

HANDOUT FOR “I DIDN’T KNOW I WAS A VETERAN” AND RESOURCES FOR LIBRARIES SERVING VETERANS IN CALIFORNIA

DISCLAIMER:

The presenter does not claim to speak on behalf of all veterans but merely to share insight as a veteran and a librarian. The information from this webinar is a starting point, and all library employees are encouraged to seek more information according to the priorities of their employer. We also encourage you to engage in social learning opportunities through online forums, joining the ALA Veterans Caucus, communicating with Veterans Connect @ the Library, or sharing what you learn from veterans at your library with your colleagues and coworkers. The ideal source for information on most topics covered today can be found on the website for the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), California Department of Veteran Affairs (CalVet), Make the Connection, and Veterans Connect at the Library. Additional resources are always best located through assistance from a county veteran services officer (CVSO) who is knowledgeable of the service organizations and advocacy groups in your area. Last but not least, please note that our understanding of resources for veterans and the research about the military and veteran experience is constantly changing. **Thank you to the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services for their ongoing support. Thank you also to the Pacific Libraries Partnership Project, the California State Department of Veteran Affairs, the California State Library, and the California Department of Veteran Affairs (CalVet) for your ongoing advocacy for veterans and their families. And thank you to those of you who are or have served in the military, in addition to your family members and friends who care about you as all of us in the library community do.**

NOTES ABOUT WEBINAR:

- The ideal source for information on most topics? For those of you living and working in California, it will be the California Department of Veteran Affairs (CalVet). But for everyone, it's the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). They have done an awesome job improving the user-friendliness of their website and it's a great tool. You might even visit it now and then just to reacquaint yourself with the many subject areas. See the links below and the links to Make the Connection and Veterans Connect @ the Library are shared below, too.
- All situations, conditions, acronyms, and words worthy of seeing in a nifty glossary somewhere can be found online or in a book I co-wrote with Sarah LeMire: *Serving Those Who Served: Librarian's Guide to Working with Veteran and Military Communities*. The VA Handbook also has glossaries of terms and acronyms. And just one more! The California Department of Veteran Affairs (CalVet) is pretty good at translating the jargon, too!
- I repeat how things change throughout this webinar. That refers to new research as well as how Congress responds to advocacy groups and their efforts. Even places like the California State Library, since a big part of their mission is to conduct research at the request of state legislators, publish some really interesting materials. The best way to stay tuned into the latest research is to stay in touch with a CVSO. However, I always like to check in with the Pew Research Center now and then. The Department of Veteran Affairs is another good resource for research. And searching the internet for peer-reviewed journal articles can

yield some really helpful and up-to-date information about many items. Our sources of research should also focus periodically on local agencies and organizations. For example, San Diego benefits from annual reports by the San Diego Military Advisory Council, which offers information on demographics that go beyond census data or what a national organization might offer.

- I talk briefly about how Congress changes many things when it comes to resources for veterans, including who is to be considered a veteran. That can be very important to people who have a condition or an exposure, or people who are part of minority group. But it also affects veterans with basic benefits, as I have experienced personally when Congress decided to offer hearing aids for free to all veterans, as long as it was shown that they indeed served in the military and they had a hearing loss that warranted the need for one. It might be overwhelming to try to keep up with what Congress decides year in and year out. I would recommend not trying to monitor that too closely, since our job as libraries is to refer veterans to the people who are the most knowledgeable about those things. Instead of trying to keep up with every bill in Congress, I highly recommend keeping in touch with the CVSO who will tell you when big things change. When it comes to minorities, try to get your CVSO to help you connect with advocacy groups, especially local Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), who specialize in those things. Sometimes a group that claims to offer services to veterans can be good but only be a for-profit organization. It's best to seek those groups that are approved by Congress, or groups with the ".org" at the end of their URL that signifies that they are a nonprofit. See also the link to the National Resource Directory below.
- As I plan to mention during the webinar, you will only see the five traditional branches of service on the slide where I talk about the importance of knowing what they are. Please don't be offended if you or someone you know belongs to the National Guard or Reserves, or if they are now working for the Space Force. My goal is to get you used to understanding why a marine doesn't want to be called a soldier, or how much the Coast Guard has contributed to the defense of our nation. The National Guard is part of the Army, after all. And the Space Force is a branch of service that is so new, I would rather you learn about them from the CVSO than from me.
- When I talk about things to remember, like the importance of our role in referring veterans and their families to the right people, I might not have time to talk about something else that is really important. It's also really important to remember that all veterans are different. The task of starting a conversation with veterans is not difficult, though, because it's what we already do when we work in a library setting. Just remember that veterans can be shy or not. They can be apolitical or not. They can be interested in resources or not. The conversation is a two way conversation, and only by listening can you decide how it should proceed. But the more you know about how to anticipate ways in which a veteran might be reluctant to talk or ask about resources for veterans, the better able you will be in staying engaged in a conversation that can open a new door for that person.
- One piece of advice when it comes to locating the organizations that serve veterans. The really good ones are usually Congressionally certified. That means that if you go to the Nation Resource Directory, you can look them up. I don't emphasize that too much during

this webinar because I want to emphasize how working together with the CVSO and other veterans is the best way to learn more.

- In terms of creating community connections, there isn't much time to talk about all the ways in which this can happen. Also, every community is unique and I didn't want to focus too much on specific types of events that might not work for all libraries. That's why I only give you a snapshot of oral history projects and the Make the Connection website. You can find many, many examples of excellent programs that libraries have done by talking to the folks at Veterans Connect @ the Library, reviewing library journals, or reading about some examples in my book.
- When it comes to tools at the reference desk, please remember to be prepared for those times when you are not there! Even at the best libraries where they have dedicated space and collections of materials and ongoing events for veterans, a little mistake can happen. Someone who doesn't know about the binder at the reference desk or a substitute covering you on your break might be asked a question that doesn't get answered. We can't be perfect, but please try to prevent that from happening. Keep all library employees informed. And keep some brochures and other materials out in the open, easy for veterans to see if people aren't there to answer their questions. You can even ask the senior managers at your library to add a note about veteran resources to any training materials for substitutes and new employees. Keeping everyone informed also adds to the potential for social learning. Just when you think you know everything, it's often the substitute or the new employee who knows something you don't. Which reminds me, let's hire more veterans and military spouses, too! Don't forget, you can join the ALA Veterans Caucus to stay informed about their efforts to help the library community at large.
- It's true that it would be difficult or impossible for veterans to just walk back to a military installation and access the resources at a military library. However, military libraries should not be underestimated! Even if the nearest military installation is hundreds of miles away, military librarians aim to serve all service members wherever they are. And many service members in the National Guard and the Reserves also live a long way away from a military installation. Please make sure to connect with a military library near you, at least by phone, and try to be knowledgeable of the online services they can offer active duty service member and families in your area. They, too, are a great source of information about working with veterans.

RESOURCES FOR VETNOW

- VetNow Resources: JobNow & Vet Now Quick-Start and User Guide
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t4rr7gi5puy9avj/AAC_uftQF_HDQ5M_YahYXLjha?dl=0&preview=Brainfuse+User+Guide+-+JobNow+%26+VetNow.pdf
- Website Placement of VetNow:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t4rr7gi5puy9avj/AAC_uftQF_HDQ5M_YahYXLjha?dl=0&preview=Link+Placements+and+Marketing+JobNow+VetNow+California.pptx
- Social Media Promotion: icons, social media posts, film clips, templates, bookmarks, flyers, and more.
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t4rr7gi5puy9avj/AAC_uftQF_HDQ5M_YahYXLjha?dl=0

- Video Clip: 36 seconds!
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t4rr7gi5puy9avj/AADhJy587-0rntq7v3LiVoDBa/VetNow%20Commercial?dl=0&subfolder_nav_tracking=1L

WEBSITES

- Veterans Connect @ the Library
<https://calibrariesforveterans.org/>
- Department of Veteran Affairs
<https://www.va.gov/> (NOT va.org!!!)
 Find a VA Location
<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>
 Military Exposures
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/index.asp>
- National Resource Directory
<https://nrd.gov/>
- California Department of Veteran Affairs
<https://www.calvet.ca.gov/>
- Veterans Crisis Line
<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>
- Make the Connection
<https://www.maketheconnection.net/>
- National Archives and Where to Request Military Records (DD214)
<https://www.archives.gov/>
- Veterans Day vs. Memorial Day? Check out the USO website! They have a really good explanation, in addition to a brief history of the holidays and even how things can be different in other countries!
<https://www.uso.org/stories/2522-understanding-the-difference-of-memorial-day-vs-veterans-day>