

# Civic Engagement in Action: The Reintegration of Veterans

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- ▶ CLASS: PSYC 489 -Capstone Perspectives on Psych Issues
- ▶ Instructor: **Linda Anooshian, PhD**
- ▶ Agency: The Veteran Center and the Evaluation and Brief Treatment PTSD Unit, Boise VAMC
  - ▶ Project Purpose: To create a brochure that would act as a reference for support services for veterans' families and friends.
  - ▶ Learning goals: To understand the basic knowledge of Boise State students regarding reintegration challenges faced by Veterans, their families and friends.
  - ▶ Community need addressed: Our brochure is intended as an agency contact reference for concerned family and friends of veterans in need. This resource has been developed for those who have kept us safe and secure.

**This study explores the attitudes and beliefs of Boise State University students regarding veterans' reintegration issues. Two hundred eight students in an introductory psychology course participated in an online survey. We found that 88% of respondents know a veteran but 37% don't know what services are available to them to assist with reintegration issues such as family, mental health and addictions problems. The information gathered assisted us in designing a brochure to serve as a single source of information on reintegration assistance for veterans and their families.**



Veterans often find themselves in combat one day and walking up the steps of their stateside home the next. This may lead to a major challenge of reintegration back into family and society. There are many issues that affect returning veterans and their families. Following deployment many vets do not feel a connection to the civilian world and may have trouble reintegrating. Loss of self, confusion and an overwhelming feeling of perceived burdensomeness contribute to the significant issues that veterans and their families face. (Brenner, et al., 2008). The entire family is affected by the veteran's departure and return. Guided reintegration has been suggested for veterans so they may be able to reconnect with their family and reintegrate back into society (Brenner, et al., 2008).

#### Method

A total of 208 undergraduate psychology students at Boise State University participated in an online survey that consisted of thirty-one questions, focused on five areas: family issues, services and benefits, addictions, mental health issues and integration.

#### Results

Results showed that 90% of people surveyed know someone who is a veteran and 80% realize that the transition from combat to civilian life is not easy. However, 37% of respondents don't know what services are available for vets and their families.

#### Discussion

The process of reintegrating back into civilian society becomes a difficult odyssey for many veterans and their families. Oftentimes, friends and family notice that something is amiss with their veteran before the veteran him- or herself does, but they may not know that help is available or how to go about getting help for their veteran or themselves.

Our project focused on investigating this information gap and finding a user-friendly way to reduce it. We conducted a survey of undergraduate students at Boise State University regarding their attitudes towards issues veterans face in their reintegration process. We consulted with representatives from the Vet Center and the Evaluation and Brief Treatment PTSD Unit (EBTPU) at the Boise VA Medical Center (VAMC). Based on the results of the survey and our consultations with these representatives, we designed a brochure with information aimed specifically at family and friends of veterans.



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