Strength At Home* Program offer?

The *Strength at Home* program offers FREE two-hour classes weekly for 10 weeks in Central Valley, CA locations.

- Classes include options for weekend time slots as well as weekday evenings and even weekday lunch
- Refreshments, light meals and on-site children care are offered at no charge for participants
- Stipends are available to offset the cost of attending classes and completing out-of-session assignments

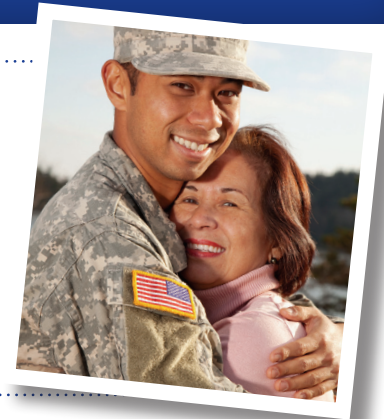
Personal changes can impact relationships upon homecoming for recently separated from service military members and their families. The *Community Circles Strength At Home* program offers tools to strengthen relationships and help Veterans or returning service members and their families (and friends) adjust after the unique stresses associated with deployment or separation from service.

The program seeks to enhance communication, closeness, and happiness in relationships after a deployment or separation from service, and ease the return to family and community.

“Wow, it really seems like vets are enjoying your *Strength at Home* program! Two of my vets claim it is the only program that has helped them in their relationships. Keep up the good work!”

Mental Health Doctor at Local VA

“I like that my mom can go with me. She wants to help but doesn't have any way to help me. It's frustrating.”



Prospective Participants' Frequently Asked Questions:

- Q:** Are these classes confidential?
- A:** Yes. Your information is confidential and protected at all times.
- Q:** Am I eligible for this program?
- A:** We are offering *Strength At Home* to all veterans regardless of duration of service, discharge and campaign status with special outreach to OEF/OIF veterans (as well as Guard/Reserve) with their choice of attending with a spouse, relative or friend.
- Q:** What is required to participate?
- A:** Go to an orientation and attend 10 weekly classes of 2 hours each and take part in brief assignments outside the classroom. Help us evaluate the program.

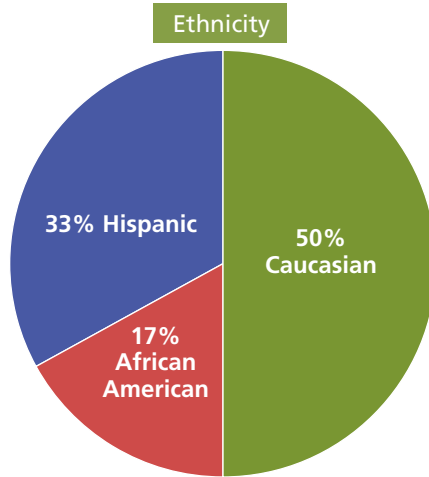


Who were the first *Strength At Home* participants?*



Demographics

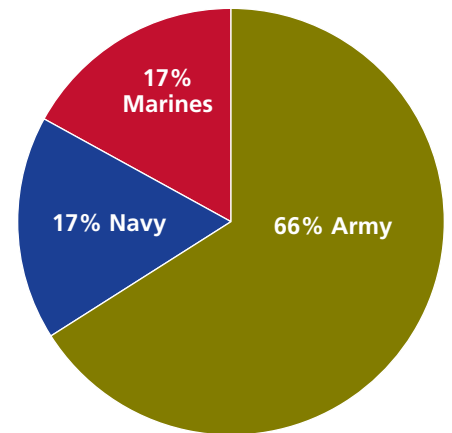
- 100% are male
- 41% have been homeless in their lifetime



Military Service Experience

- 66% served in combat
- Average 1.6 tours of duty
- Average of 1.4 deployments
- Discharge Status
 - 11 Honorably Discharged
 - 1 participant is still serving in the Guard

Service Branch



“ We have been waiting a long time for a program like yours - *Strength at Home* truly is a God send.”
VA PTSD Staff Psychologist

Service Era**

25% Vietnam

41% Post-Vietnam

33% Persian Gulf

25% OEF/OIF

Behavioral Health

- 63% have PTSD
- 58% have Traumatic Brain Injury
- 65% have moderately severe or severe depression

“ I wanted to thank you for introducing *Strength at Home* to our community. There are so many veterans who are in need and genuinely want help. I can guarantee you that the demand will be large and gratitude will be high.”
Operation Welcome Home Veteran Representative

“ I finally spoke to my kids for the first time in three years! I didn't know what to say before I learned those communication skills.”

*First participant cohort equaled 12 dyads.

** Totals exceed 100%, as some veterans served in more than one era



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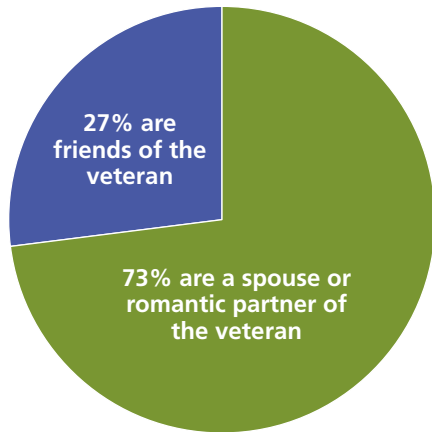


What motivates veterans to participate in *Strength At Home*?



Relationship with Dyad Partner

Who are their partners?



36% of partners have served in the armed forces

“ My wife and I were literally a moment away from divorcing before this program. We did not think it was possible to save our marriage, but our new communication skills are helping us to work out our issues.”

How do Veterans feel about CC SAH?

We have follow-up data from 6 Veterans to date. Among those, we found that:

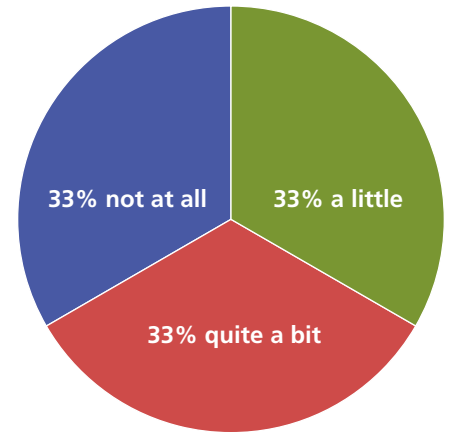
- They attended an average of 9 out of the 10 sessions offered
- 100% state they learned valuable communication and coping skills

100% would recommend the program to a friend

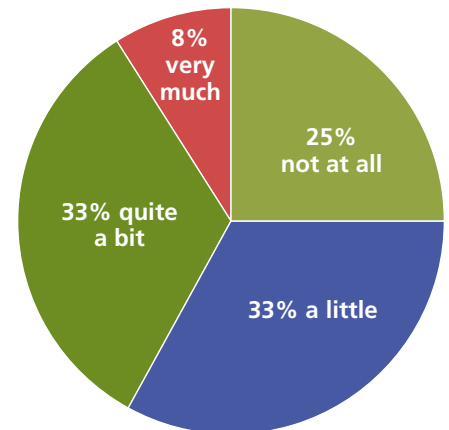
What do we know about their relationships?

- 33% have been involved in a physical altercation with their partner in the past 3 months
- 75% feel that they give more than they get from their relationship with their dyad partner
- About 1/3 have frequent arguments with their partner
- About 1/3 have to make an effort to avoid conflict with their partner

How often do you argue with your partner?



How often do you have to work to avoid conflict with this person?



“ I am so glad I went through this program, I made so many friends and feel like I finally have meaningful relationships!”



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