# Transforming Veteran Care Through Cross-System Navigation and Population Health Integration

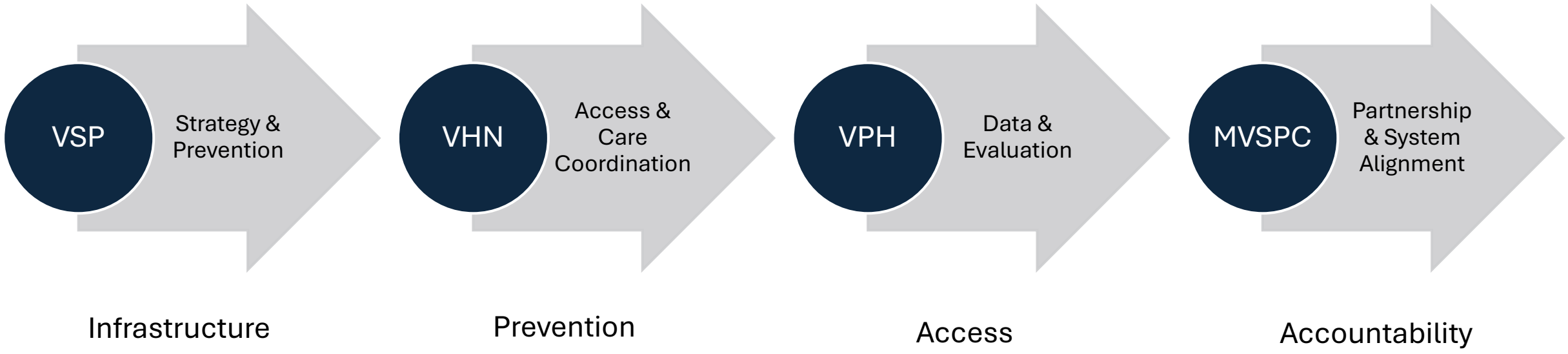
Raeann Murray, LSW | Veteran Health Navigator Supervisor
Heather Fuller | Veteran Health Navigator
Carla Miller-Leisch | Veteran Health Navigator

# Learning Objectives

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Understand why Veteran identification matters
- Describe the development of Minnesota's Veteran Health Navigator Program
- Identify key implementation strategies
- Explore opportunities for replication

# Minnesota's Veterans Community Health Approach



# The Veterans We Are Missing

**Identification creates an opportunity**

**Partnerships turns that opportunity into action**

- Veterans Community Health
- Veteran Health Navigator
- Veteran Population Health
- Minnesota Veterans Suicide Prevention Collaborative

# Identification is the Starting Point

MANY VETERANS RECEIVE CARE OUTSIDE THE VA

PROVIDERS MAY NOT KNOW A PATIENT HAS SERVED

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR BENEFITS AND SUPPORT

EARLY IDENTIFICATION IMPROVES OUTCOMES

# From Identification to Connection

- Identifying a Veteran is the first step.
- What happens next is where partnership matters.



# Identification Without Connection Creates Another Gap



IDENTIFY



ASK



CONNECT

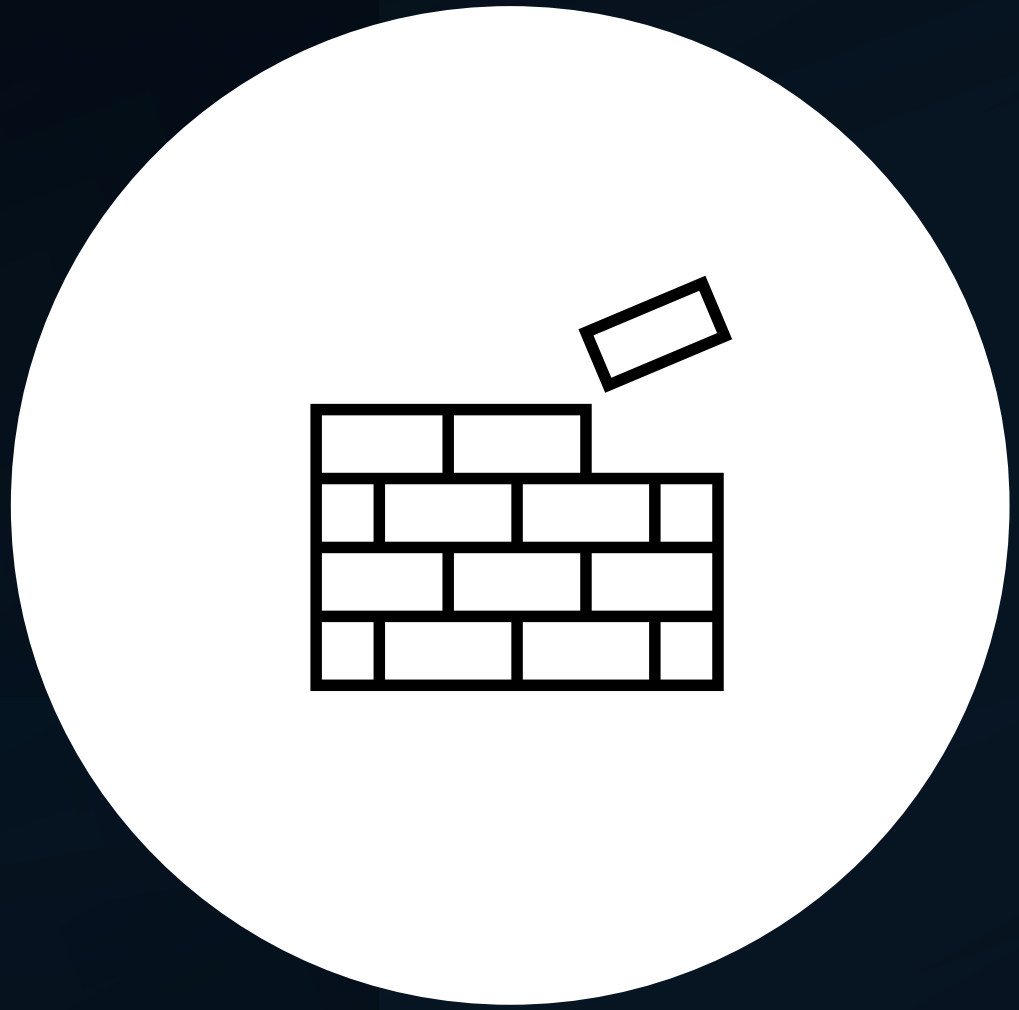


NAVIGATE



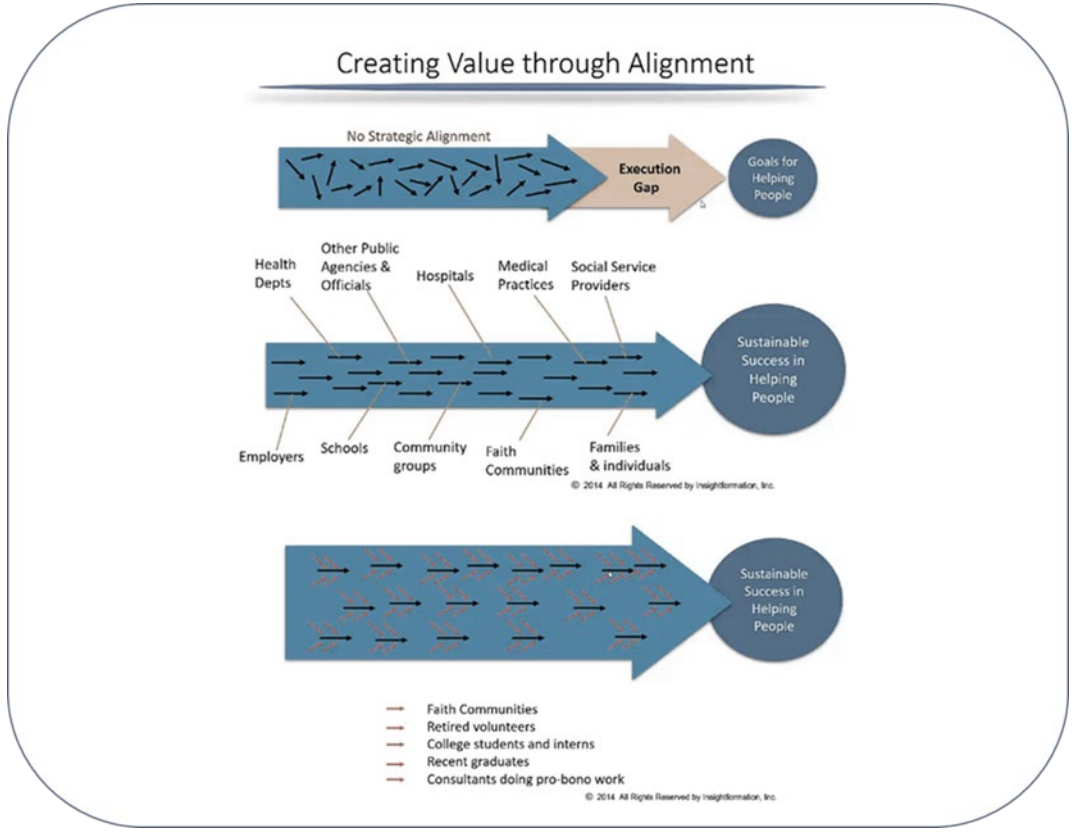
FOLLOW THROUGH

# Building a Pathway from Identification to Connection



# Built Partnerships

## Minnesota Veteran Suicide Prevention Collaborative




- VA/SAMHSA
- MN Dept. of Veterans Affairs
- MN Dept. of Health
- MN National Guard
- MN Commanders Taskforce
- MN County Veteran Service Officers
- Community Based Veteran Service Organizations
- MN Non-VA Healthcare Systems

# Building the Model



From identifying the need to building a sustainable pathway

# Veteran Health Navigator (VHN) Brief Program Overview

**The Veteran Health Navigator (VHN) Program helps healthcare systems identify Service Members, Veterans, and their Families and connect them to VA, MDVA, county, and community resources.**

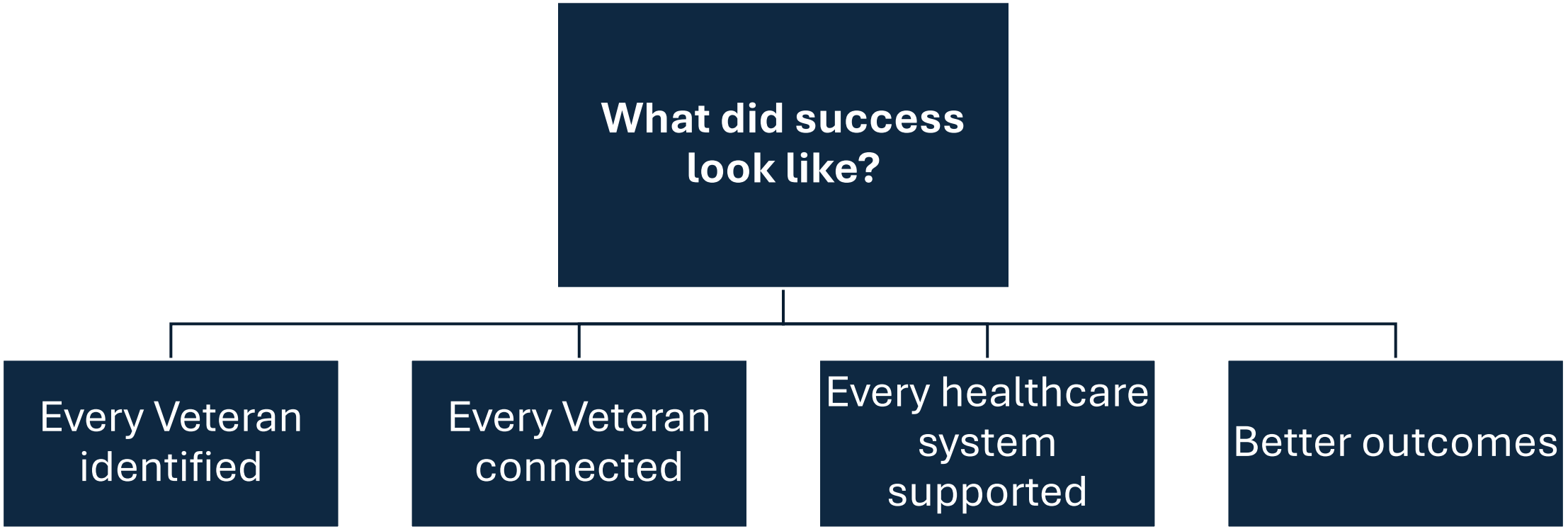
- *Ask the Question*
  - "have you or a family member ever served in the military
- *Document*
  - Capture the response in the EHR or existing workflow
- *Connect*
  - Help connect Veterans and families to benefits, healthcare, and supports
- *Follow up*
  - Coordinate with the team so referrals do not get lost.

# Identification Matters

- When providers know a patient has served, they can:
  - Improve care coordination
  - Recognize service-related exposures
  - Provide trauma-informed care
  - Strengthen behavioral health interventions
  - Improve discharge planning
  - Connect Veterans with earned benefits

- Early identification can change the trajectory of care.

# Building the Vision



# Developing the Program



Recognize the need



Research



Strategic Planning



Healthcare Partnerships



Program Development



Pilot Sites



Implementation



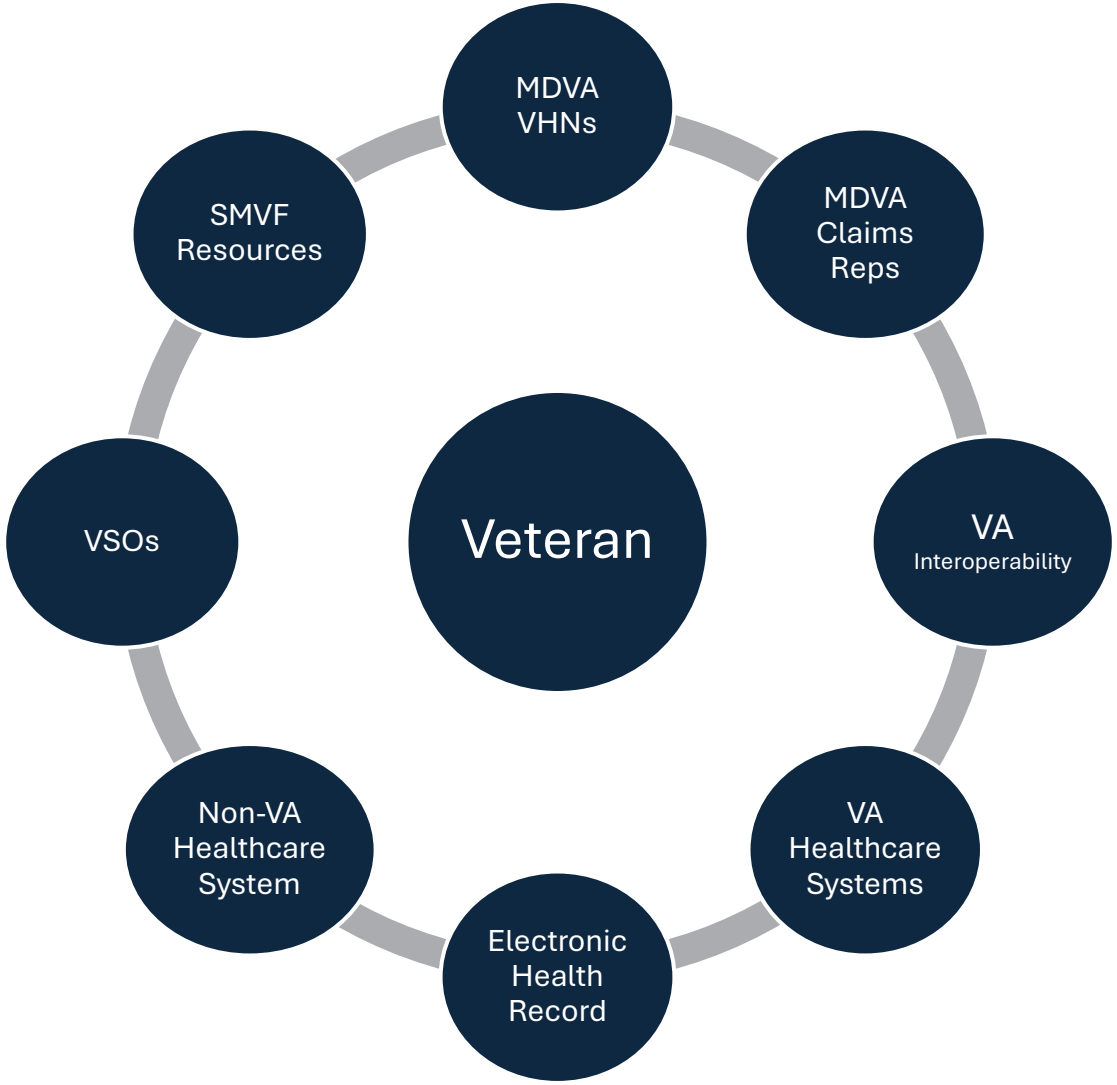
Expansion

# From Concept to Practice

What can Veteran identification look like
within a healthcare system?



# Supporting the Veteran



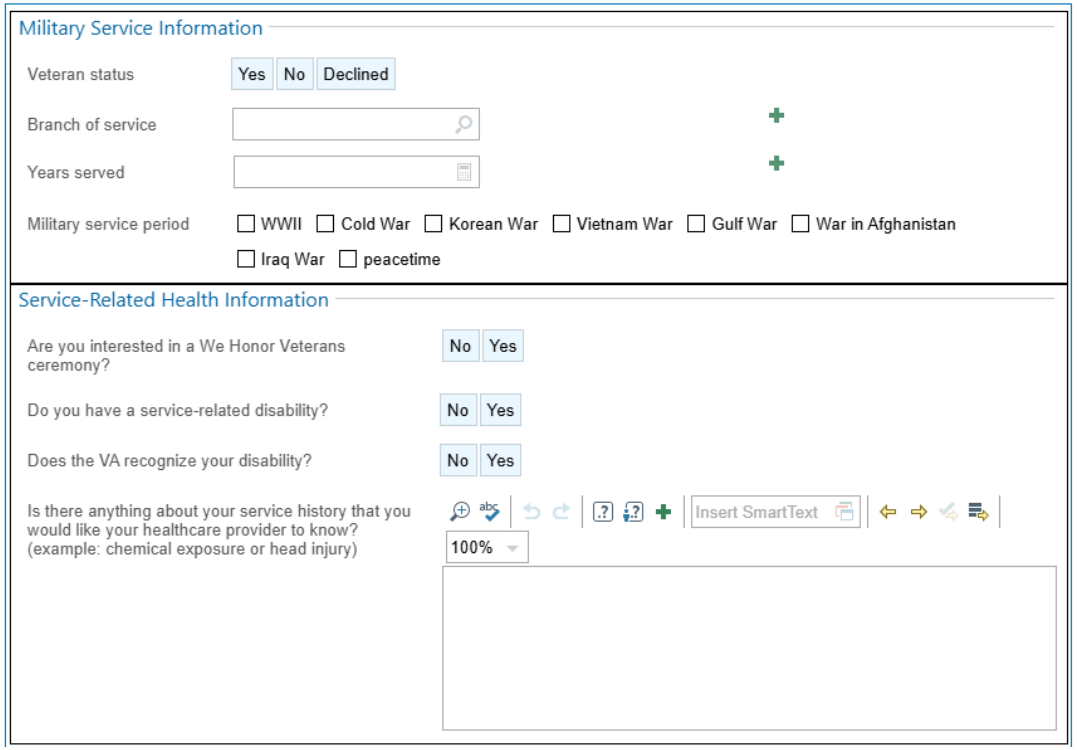
# Different Roles. Shared Mission.

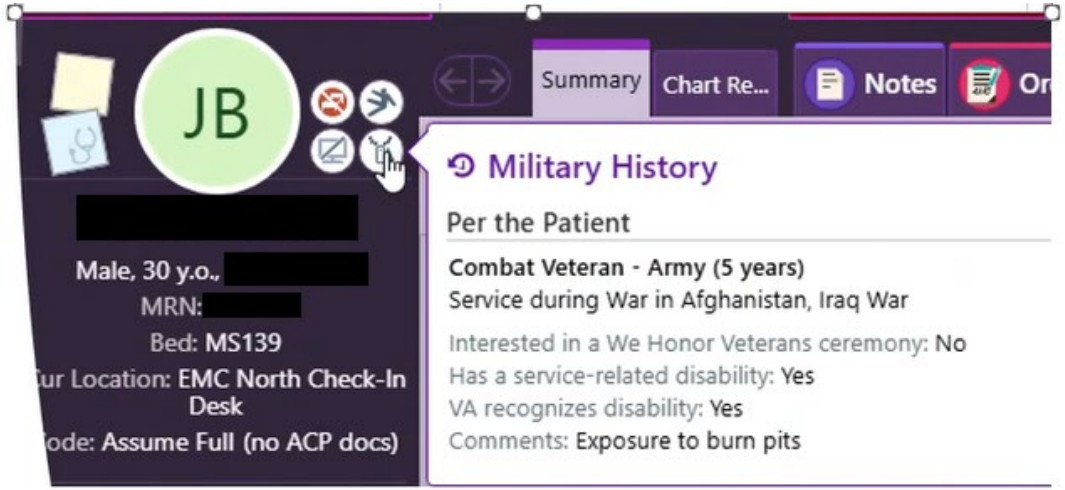
| Veterans Community Health Coordinators | Veteran Health Navigators | Claims Representatives Veteran Service Officers |
|---|---|---|
| Community Partnerships | Healthcare System Integration | Veteran Benefits & Navigation |
| • Develops regional partnerships<br>• Connects Veteran-serving Organizations<br>• Builds Awareness of resources<br>• Identifies community gaps & needs<br>• Strengthens referral relationships<br>• Supports prevention initiatives | • Provides healthcare TA<br>• Implements Veteran Identification<br>• Supports EHR / Workflow Integration<br>• Provides Staff Education<br>• Develops Referral Pathway Development<br>• Uses data for improvement | • Receives Veteran Referrals<br>• Provides Benefits Education<br>• Assists with Claims Assistance<br>• Gathers Documentation<br>• Connects to VA / State benefits Follows Veteran through process |

**Different roles. One connected system. Shared outcome: Veterans identified, connected, and supported.**

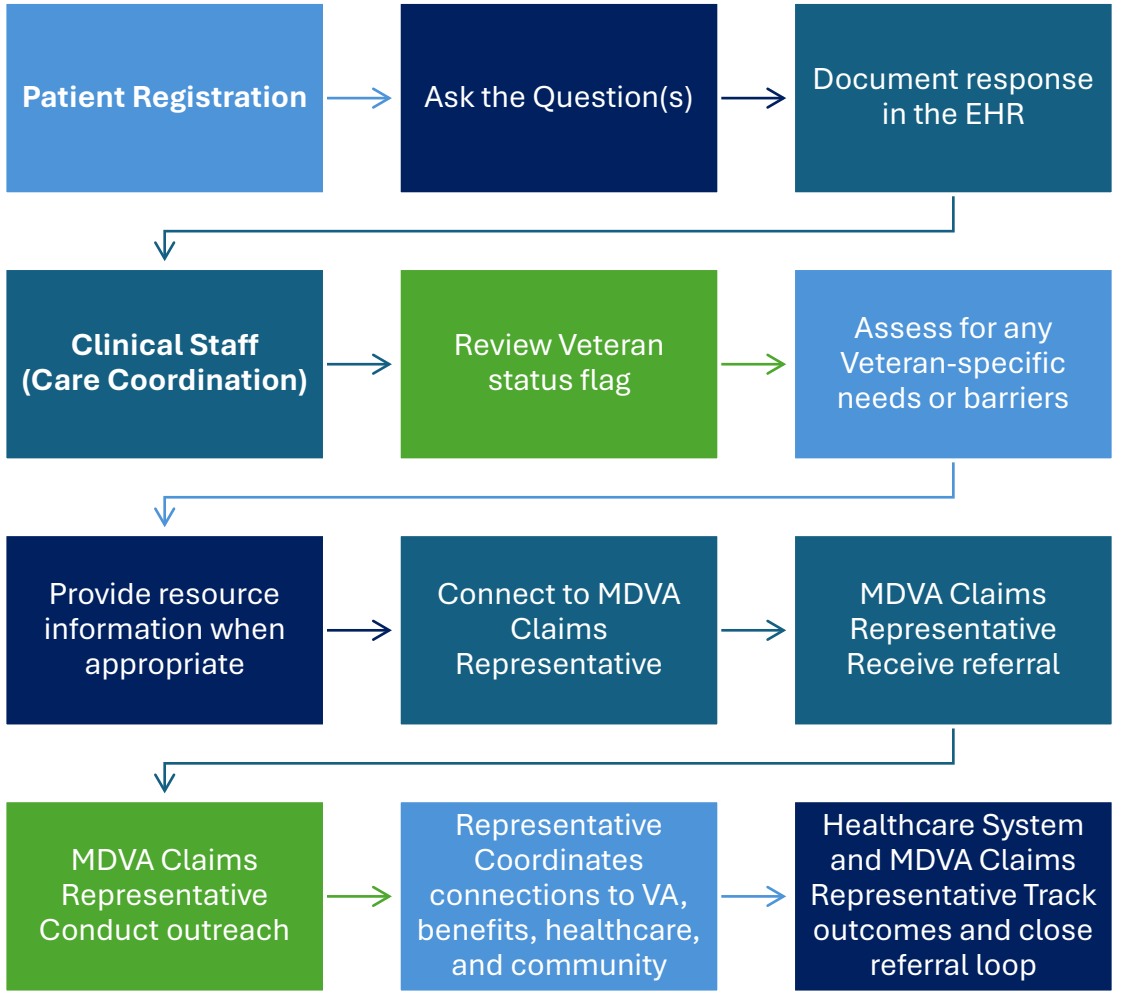
# Smartform and DogTag Icon

Patient Enters non-VA system → "Ask the Question" (Veteran Status identified) → Flag in EHR → Referral/Warm Hand off completed → Data Captured



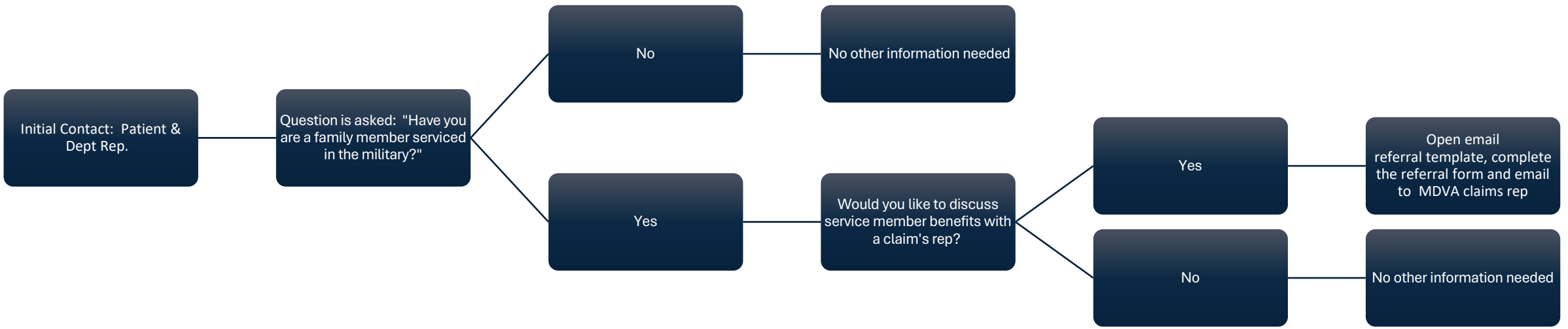
# Veterans Health Navigator ***SAMPLE*** *Process Flow*



# Veteran Health Navigator Interaction/ Support



# Referral to MDVA Claims Rep



# Email Referral

MDVA CLAIMS REFERRAL (email)

Veteran Name (Full Legal name):

Date of Birth:

Branch / Dates of service:

Contact information (email/phone):

VA Healthcare participation (Past | Present): Yes / No

Referring Staff Member (including contact information and Healthcare system):

Reason for Referral (state benefit/appeals/new claim):

Additional Notes:

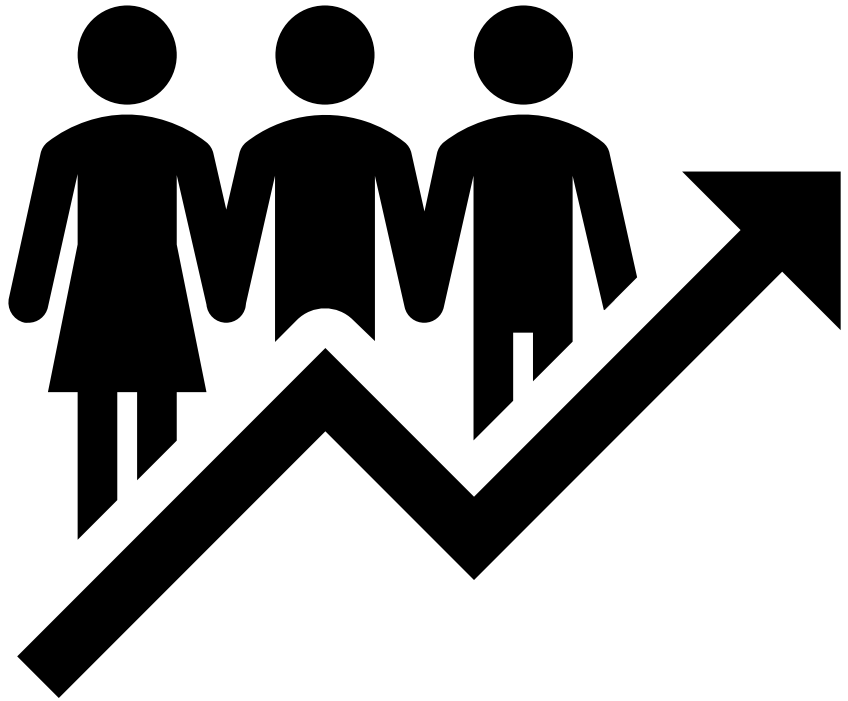
# What Staff Can Expect After Referral

- Referral will be reviewed by the VHN team.
- VHN Claims Rep will reach out to the patient
- Staff may receive follow-up depending on workflow and consent.
- Navigator  will assist with communication between pilot team & claims rep, provide additional resources as needed, and trouble shoot challenges throughout workflow

# Building for Sustainability

The workflow is only one piece.

Sustainable change requires infrastructure and partnership.



# Infrastructure That Makes Partnership Sustainable



Electronic Health Record Partnership

Partner closely with EHR and health care IT teams

Pilot site

Leveraging existing workflows, standardized fields, and screening tools

Utilizing Epic guidance and best practices from prior implementations

Adapting workflows to align with current intake and clinical processes

# VA Interoperability Collaboration

## VIP Community of Practice

- Collaborative discussion forum of healthcare organizations advancing interoperability to improve care for Veterans and the healthcare community.
- Purpose: This community advances interoperability standards to improve care coordination for Veterans and the broader healthcare community. Foster open collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving among Pledge signatories and partners.
- Onboarding Assistance
- Goal to have participating Health care system join

# Veteran Health Navigator Program ***Progress in Action!***

- Implementing Veteran identification programming across a diverse network of healthcare partners.
- Developing Ask the Question Implementation Toolkit, Onboarding Materials such as pocket guides, and other resource materials
- Provide targeted education in collaboration with MDVA Programs and Services and community partners
- Legacy and Infancy System Collaberation

# Learning From Implementation

What are we learning, and how will we measure progress?



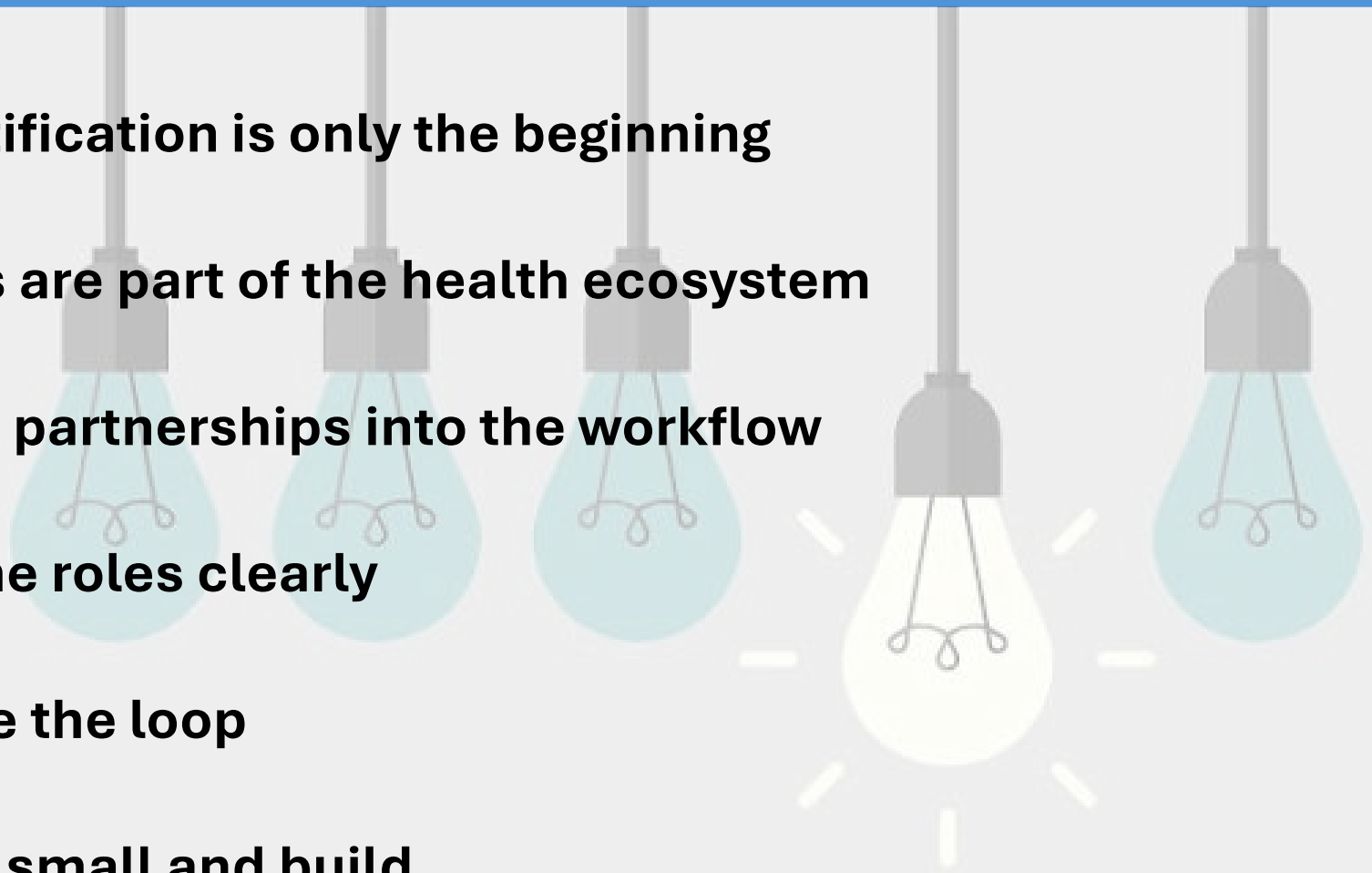
# Measuring Success

- Veterans identified
- Referrals made
- Benefits Application (State and Federal)
- Improved outcomes
- Stronger partnerships

# Why This matters Beyond Benefits

| Health | Prevention | Stability | Systems |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Better coordination and continuity of care | Earlier connection to behavioral health, suicide prevention and social supports | Access to earned benefits can address financial, housing and other social needs | Reduced Fragmentation and stronger coordination between VA, community healthcare and Veteran Services |

# What We've Learned



- ✓ **Identification is only the beginning**
- ✓ **VSOs are part of the health ecosystem**
- ✓ **Build partnerships into the workflow**
- ✓ **Define roles clearly**
- ✓ **Close the loop**
- ✓ **Start small and build**

# What Could This Look Like in Your Community?

1. Who is identifying Veterans?
2. Who are your partners?
3. What happens after someone answers “yes”?
4. Is there a warm referral pathway?
5. How do you know the connection occurred?

PSYCH/ARMOR®

# Veteran-Informed Training

A nonprofit organization that provides education and training about the military and Veteran community.

Offers online courses to help professionals better understand Veterans' experiences, military culture, and unique needs.

Helps health care providers and community professionals build skills for working effectively with Veterans and their families.

Provides training on topics such as military culture, mental health, and supporting Veterans in civilian settings.

Supports more informed, culturally responsive, and Veteran-centered care.

Recommended resource: The free 15 Things Veterans Want You to Know for Healthcare Providers course is a great starting point for health care professionals


Q&A

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

# Thank You!

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