

VSPE Veteran Serving Organization Impact Highlight

Arizona Coalition for Military Families



VSPE funded the Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF) for three cycles of VSPE between 2018 and 2022. ACMF is a nationally recognized statewide public-private partnership and collective impact initiative established in 2009. The Veteran suicide rate in Arizona is significantly higher than the general population's. In 2017, ACMF, the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and other key public and private stakeholders established the Be Connected (BC) program to address Veteran suicide. This statewide upstream suicide prevention

program focused on Arizona's 500,000 service members, Veterans, and their families. Be Connected serves the military, Veteran, and family population by providing connection to support, information, and other resources across all social determinants of health, with a goal of earlier and more effective intervention. The program includes a phone support line, care navigation, career navigation, risk reduction, community outreach, and engagement of partners and helpers.

ACMF identified a gap in their ability to evaluate their programming before participating in VSPE. ACMF used their first VSPE project to implement process evaluation to determine whether key program activities were implemented as intended. Findings from this evaluation allowed them to:

- **Ensure consistency in their procedures and determine caller needs in the BC program support line.**
- **Define who was seeking services from the BC program and show that ACMF reached their intended audience before a crisis, using upstream, non-crisis services.**
- **Better serve Veterans by substantially improving the way they implement programs and collect data to evaluate them.**



ACMF used formative evaluation which involves the collection of data and information during the development process that can be used to improve programs. They strategically developed two evaluation tools to improve evaluation and suicide prevention activities. ACMF engaged with partners to create evaluation tools, which improved their evaluation efforts and helped accomplish long-term results. ACMF has piloted and shared these evaluation tools for other communities to use.

These tools include:

- The **Veteran Suicide Vulnerability Index (VSVI)** allows states and communities to assess the status, needs, and risks of their Veteran population.
- The **State Veteran Suicide Prevention Scorecard** equips these communities to analyze their own strengths, challenges, and readiness to engage in Veteran suicide prevention.

ACMF developed a rigorous outcome evaluation plan to assess how well their BC Risk Reduction Operations Team achieved its intended goals in their third year. This process equipped ACMF to start their outcome evaluation plan and evaluation logic model which informed a newly launched risk reduction framework and coaching interconnection program.

Achievements from their third year include:

- **Continued use of this evaluation plan, which will allow ACMF to assess if the program is increasing how easily Veterans can access and services and any improvement their social determinants of health.**
- **Integration of VSPE skills into their evaluation efforts to help share lessons learned and promote the use of their evaluation findings.**

ACMF shared that their **“internal capacity to carry out evaluation is markedly different”** because of VSPE. ACMF Project Director, Nicola Winkel, said **“Things that would have taken two to four years for us to get to, we've done in a year because we were part of this project.”** ACMF applies the evaluation skills gained from VSPE and is expanding their evaluation efforts through a collaborative partnership with Arizona State University. VSPE successfully equipped ACMF with skills to take on more complex forms of evaluation. They continue to use evaluation throughout their organization to improve outcomes for Veterans and reduce suicide.



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This report is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$500,000 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government.