**Community Mental Health Summits**

**Background:** On May 29, 2013, the Under Secretary for Health released a Memorandum instructing each Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center to hold a Mental Health (MH) Summit in recognition of the principle that truly Veteran-centered, recovery-oriented care requires active collaboration and coordination with community partners. This was in line with an Executive Order of August 31, 2012 charging VA to ensure that Veterans and their families receive needed mental health services in partnership with community providers through “an integrated network of support” within a public health model.

**Goals:** Community Mental Health Summits are designed to foster partnerships and collaboration between community stakeholders and VA Medical Centers. Given that most Veterans (and virtually all their dependents) utilize at least some health care services outside of VA, it is critically important that VA and community providers collaborate to support the mental health needs of Veterans and their families. This principle was further emphasized by the passage of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act in August 2014. The underlying principle was to recognize that truly Veteran-centered, recovery-oriented care requires active and ongoing cooperation with community partners. While Medical Centers may choose to partner with outlying Community Based Outpatient Clinics and other VA facilities including Vet Centers in order to provide the best possible community reach and collaboration, MH Summits are primarily organized at the Medical Center level and Medical Center leadership are responsible for their implementation.

**Objectives:** This fourth year of the Community Mental Health Summits provides an opportunity to sustain and enhance the positive working relationships and joint vision established in past years in order to better address the mental health care needs of Veterans and their families. Each VA Medical Center should work with its Community partners to frame the specific purpose and objectives for its Mental Health Summit based on local community assets, unique needs and ongoing dynamics with an emphasis on ***My VA Access and Suicide Prevention***. These two core issues continue to be instrumental to ensuring quality care. Each Summit should reflect the overall intent of the Mental Health Summit process, which is to enhance mental health care for Veterans and their family members through dialogue and collaboration between VA and the Community. Each facility is coordinating participation from local Give an Hour providers and SAMHSA Regional Representatives.

**Summary:** Each year the findings from Post-Summit Participant Evaluations indicate that VA and community participants share great enthusiasm for the Mental Health Summits and are hopeful that the process will endure and be expanded. Results also suggest that MH Summits offer an effective platform for developing and maintaining VA collaborations with state and community-based organizations in the service of Veterans and their families; that they are promoting the coordination of care between VA and non-VA providers; and that they are promoting awareness of the needs of Veterans and Veterans’ family members.

**Data:**

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| **Year:** | **# of Summits** | **Attendees** | **Post Summit Evaluations** | **Community Partners** |
| 2013 | 154 | 12616 | 4569 | 7570 (60%) |
| 2014 | 144 | 11759 | 2509 | 7055 (60%) |
| 2015 | 167 | 14000+ | 2440 | approx. 9240 (66%) |