

IMPACT FORUM TAKEAWAYS

The Importance of Research in Building Comprehensive Programs

On August 16th, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation hosted its inaugural Impact Forum call, focused on the integration of research into programs serving military caregivers and their families. Lynn Crabb from the American Red Cross facilitated a discussion with Terri Tanielian from the RAND Corporation on the recently released **Research Blueprint: Improving Support for America's Hidden Heroes**.

Our goal for the call was to take a deep dive into this Blueprint and discuss how it applies not just to researchers and funders, but also to those developing resources and programs for caregivers. In this follow-up document, we have distilled the presentation into a few key takeaways that we hope will be useful for any organization intending to use research to inform their work.

How are our partners already integrating research and data into their programs?

1. Collecting demographic data, identifying needs of the population, and using feedback to improve programs
2. Implementing regular surveys of clients to measure outcomes
3. Gathering data annually to track long-term trends
4. Partnering with research institutions to use collected data to inform research studies and questions

"We collect demographics, injury/illness/woundedness data, services wanted, status, etc. and use them to see patterns, get feedback and adapt our program to reflect trends and needs."
- Highlight from the post-call survey

What are some obstacles to gathering information on military caregivers?

1. Bandwidth - does the organization have the manpower to do the work?
2. Funding - who will pay for the study?
3. Interest - will a researcher take on this question?
4. Credibility - how are you ensuring that you collect your data in a way that it will be able to be used by others?

"A lot of folks want to do this [collect data] but they think it's costly, they think it's difficult to do... ultimately it's going to help... but it has to be conducted rigorously, and it has to be published in a peer-reviewed mechanism, because if it's not, it won't make it into the literature, and it won't actually inform other people as they look to the literature."
- Terri Tanielian, RAND

What does Terri recommend for organizations who want to start integrating research into their programs?

1. Do your homework - look to see what has already been documented about your intervention or program
2. Look to see how existing research might extend to your particular focus or setting, even if it's not focused on your specific population
3. Begin to collect as much data as you can
4. Think about how you can be a partner in research to begin to impact the space as a whole
 - a. Share data
 - b. Be rigorous in your methods
 - c. Look for trends over time
 - d. Consider partnering with a research institution to analyze the information you are gathering
 - e. Work to publish your findings in a peer-reviewed mechanism - this will allow your work to enter the body of literature and be used by others in the space

If you have questions about the Impact Forum program, or would like to be involved, please email Laurel Rodewald at laurel@elizabethdolefoundation.org.



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CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES