

# Working with Veterans Organization in Navajo Indian Country to Develop Veterans Treatment Courts

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June 25, 2021

# Treatment Courts work

- Justice involved veterans can access services through the VA Veterans Justice Outreach program - LISW is available for immediate evaluations inside the jails or detention facilities
- But...what kind of community based treatment can support veterans on the continuum of care? Or “Long Term” care for trauma informed care.



# Wellness Model for Haskeeji Nahatah (Military leaders) and Families

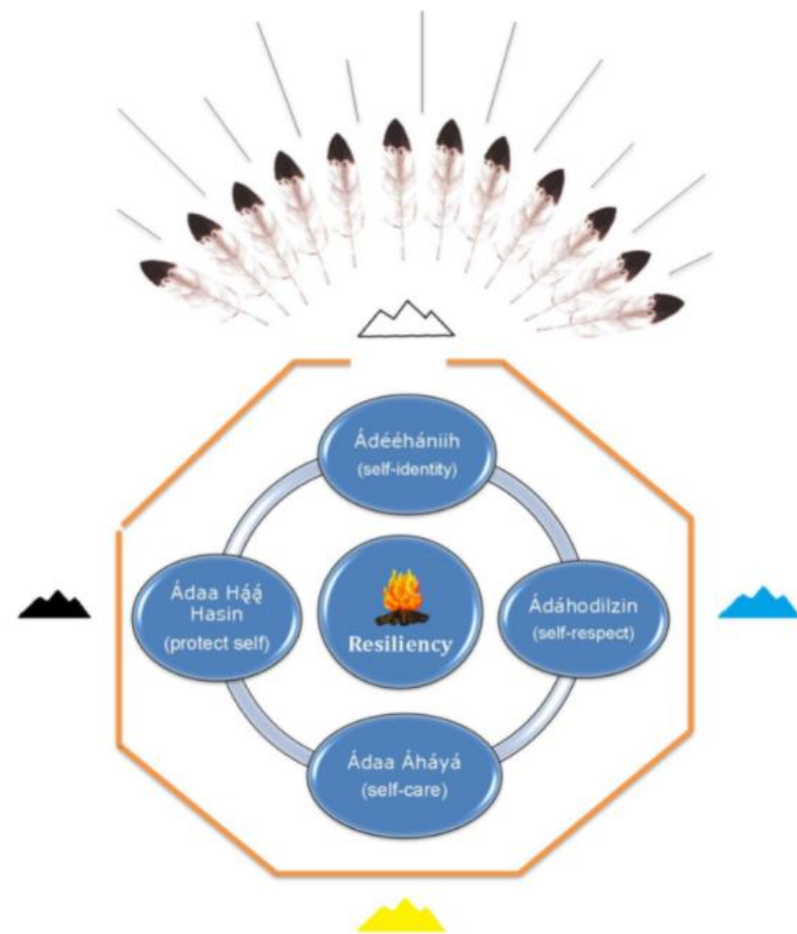
Self-Identity

Self-Respect

Self-Care

Protect Self

Developed by Office of Native Medicine  
Traditional Healers and from the Indian  
Health Service Website



Graphic of the Navajo Wellness Model curriculum entitled "Shá'bek'ehgo As'ah Oodáá'

# Logic Model for Navajo Veterans Justice Outreach Project (USDOD Funded 2013)

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- 1. Veterans participated in defining goals
- 2. Covered the Wellness Model, or “continuum of care”
- 3. Includes families
- 4. Not just for justice involved veterans but also for all Haaskeeji Nahatah
- 5. Helps treatment teams define goals and efforts from individual to community based activities (A community must have supports for those who are in a healing journey)

## Project completed a Logic Model

## Navajo Nation

Need	Goals	PROGRAM	Strategies & Activities	"If-Then" Statements/Theory of Change	Outcomes
All Veterans on/off reservation	Help reintegrate veterans into a healthy sober lifestyle successfully.	1. Life Skills curriculum for veterans and families 2. Community readiness assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify veterans through benefit fairs.</li> <li>2. Conduct training for TBI &amp; Suicide Prevention, Mental Health First Aid.</li> <li>3. Incorporate PM program presentations that are culturally appropriate. Help veterans with coping skills, teach ceremonies, manage emotions, improve family relationships, communications skills, avoiding risk taking, harm reducing and etc.</li> <li>4. Peacemaking Talking Circles.</li> <li>5. Coordinate Educational sessions on families and PTSD.</li> <li>6. Coordinate with VA families and Psychologist.</li> <li>7. Group-CBT- Journaling</li> <li>8. Chapter – Honoring Veterans</li> <li>9. Community dinner – Bike Run</li> <li>10. Breakfasts – Meet and Greets with other veterans</li> <li>11. Spending more time with family</li> <li>12. Retreat- emotional regulation, education about traditional healing for veterans.</li> <li>12. Develop self help guide for veterans.</li> <li>13. Connect with housing programs and shelters, -</li> <li>14. Educate youth at High School Level about the traditional teachings of joining the military</li> <li>15. Strengthen the Carl D. Hayden Traditional healing program with VA for veterans – (funding stream through Navajo Nation). For VA enrolled veterans.</li> <li>16. Develop “orientation” materials for veterans and families – recorded virtual</li> </ol>	<p>If VJO coordinator coordinates a prevention program for veterans and families then there is participation and engagement will be identified.</p> <p>If veterans and families can be identified then life skills can be implemented.</p> <p>If life skill is implemented you will see a healthy and functioning veteran and family.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Program participation sobriety increased skills in emotional regulation and family participation.</p> <p><b>Long Term:</b> Sobriety more than 30 days Maintenance of successful relationship Regain self-respect and communication</p>

## Sample:

Services for veterans who are justice involved	Heal the person Reduce or prevent recidivism in justice involved activities Enhance family stability Help veteran reintegrate into the community		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify veterans work with probation, parole, corrections, courts, shelters, VA, NMDVS, VSO</li> <li>2. Conduct social and family summary/assessment for service needs</li> <li>3. Develop Case Management Plan</li> <li>4. Develop MOU with appropriate stable</li> <li>5. Incorporate PM program in interventions.</li> </ol>	<p>If the VJO coordinator does outreach then veterans will be located.</p> <p>If veterans are located then they will receive services.</p> <p>If the vet received services, then they will be less likely to commit offenses against self, family, and community</p>	<p><b>Short Term</b> Increase knowledge of resource and services Support and benefits Increase knowledge of K'e</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> Increase knowledge of how to seek help Educate how to upgrade discharge</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> Increase skills in advocacy for self and regain self-respect</p> <p>Change attitude and behavior for healthy living.</p>
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# Why Work with Veterans in development of your Treatment Court?

- Wisdom from their own experience
  - Their journey inspires hope and belief that recovery is possible
  - Their Stories are unique (i.e. work, family and movie careers)
- Thomas H. Begay, Navajo Code Talker, Veteran of WWII and Korean War
  - Battle of Iwo Jima and Chosin Frozen Survivor
- <https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/pdf/idc2-052411.pdf>



# Veterans have stories to tell

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# Consumer Orientated Care or Military Culture Sensitivity



- Provide information on what works for your veteran population in your tribal or pueblo community
- Always willing to help their fellow veterans
- 3 Generations of Military Service:
- Photo to Left: LTC Ronald C. Begay, Navajo Code Talker Thomas H. Begay, 2LT Kristopher Roanhorse and CPT Regina Begay Roanhorse; Other CPT Gerald Begay & Code Talker Thomas H. Begay

# Navajo Nation Veterans Organizations

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- Trust fund established for the Navajo Veterans
- “Veterans” organization are non-tribal entities but their funds are administered by the local “chapters”
- There are 110 Veterans Organizations in the Navajo Nation
- There are five (5) Agencies that have overall “commanders”
- Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council established by the Veterans Act
- Advocate for their respective veterans on policy issues

# Veteran Resources in Navajo Nation

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- Veterans want to help other veterans
- Families want to help their veteran
- More funding is needed to support Veteran Organizations

# Navajo Veterans Advisory Council

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# Navajo Nation Veterans Act



- Enacted by Navajo Nation Council in January, 2016. 2 N.N.C. Sec. 1031 et seq.
- Established a Veterans Administration in the Navajo Nation
- Established a Veterans Advisory Council
- [https://www.nnva.navajonnsn.gov/Portals/0/Home%20Page/Home%20Page%20Files/Forms/Veterans%20Act%20Legislation\\_opt.pdf](https://www.nnva.navajonnsn.gov/Portals/0/Home%20Page/Home%20Page%20Files/Forms/Veterans%20Act%20Legislation_opt.pdf)

# Veterans Act Continued

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- Since the time of Naayee'neizghani and Tobajishchini, Navajos revere and respect warriors in our society.
- Native Americans represent the highest per capita for military enlistment of any other ethnic group in the United States military
- There is a need to ensure that Navajo veterans have direct involvement in policy-making decisions regarding veteran's services and benefits
- The Navajo Veterans Affairs will seek recognition with the U.S. V.A.
- Responsibilities of the Navajo VA – to seek claims under Navajo, federal, state, local laws

# Navajo Nation MOU with AZ

- Navajo Nation Russell Begay signed MOU on June 27, 2016 that allows Arizona Dept. of Veterans Services to accredit Navajo Veteran Service Officer to file service-connected disability benefits claims with Veterans Affairs.
  - Article: ADVS & Navajo Nation sign Historic Agreement.
  - Retrieved from: <https://dvs.az.gov/advs-navajo-nation-sign-historic-agreement>
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- A photograph of a formal meeting room with wood-paneled walls, a large circular seal on the wall, and a person standing in the background.



# RURAL NAVAJO NATION

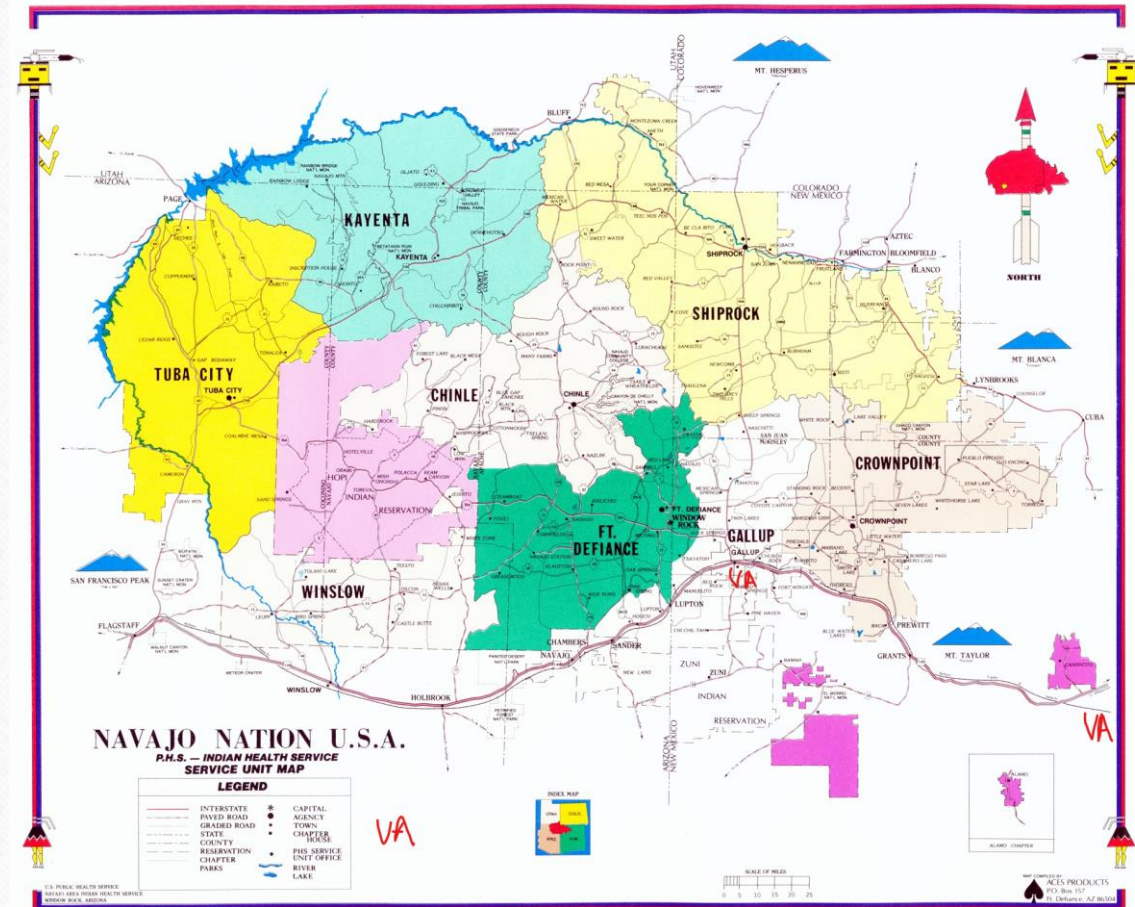
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- Clinics, hospitals are located throughout AZ, NM and UTAH portions of the Navajo Nation
- Navajo Division of Behavioral & Mental Health Services (tribal programs-638) located in every agency (5 agencies)
- Access to counselors (psychologists, psychiatrists) for PTSD or suicidal ideation is very limited.
- VA services (if service connected disable) are 200 miles away

# ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS

VA-I.H.S. MOU: reimbursement to I.H.S.

1. Are I.H.S. personnel culturally sensitive to Veterans Care
2. I.H.S. personnel are culturally sensitive to traditional healing
3. Community Based treatment – since time immemorial. QPR, Mental Health First Aide

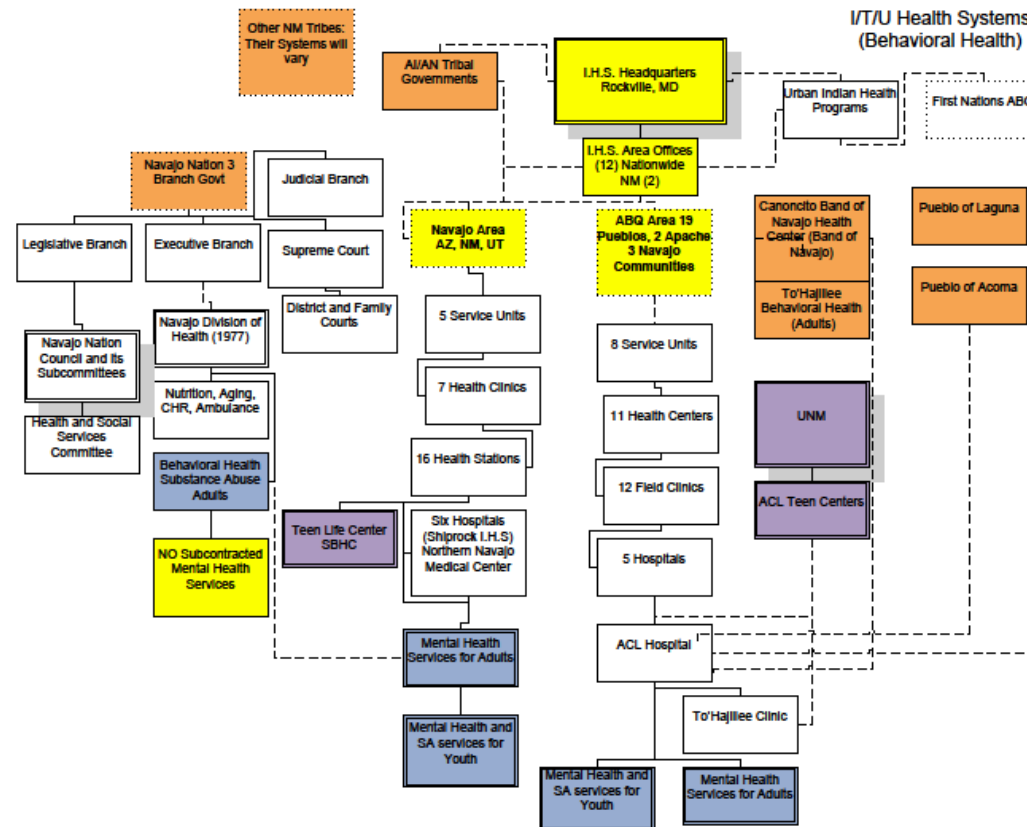


# Reaching out to local health systems: Indian Health Services, Navajo Area

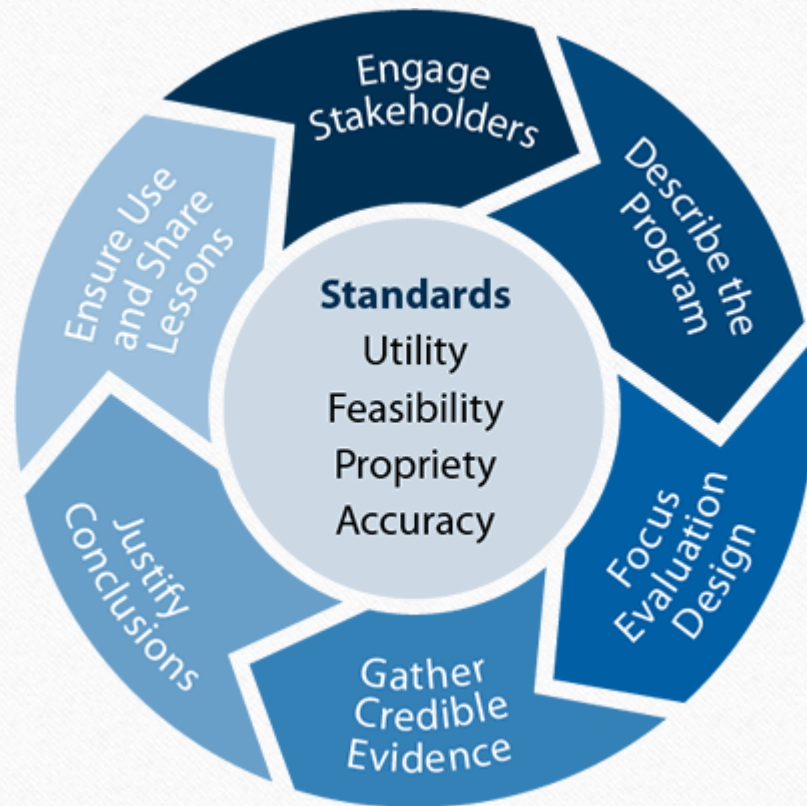
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- In 2016, the Navajo Healing to Wellness Court's Veteran's Justice Outreach project reached out to the Navajo Area I.H.S. mental health program and the Vet Center partners.
- Peer support project
  - Mental Health First Aide training for Veterans who want to be mentors or helpers
  - Sustainability
  - Trauma informed care- military culture sensitivity

# Navigating the I.H.S. Behavioral health systems



Navajo Area Indian Health Services, or any I.H.S. and the Veterans Affairs MOU



## VA Veterans Health Administration MOU

- Reimbursement for Direct Health Care Services to AI/AN Veterans in 77 I.H.S. facilities to 2022
- Reimbursement of \$75.5 million for 9,400 VHA enrolled AI/AN veterans.
- 2017 – VA reimbursed I.H.S. and the THPs (Tribal Health Programs) \$17 million
- In 2016, the project met with key leadership at the Navajo I.H.S. mental health program to develop better access for Navajo Veterans
- “Military” culturally appropriate care is needed
- Self care (App for PTSD)
- Training – “Peer support” use of Hogan's, etc.

# 2018 CTAS Award- Navajo Veterans Justice Peer Support Program

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## Benefits:

- Social Support, Purpose & Meaning
- Normalization of symptoms and hope.  
Peer groups trauma type, Gender and Era  
of Service
- Therapeutic benefits when there is nothing  
out there on the rez
- <https://academic.oup.com/milmed/article/180/8/851/4160556>

## Gourd Dance at OVW event



# NAVAJO WELLNESS COURT DEVELOPMENT

## Peer Support Enhancement to any Court off or on reservation - Mentoring



- Veterans in tribal communities are resources
- Military culture – a unique bond exists between veterans
- 110 local Chapter veteran organizations in the Navajo Nation (AZ, NM, UT)
- Peers helping peers. Knowledge of values that make them soldiers and patriots

# Military Support Group

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## Benefits, Job & Health Fair and Gourd Dance



- 2016 -2021
- “MSG” Military Support Group (state, tribal and federal partners)
- One Saturday each year – benefits and gourd dancing
- Increase access for returning combat veterans in an off reservation community (Gallup, NM)
- Speakers: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Former Cabinet Secretary Jack Fox, NM Veterans Administration, Other tribal officials and leaders
- Over 200 people attended each year except this year due to pandemic
- 2020-2021 OVW “Virtual Run”

# Breakfasts and Gatherings...to do Work: strategic planning and funding Veterans Projects



# 2021 OVW “Virtual Run”

- Strava Run Club



- Partnerships with Navajo Department of Behavioral and Mental Health Services
- You Tube Channel: McKinley County Veterans Services Collaborative – 2<sup>nd</sup> week Video was about resources for veterans
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq6G8KqGIsE>



#OVW2021

Operation Veterans Wellness Virtual Run Week 2

<https://youtu.be/kxmY9VNMfdU>



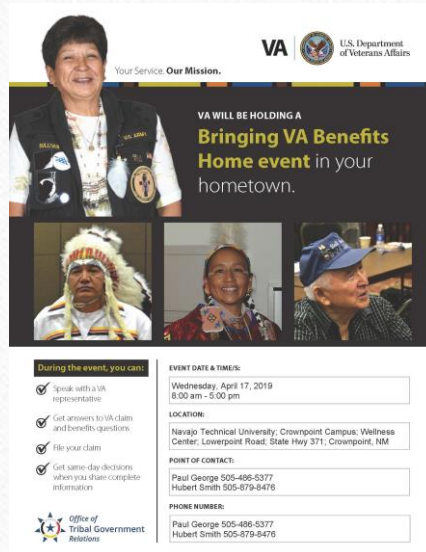
## VETERANS SUMMITS: Partnership with Navajo Veterans Administration & VA

- Chinle, Gallup from 2016 – 2020
- Military Support Group working with volunteers on the Gallup “Stand Down”
- Benefits and claims fair
- Traditional teaching



# Benefit Events & Strategic Planning

Invite off – Rez Veteran  
organizations and VA to your  
event



VA WILL BE HOLDING A  
**Bringing VA Benefits Home** event in your hometown.

**During the event, you can:**

- ✓ Speak with a VA representative
- ✓ Get answers to VA claim and benefits questions
- ✓ File your claim
- ✓ Get same-day decisions when you share complete information

**Office of Tribal Government Relations**

**EVENT DATE & TIMES:**  
Wednesday, April 17, 2019  
8:00 am – 5:00 pm

**LOCATION:**  
Navajo Technical University, Crownpoint Campus, Wellness Center, Lowerpoint Road, State Hwy 371, Crownpoint, NM

**POINT OF CONTACT:**  
Paul George 505-496-5377  
Hubert Smith 505-879-8476

**PHONE NUMBERS:**  
Paul George 505-496-5377  
Hubert Smith 505-879-8476

Incorporate all strategic plans



# 2020 Virtual Veterans Summit

- Virtual Summit on Facebook live. Videos are available:



# Technology Outreach on Wellness

## You Tube: McKinley County Veterans Services Collaborative



# Best Practices for supporting Veteran Treatment Courts in Navajo Nation

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- Trauma informed Judge and treatment team on military trauma by era, gender and tribe or pueblo
- LISW at Tribal Court for evaluations i.e. Veterans Justice Outreach program at VA has a LISW
- Peer supports from Prevention to Intervention to wellness for life
- Attending Veterans meetings – there will be food and lots of good people
- Sustainability – plant the seed with your tribal 638 programs

# Thank you

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