

Joining Forces Educating and Engaging Students to End Veteran Homelessness

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Background

- Veterans make up about eight to eleven percent of the population
- Approximately 25 % experience homelessness
- National initiative in 2009 to end Veteran homelessness by 2015
 - Form community partnerships
 - Identify income and employment benefits
 - Identify and utilize housing services
 - Prevention efforts
 - Raise awareness of the issue through outreach and education
 - Identify, refer, and treat Veterans who need medical/psychiatric services

Joining Forces

- Joining Forces Pledge signed by SDSU-SON
- Educate future nurses about the unique needs of Veterans using best practices
- Grow the body of knowledge for improving health care and wellness of Veterans
- Integrate content of unique health and wellness challenges of Veterans into nursing curricula



Educating and Engaging Students

- VA Homeless Coordinator: Junior level nursing students (N416) observed and engaged in doing assessments and identifying housing resources for Veterans with the nurse coordinator
- Psychiatric Emergency Clinic (PEC): Junior level nursing students (N416) worked with the nurse and assessed many homeless Veterans for psychiatric referrals for outpatient, inpatient, and follow up care



- Outreach nurse for homeless Veterans: Students from the Valor-Extern program worked with the nurse to identify, assess, and refer homeless Veterans in the field
- Stand Down: Students from the SON volunteered for San Diego Stand Down, where homeless Veterans received medical care, resources, support, and referrals

Outcomes

- Students understood the importance/significance of Joining Forces in providing care to Veterans in the VA and in the Community
- Students appreciated the magnitude of the needs of homeless Veterans
- They developed insights that Veterans are a vulnerable population
- Students understood the risk factors for homelessness for Veterans
- They identified ways of integrating care received by Veterans in the community with resources at the VA
- Students understood the importance of prevention and education in decreasing Veteran homelessness



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