

Proposed Competencies for Counseling Military Populations



Military Culture represents general information about the functioning and worldview of military service members and their families.



Ethics represents counselors' self-awareness and motivation to serve military-connected clients, as well as ethical considerations working with military populations.



Systems Features represents general information about the nature and structure of the military lifecycle including, but not limited to, deployment, family, spouses and children, health and wellness, employment, and retirement.



Assessment of Presenting Concerns represents common areas of clinical concerns that service members frequently present to mental health services to address.



Identity Development represents the whole person concept of military life including one's personal identity as a service member and connection to mission and core values of working in a high-risk occupation across the lifespan.



Treatment represents general information about unique issues that may arise in the treatment of military-affiliated clients and approaches supported by research for military populations, including best practices of military care systems, as well as holistic, wellness-oriented services.



Advocacy represents counselors' ability to understand and influence individual, system, and public policy efforts to increase access to mental health resources for military-connected clients and promote the role of counseling professionals working with military populations.

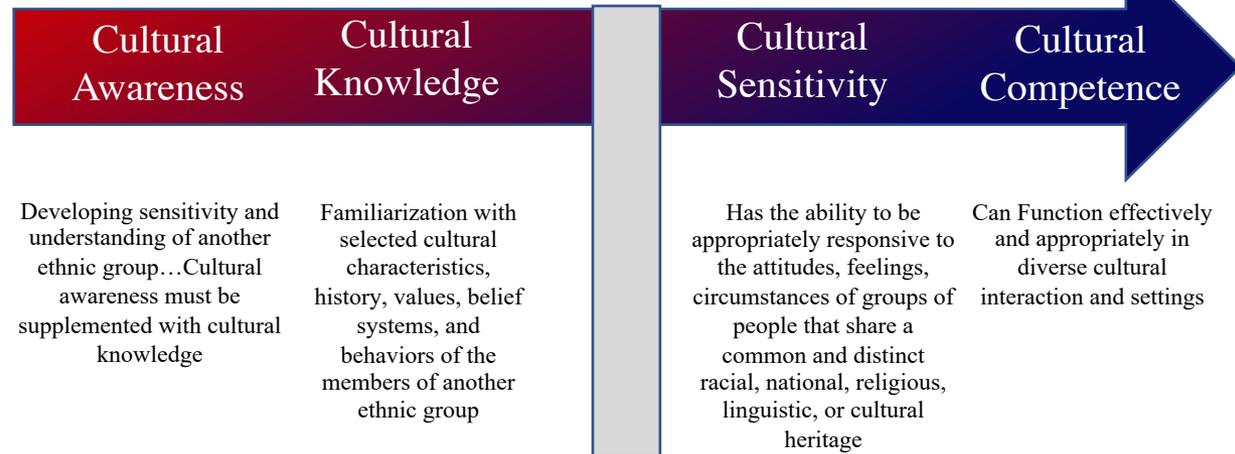
Beyond Basic Training: Ethical Considerations in Developing Military and Veteran Cultural Competence

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In 2016, the Military and Government Counseling Association appointed a task force to develop a set of competencies for professional counselors when working with service members, veterans and their families. The appointed task force developed and presented Competencies for Counseling Military Populations (Prosek, et al., 2018).

Continuum of Cultural Competence



Adams, D. L. (1995). Health issues for women of color: A cultural diversity perspective.

Explicit vs. Implicit Elements of Cultural Competence

Explicit- include hierarchies, ranks, uniforms, missions, occupations, organizational structures, jargon, terms

Implicit- *may be the most powerful and enduring* because they are intangible and cannot be shed along with the uniform. These include the values and guiding ideas of the warrior ethos.

(Litz, Lebowitz, Gray, & Nash, 2016)

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<http://www.veteranmentalhealth.com/JMGCJune18>

Complete Competencies for Counseling Military Populations

<http://www.veteranmentalhealth.com/competencies>

Additional Information

The Military/Civilian Gap or Divide:

Military Culture: Collective

- 'We' Culture
- Fixed
- The group's goals placed ahead of personal goals
- Learn first to manage people, then ideas
- Success is measured by group achievement
- Work is life (Profession or Vocation)

Civilian Culture: Individualistic

- 'I' Culture
- Fluid
- Emphasis is on individual achievement and self-reliance
- Learn first to manage ideas, then people
- Success is measured by individual achievement
- Work is just a job (Occupation)

Military Ethos (SAMHSA Handbook, 2010) (Snider, 2005)

- Warrior Ethos "Leave no one behind" deep and enduring sense of loyalty, commitment, and teamwork with fellow service members.
- Infuses in each Service member a moral focus including the ability to make ethical decisions in situations that are morally ambiguous.
- Instill a Bond of brotherhood/sisterhood lasts throughout their military career and beyond. This bond is highly valued, nurtured, and protected. After a service member separates, this is lost and can often leave a veteran searching for a substitute.

Military Values (SAMHSA Handbook, 2010)

- Honor and integrity are the core values of military service. In addition, each service has its own specific values that are taught to new recruits from the beginning of their time in service.
- The attributes gained during military service changes who they are as a person. Channeling their understanding of the military ethos & values culture can be a key technique in therapy.

Parallels

- A parallel is an effective implicit technique to reframe what the service member/veteran already knows.
- Parallels can be drawn between implicit military cultural experiences and psychological frameworks or models.
- A way to normalize therapy and show your military cultural competence at same time. Ultimately, it can help build **trust**.
- Components of good Parallels: *Metaphors, Analogies, Allegories*

References

Recommended Resources for Explicit & Implicit Cultural Training

- DoD/VA: Center for Deployment Psychology:
<http://deploymentpsych.org/military-culture-course-modules>
- DoD: Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury: <http://dcoe.mil/Training/Education.aspx>
- PsychArmor Institute: <http://www.psycharmor.org/#psycharmor>
- Head Space and Timing: <http://veteranmentalhealth.com/>
- Task & Purpose Newsletter: <http://taskandpurpose.com/>
- Wes Moore TED Talk: "How to talk to veterans about the war":
[https://www.ted.com/talks/wes moore how to talk to veterans about t he war?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/wes_moore_how_to_talk_to_veterans_about_the_war?language=en)
- Sebastian Junger TED Talk: "Why Veterans Miss War"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGZMSmculXM>

Recommended Further Readings:

- **Philosophy & Stoicism**
- **The Psychology of War**
 - Michael Matthews: *Headstrong How Psychology is Revolutionizing War*
- **Civil Military Divide/Gap**
 - Kori Schake & Jim Mattis: *Warriors & Citizens American Views of Our Military*
 - Karl Marlantes: *What It Is Like to Got to War*
- **Importance of Community in Healing**
 - Sebastian Junger: *Tribe On Homecoming and Belonging*
 - Joseph Bobrow: *Waking up from War*
- **Moral Injury**
 - Jonathan Shay: *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*
 - Nancy Sherman: *Afterwar Healing with Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers*
 - Brett Litz, Leslie Lebowitz, Matt Gray, and William Nash: *Adaptive Disclosure*

Additional Resources for Culturally Informed Treatment

- National Center for PTSD: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>
- VA Community Provider Toolkit:
www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders
- Make the Connection: www.maketheconnection.net
- About Face: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/AboutFace/Index.html>
- Coaching Into Care: <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/index.asp>
- PTSD Decision Aid: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/decisionaid/>