



*Shared experiences  
and support for Veterans*

[www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net)

## **Q: What is the Make the Connection public awareness campaign?**

**Make the Connection** is VA's national public awareness campaign that is creating new ways to connect Veterans and their family members and friends with mental health information, resources, and support they can use to improve their lives.

## **Q: Who is the primary audience for the campaign?**

As the goal of the campaign is to direct Veterans to resources that can help them improve their lives, Veterans of all eras of service comprise the primary audience. But we also know that family members and friends are attuned to the challenges some Veterans may face, and they may often be best able to support Veterans in confronting those challenges and seeking assistance in overcoming them. They can help Veterans they care about identify symptoms or problems in living that could be improved through the resources the campaign highlights and can encourage those Veterans to access VA care and other mental health resources.

Furthermore, internal and external partners such as health care providers in the community and in VA, as well as employees at Veteran Service Organizations can use the campaign's Web site, [www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net), to identify resources that could benefit the Veterans with whom they work. Employees within VA can refer the Veterans they serve to the Web site as a way of encouraging Veterans to realize that they are not alone and that help is available.

By reaching a wide audience, the campaign can help everyone be an ambassador for the health and well being of Veterans, and put the tools for taking positive steps at the fingertips of all Web users.

## **Q: Why is the campaign important?**

Veterans have been trained to work through difficult situations together. When they experience difficulties as civilians—such as relationship problems, chronic pain, or symptoms of posttraumatic stress—they often believe they must work through these challenges alone. For those not familiar with the importance and the effectiveness of mental health services, seeking such services can be mistakenly believed to be a sign of weakness. It is important for Veterans and all other audiences to understand that proactively addressing all health issues, including those related to mental health, is for the good of oneself, one's family, and the community as a whole.

Moreover, many Veterans and others who see the benefit of utilizing services similar to those highlighted in **Make the Connection** are unaware of services targeted specifically toward Veterans. The unique experiences Veterans have gone through often mean they can benefit more from services tailored directly to them and others in the Veteran community. This campaign makes it easy to identify Veteran-specific resources that are designed specifically for the benefit of Veterans.

## **Q: What is MakeTheConnection.net?**

**MakeTheConnection.net** is a one-stop online resource where Veterans and their families and friends can privately explore information on mental health issues,

hear fellow Veterans and their families share their stories of resilience, and easily find and access the support they need. Visitors to **MakeTheConnection.net** can customize their experience and view content that is most relevant to them.

The Web site allows visitors to use interactive tools that serve as a filter to help them discover insights about what has worked for other Veterans. Based on their choices and preferences in navigating the site, they will be directed to information—including affirmative video testimonials of people with similar experiences—and suggestions of concrete steps to address the situations and concerns they face, as well as carefully selected resources to explore.

## Q: Who is leading the Make the Connection campaign?

The campaign is operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as part of its commitment to advancing the well being of the Nation's Veterans. VA continually strives to ensure Veterans have access to the most comprehensive and excellent care possible. VA's national system of mental health care is robust and specifically designed to address the needs of Veterans.

The success of the **Make the Connection** campaign also depends on support from VA staff, communities across the country, and partnerships with groups like Veteran Service Organizations, community-based organizations, and local health care providers who have direct contact with Veterans every day.

## Q: What makes this campaign special?

At the heart of **MakeTheConnection.net** are stories and testimonials by Veterans, for Veterans and their friends

and family. The best messengers for helping Veterans overcome barriers related to mental health and get the care they need are credible and trusted individuals and organizations that understand Veterans' experiences. It is these trusted messengers, who have courageously agreed to share their personal stories, that the campaign highlights.

**Make the Connection** helps people connect feelings and symptoms they are experiencing to problems and conditions that are treatable. It underscores the reality that there are evidence-based steps that can be taken to help Veterans overcome difficulties and improve their lives.

In addition, visitors to **MakeTheConnection.net** are able to customize their online experience and view content that is most relevant to them. The site will have content for Veterans that allows them to "see themselves" through tailored information based on era of service, gender, race, ethnicity, symptoms, and characteristics of military experience such as combat exposure and branch of service.

## Q: What can I do to help?

The success of **Make the Connection** depends on support from everyone who interacts with Veterans: community members around the country, Veteran Service Organizations, community-based groups, and local health care providers who have direct contact with Veterans every day. Many of these groups have participated in the campaign's development and will be critical partners in the distribution of **MakeTheConnection.net** messages and efforts to build greater awareness of the numerous resources available to improve the lives of our Nation's Veterans.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs