

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Partnering with Families and Caregivers

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Objectives

The Story of a Veteran Caregiver

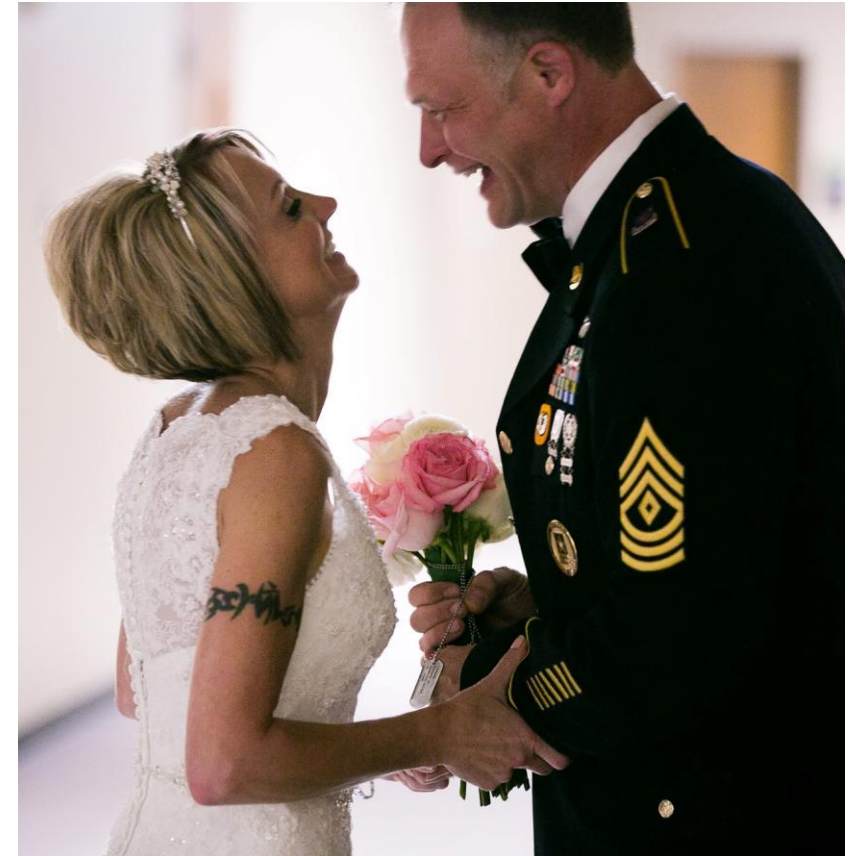
My Mayor's Challenge Experience

What Can Family Members/Caregivers Do?

Lessons Learned

The Story of a Veteran Caregiver

- Bryan and I met in 2013
 - 23-year Army career/Special Operations
 - 7 tours to Afghanistan
- First suicide attempt in 2017
 - No support for the family
- Leaving my career after 15 years



Kansas City, MO, Mayor's Challenge Team—2019

- SMVF—What about the F?
- One of the teams to include a family member with lived experience
- Poster presentation



Family Members /Caregivers Are Key

- First Gatekeepers
 - They are a consistent presence in Veterans' lives
 - Provide ongoing emotional and physical support
 - Provide regular social support
 - Identify high-risk behaviors and offer de-escalation
- Communicate to Providers
 - Report symptoms/behaviors
- Inform Research and Policy
 - Before, during, after a crisis



Lessons Learned/Key Takeaways

- Must Invite Family Members/Caregivers to the Table
 - If you are not in their shoes, you do not know
- Caregivers/Hidden Helpers Need Mental Health Care
 - Culturally competent providers
 - Mental health of caregiver affects Veteran
- Must Provide Education/Tools
 - Equip caregivers with knowledge and training
 - Follow up with caregiver after a crisis



Lessons Learned/Key Takeaways

- Veterans Do Not Heal in a Vacuum
 - What affects them impacts the family
 - Train providers in Inclusive Care
- Provide Opportunities for Caregivers to Meet...
 - Policymakers
 - Protect and expand state and local support programs
 - Department of Mental Health—resources for caregivers
 - Expand respite to Veteran and military caregivers
 - Employers
 - Offer paid family leave
 - Flexible/remote work opportunities

