

Project for Return and Opportunity in Veterans Education (PROVE): An Innovative Clinical Social Work Field Education Model

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Abstract Veterans transitioning from the military to college life and the unique issues impacting them are an area of clinical social work that has yet to be fully explored in the literature. Project for Return and Opportunity in Veterans Education (PROVE) is an innovative social work field education model that trains first year graduate interns to serve student veterans on college campuses in a non-traditional, milieu setting. PROVE uses a strengths-based, resiliency focus to emphasize the unique characteristics of the student veteran. The model affords the intern a clinical skill set applicable to working with veterans in various social work agencies. This article will discuss the history, framework and implementation of the PROVE model, use of Veteran-Affirmative Counseling (VAC) and the unique milieu setting. The article will conclude with implications for clinical social work practice field education settings and recommendations for replicability of the PROVE model.

Keywords Student veterans · Transition · Military cultural competency · Fieldwork

Introduction

Sometimes where you land is exactly where you are meant to be...

On a Wednesday afternoon, while sitting in the Student Veterans Resource Center (SVRC), the first year interns were utilizing their termination skills to say their farewells to Diana, one of the dependents who had become a regular. Both of her parents served in the military and Diana is using her mother's educational benefits to acquire an undergraduate degree. The interns, gently guided her through a conversation about how her first year at college evolved, from finding her place in the veterans' community to assuming a leadership role in the student veteran club as an officer. The interns further inquired how she was able to hone in on her course of study and navigate the best path to achieving her long-term goal of enrolling in the master level nursing program after earning her bachelor degree. Diana was happy to take that reflective journey but even more importantly, she wanted to let the group know that she was signing up to serve in the Army National Guard to train as a combat medic. The interns and other veterans in the room immediately wanted more details. An important aspect that emerged was that Diana was going to be in the same unit as one of the seniors, John who is already a combat medic. She would be working with him once she completed basic training. Without PROVE's emphasis on actively connecting each person who walks into the SVRC with another veteran and the interns' dedication to creating community by decreasing veterans' social isolation, Diana and John would likely never have met on campus. Embarking to become a medical professional in a military unit that historically has an underrepresentation of females, Diana now has a tangible connection to a senior combat medic in her unit. The top non-commissioned officer in her unit, Staff Sgt. James, was also a student at the same college less than 5 years ago and a regular visitor of the SVRC back in the day.

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At present, Diana has taken a leave from college and is completing basic training with the intent to return to campus as an Army National Guard reservist in Fall 2017. This historical linkage could not have been predicted but in retrospect seems inevitable; all began with PROVE. They have all landed where they needed to be.

PROVE'S History and Philosophy

PROVE was founded in 2007 at a large, urban public university, as a collaborative effort to respond to the numerous veterans enrolling in higher education after their military service (Hassan 2013).

Spearheaded by a Vietnam-era veteran Social Work Professor and a Vietnam veteran University Dean, their vision to enhance campus services for veterans and to support their transition from military service to college life led to PROVE's timely inception. Not since World War II have such high rates of veterans transitioned from military life to student life (Cook and Kim 2009; Miller 2013; VA, 2013). The number of student veterans and their beneficiaries (spouses or dependents) accessing military educational benefits across the United States increased from 397,598 in 2000 to 564,487 in 2009 to over a million in 2012, totaling over \$10.5 billion in utilized benefits in 2011 alone (McCaslin et al. 2013). Estimates of two million service members or more returning from conflicts in the Middle East and departing the military will enroll in postsecondary education (Cook and Kim 2009; Madaus et al. 2009). This influx of veterans into student life necessitated a focus on clinical social work support services for a subpopulation of learners who require services tailored to their unique and nontraditional backgrounds. We utilize the term "veteran" broadly in the context of our training. Under this umbrella term, PROVE serves veterans, military service members and family members which include reservists, members of the National Guard, children and spouses ("dependents") who are using educational benefits, individuals who are on active duty in combat or peacetime as well as individuals who completed their military service. Concurrent to this provision of support is PROVE's unique mission to train a cadre of social work interns in the specific needs and concerns of the modern day student veteran.

In designing and shaping this service delivery model, PROVE recognized the tendency of many student veterans to avoid seeking formalized college supports such as counseling or disability services. Veterans are often cautious around non-military connected individuals ("civilians") and may question their intentions. Stecker and colleagues (2007) found that veterans' discomfort with help seeking was the most common barrier to care (as cited in Dickstein et al. 2010). Additionally, military culture,

which emphasizes stoicism and self-sufficiency, can make requesting help difficult for today's student veteran (Osborne 2014). On the other hand, there is a tendency for veterans to more readily share their life experiences with one another and therefore be motivated to help fellow veterans (Coll and Weiss 2015). PROVE capitalizes on this camaraderie by encouraging social work interns to allocate the time to engage and build rapport and to be a consistent, reliable presence in the space where most veterans on campus congregate, the SVRC. This space affords interns the opportunity to provide information, impart support and create linkages to other resources with the comfort of other student veterans being present.

PROVE utilizes a needs-resource paradigm. Interns assess the student veterans' needs and challenges that may present obstacles to a successful educational journey and identify the resources within the college and community to be mobilized (Minnis et al. 2013). In the years after the Vietnam War and prior to 9/11, college services to student veterans were often limited to only part-time certifying officials focused on processing the paperwork for the veteran's educational benefits (O'Herrin 2011). PROVE's social work interns and experienced field instructors represent a major additional resource to college services for student veterans and serve as a catalyst to decreasing social isolation by providing both peer assistance and supervised professional support.

PROVE staff develops relationships with key campus personnel in the offices and departments that provide counseling, disability accommodations, registrar, academic related supports, career advising and bursar services. This type of collaboration helps to ensure that student veterans' needs can be met in a timely and comprehensive fashion. The PROVE team, by working closely with campus professionals, creates a synergy around services to student veterans that has led to advancements such as priority registration, early academic advising, enhanced tutoring options, and various campus resources with veteran specific components such as campus certifying officials and peer student veteran mentors.

PROVE is one example of a social work internship program that serves student veterans on a college campus. In 2008, the School of Social Work at Texas State University developed a program utilizing social work interns to serve the needs of student veterans called the Veterans Initiative (Selber 2015). There are some similar characteristics between the PROVE model and the Veterans Initiative. For example, both projects focus on a strengths-based approach; emphasize developing partnerships on campus to enhance services for student veterans; utilize outreach and engagement as necessary components to accomplish the work and utilize supplemental training to enhance the interns' knowledge around Military/Veteran Cultural

Competency in concert with achieving required social work competencies (CSWE 2010). What differentiates PROVE from the Veterans Initiative is how and where the graduate social work interns are deployed—an integral component of the model. As discussed, PROVE places two interns per campus in the SVRC as compared with the Veterans Initiative which places social work interns in various offices and departments on campus such as the Bursars, Admissions, Disability, Academic Advising, etc. Placing the interns in the milieu where veterans are most likely to be, versus expecting to meet veterans in places where they would have to seek out services or ask for help, is part of PROVE's core philosophy (Weiss et al. 2011). The PROVE model has the interns adapting to the culture of the student veterans, assessing their needs based on observation and informal interviews and then moving to interventions based on those observations. This affords the interns the opportunity to become imbedded in the day-to-day fabric of the veterans' community on campus which allows them to develop ongoing, meaningful rapport with student veterans and the time needed for veterans to become comfortable having civilians around (Wheeler and Bragin 2007).

While PROVE's mission is to serve student veterans, the program also addresses a serious need emerging in the larger community as the drawdown in Iraq and Afghanistan continues. There is a dearth of trained social workers knowledgeable about the needs of military and veteran populations, both past and current. Minimal empirical information exists regarding practitioners' knowledge of military social work and the effectiveness of the education and training aimed to prepare them to work with a military or veteran population (Forgey and Young 2014). Social workers find themselves at the frontlines of clinical service for this growing veterans' population but most schools of social work have been slow to provide military culturally oriented trainings and curricula to students or alumnae. This educational gap leads to a continuing inability to keep pace with workforce demand for social workers to be adequately prepared to serve veterans (Flynn and Hassan 2010). PROVE's educational and training component is therefore, particularly timely, and greatly needed to advance the profession's clinical training and responsiveness to this underserved population.

The PROVE Model

PROVE's team includes graduate social work interns, licensed MSW field instructors, and student veteran peer mentors. Together, the team works to develop and enhance services for student veterans with an emphasis on removing barriers to their successful academic journeys. The PROVE model has expanded each year since its inception, beyond

the initial pilot program of five interns on two campuses, to a cohort of 14 graduate social work interns covering seven campuses, at both community colleges and senior colleges.

PROVE functions as part of a host setting on college campuses typically under the umbrella of the Office of Student Affairs but is not affiliated with any specific service such as psychological counseling. The program is usually located within the campus SVRC. PROVE utilizes student veteran peer mentors, activating a "veteran helping veteran" principle (Whiteman et al. 2013) and facilitating building rapport, trust, and a more relaxed context into which student veterans are introduced to the social work interns. While initially creating an environment that affords comfort to veterans and facilitates active engagement, the arrangement may place stress on the interns who have to adapt to this unique environment and service delivery system. In this non-traditional milieu setting, the interns are challenged with being in a less formally structured environment where the student veterans strongly influence the dynamics (Propst 1992). At times, interactions between veterans may contain crude language, which may seem to simulate a "barracks-type" atmosphere more familiar to those who have served. These statements may collide with social work professional values and can be challenging for interns and staff. At other times, veterans share combat stories and the content and emotions can be difficult to hear and absorb without judgment. Because the PROVE environment is not set up as a traditional individual counseling or group therapy setting where a social worker can usually elect what to explore and how to respond, this fast moving, less structured setting means flexibility is imperative.

Interns working within a milieu setting are confronted with many challenges. Many of the clinical skills a first-year master's student needs, such as development of the professional self, setting appropriate boundaries, and role definition, can become difficult to achieve in an environment rich in ambiguity. Issues of who "owns" the space may arise as student veterans want to feel safe by having some sense of propriety. A pervasive casualness in the SVRC can also undermine professional boundaries and blur lines which must be balanced. For example, situations arise where veterans who may be dealing with post traumatic stress (PTS) require immediate emotional support, especially if they are triggered by other comments or experiences. The interns need to be ready to defuse what may become an intense interpersonal interchange. Additionally, the milieu environment means that student veterans who come to the SVRC may not be looking for traditional one-on-one clinical services but rather are exploring what the space has to offer and it is incumbent upon the interns to allow the student veterans to define their needs and provide the appropriate resources. Over time, the interns become people who the student veterans can rely on to be interested, engaged and

supportive of them on a daily basis. Many student veterans then seek the interns' help when they have more interpersonal concerns and are more open to interns' observations of issues and patterns they have noticed which may lead to opportunities for more traditional clinical work. On most PROVE campuses, the interns spend the majority of their time in the SVRC which is generally a large room with workstations as well as casual seating. Most of the PROVE campuses provide some type of private office space outside of the SVRC for interns to use for these types of interactions and conversations. However, interns are also encouraged to improvise and utilize various locations around campus for continued conversation. While both the graduate social work interns and the undergraduate student veteran mentors may perform some similar tasks such as making initial outreach calls, tabling and addressing some concrete needs that student veterans come in with, the interns are the ones that are able to move relationships and services to the next level with informed referrals; and with assessment and intervention utilizing the PROVE needs assessment form, case review in supervision and in bi-weekly trainings; and ongoing, purposeful relationship building with individual student veterans.

The learning opportunities in a PROVE social work internship are rich and multifaceted and present themselves throughout fieldwork, supervision, and acquisition of on-the-job military cultural competency. Social work interns gain proficiency in social work competencies through conducting outreach, assessment and interventions with student veterans on interpersonal, mental health, and familial issues that interfere with education. The interns also advocate for and support student veterans to meet their concrete needs by assisting with academic concerns, connecting students to disability services, obtaining educational benefits and legal help and making referrals for more extensive therapy or medication consults. A significant educational component of the program for the interns is delivered via the veterans themselves. The interns learn much about the military and veteran-specific policy and processes, like applying for educational and service-connected benefits (e.g., the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill) from the very student veterans whom they are there to serve, as the clients are the subject matter experts.

A brief example of the model in action follows:

Calvin, a student new to campus, stops by the SVRC and is welcomed by the social work intern who inquires if he is a veteran. Following an affirmative response, the intern welcomes the new student and queries about his branch of service. The intern then turns to another student veteran in the SVRC representing the same branch and introduces the two of them, leading to a brief and spirited exchange about

deployments and service time. Calvin begins to relax and is introduced to other student veterans at the center and a student veteran mentor. The social work intern asks if Calvin has a few minutes to talk and begins a conversational interview to conduct an initial needs assessment, which includes academic information, his transition to school, and wellness. Based on the intake, the social work intern offers opportunities for Calvin to receive help and be of service to other veterans. The social work intern concludes by providing useful information about campus resources and offers to accompany Calvin to the Registrar's Office to resolve an issue with class enrollment.

Three weeks later, Calvin meets with the social work intern and begins to discuss problems with sleep, concentration and flashbacks. Although Calvin had been referred to a community-based Veterans Outreach Center (Vet Center), he had been hesitant to seek counseling and appeared to be unable or unwilling to keep appointments. The social work intern offers to accompany Calvin to the Vet Center and the offer is accepted. As they walk together, the intern learns more about Calvin's story, some family history, other resources he's used or rejected, components which allow for a fuller clinical assessment while demonstrating core social work principles, such as respect for the inherent dignity and worth of the person.

When they arrive at the Vet Center, Calvin is seen by a counselor and emerges considerably more relaxed following the appointment. Throughout the remainder of the semester, Calvin continues to visit the social work intern at the SVRC for clinical support around navigating academic and personal challenges while also receiving professional services from the Vet Center focused on his readjustment to civilian life. The outcome—the veteran is now performing better in school and has come to the realization that he can ask for help without fear of stigma.

This non-traditional therapeutic framework also encourages client participation and empowerment. Any discomfort or stigma related to seeking mental health services can be minimized as the social work intern is already *in* the client's environment. Conversations between the student veteran and intern may start in the client's comfort zone and to the casual observer, may appear merely informal, however the conversations are purposeful, directed towards getting to know the student veteran and his or her evolving needs. If private conversation is desired by a student veteran who has been reluctant to request

one-on-one counseling directly, the intern, attuned to nonverbal cues, may offer to take a walk with the student veteran across campus, accompany the individual to the Certifying Official, or assist in accessing other services.

Building Therapeutic Skills: Military Cultural Competency and Veteran-Affirmative Counseling

To become a skilled social worker with student veterans, PROVE interns and field instructors receive Military Cultural Competency training and abide by the tenets of *Veteran-Affirmative Counseling*—adapted from Olkin’s (2009) Disability-Affirmative Therapy. The tenets of Military Cultural Competence and the three foundational pillars and philosophy of Veteran-Affirmative Counseling are explicated below.

PROVE’s Military Cultural Competency Training

Developed in part for the Jed Foundation online training in 2012, PROVE’s Military Cultural Competency Training has been highlighted on numerous websites and in training manuals. PROVE strongly encourages engagement with veterans, by continuously viewing their clients as unique individuals who may share some idiosyncrasies among military cultural experiences. However, not every veteran sees himself or herself as a hero, not every veteran has PTSD, and not every veteran has been in combat. Thus, it is not surprising that sometimes it may be easier or preferred for veterans to want to talk to each other rather than to civilian social workers who may not fully understand their experiences. Sometimes veterans become frustrated because they are asked insensitive or inappropriate questions. Likewise, social work interns may feel uncomfortable talking to veterans because they don’t know what is appropriate and what is off limits (Bragin 2010). An example of respectful communication we impart in training includes some of the following guidelines for social work interns: (1) We encourage them to ask about the student veteran’s transition from the military to college and civilian life (Coll and Weiss 2012). For many veterans a PROVE intern may be the first civilian who is open to hearing about this aspect of a veteran’s life outside of family members; (2) We emphasize to the interns and the student veterans that transition is a process and can take time; and (3) We support the intern to focus on the veteran’s successful academic journey, potential obstacles hindering that goal and how they can provide the necessary resources.

To begin the conversation, interns ask about what branch of service the veteran served in and whether he or she is new to campus. These are basic engagement tools which allow for exploration and expansion with the student

veteran rather than a one-size-fits all checklist. Since a main focus of PROVE relates to helping veterans have a successful academic journey, it is strongly emphasized that nontraditional features of veterans may make it challenging to adapt to the college environment; difference in age and experience compared to their civilian student counterparts; the social and emotional foci veterans develop only after leaving the military; and issues that may arise due to changes from a mission focused and concrete system to an environment with more freedom of choice (Savitsky et al. 2009).

Clearly there are some topics and processes to avoid when speaking with student veterans:

- Pressuring veterans regarding specifics about their service
- Minimizing the challenges that a veteran might face in the college environment
- Making assumptions about any veteran’s political or foreign policy views

To develop engagement skills and build rapport, we encourage interns to maintain a slow pace with veterans regarding inquiry about their military experience. Why a person joined the military may not actually serve a clinical purpose in the initial stages of the relationship, particularly if a veteran has either a concrete need or desires to explore available services. One of the greatest assets of the milieu setting is allocation of time for a veteran’s story to unfold over the course of a month, a semester or even the academic year. The traditional intake-type, rapid fire questions are not what is encouraged in our trainings, rather having more time to get to know a veteran at his or her own pace allows social work interns to more organically fill in the background information as it relates to the military experience (Kadushin and Kadushin 1997).

Part of the supplemental bi-weekly trainings that PROVE provides includes utilization of documentation that has been specifically designed for the project such as our intervention logs and needs assessment forms. The intervention logs are a one page document that is designed to capture what services each intern provides to the student veteran. Types of interventions, length of time spent with the veteran, and type of contact (in person or by phone) are captured in this document. There are multiple types of interventions delineated on this form such as referrals to a variety of on and off campus veteran resources, facilitating social connection and following up on previous issues. Our needs assessment form is a basic intake form that collects demographic data, personal wellness information and veteran’s benefit status.. All data is entered into the PROVE database and are used in reports for our funders and partners once the information is de-identified.

Veteran Affirmative Counseling

Pillar One: Multi-community-ism (as opposed to “bicultural or multicultural”)

Veterans can be “citizens” of multiple communities (e.g., college community, religious community), moving back and forth between their civilian lives and their military experiences, between their “units” and their families, between the less than 1% of the military population and the other 99% of citizens who are civilians (PEW Survey 2011). Social workers who lack basic Military Cultural Competency training can experience similar problems that are inherent in all types of cross-cultural counseling—lack of rapport, premature termination and negative outcomes. Reger et al. (2008) describe military culture as distinct, with each branch defined by a unique set of “language, manners, norms of behavior, and belief systems” and as deserving of having competence developed around as any other ethnic or racial minority (p. 21). Veteran-Affirmative Counseling requires that the social worker understand military culture and values and is prepared to demonstrate familiarity with basic terminology, and understanding of the structure of the military, deployment cycles, and concepts such as unit cohesion and mission-oriented strengths (Lighthall 2012).

Pillar Two: Military and Veteran Culture as a Social Construct

Treatment of a veteran that focuses on only the person ignores the reality of the military/veteran experience, particularly the stigma around seeking help, negative societal views of veterans and the disconnect that the majority of civilians feel towards veterans and service members (Lafferty et al. 2008). Even the most experienced clinical social workers may make assumptions about veterans, such as every veteran has seen combat, or use language in a careless manner referring to all military personnel as soldiers rather than branch specific (Hall 2012).

Pillar Three: Additive Clinical Skills

Veteran-Affirmative Counseling requires social workers to obtain additional training, education, practice and skills relevant to the characteristics, strengths, potential transition issues and culture of this population. Simply having the foundational knowledge that a social work degree provides does not allow for truly competent practice with this heterogeneous group whose life experiences differ greatly from those of traditional college students (Lang 2012). As students, veterans are more likely to be older than their peers, to be first-generation college

students, to have dependents, and to have had a break in their education (DiRamio and Jarvis 2011; Kim and Cole 2013). Some veterans have served in combat capacities prior to their college enrollment and these experiences have matured them and set them apart from their civilian peers (Ackerman et al. 2009). Social workers need to adapt their counseling to account for the varying student roles and the multiple dimensions of the student veteran experience.

Social workers need to value the veteran and his or her unique experiences, foregoing assumptions about experiences during military service, and veterans’ political or social beliefs and attitudes towards world events and people from different backgrounds or regions. Thus, social workers should be willing to acknowledge and shed stereotypes or perceptions that they have formulated either personally or through their social work education. If a client states that his or her military service is not a current concern or part of the presenting problem, the social worker should not assume that the client is in denial, resistant or traumatized simply because that is the clinician’s perception.

Additionally, flexibility is critical in thinking about the type of counseling that may be necessary. One of the key tenets of military training is stoicism which can lead to a belief that asking for help or needing assistance connotes weakness (Coll et al. 2013). Battling this perception would be critical to developing a plan moving forward. Looking at a holistic approach for coordination with other services and programs, such as combining volunteerism and support for other service members, may be most appropriate. To help a student veteran build a new unit and have a new purpose would be utilizing skills that otherwise don’t translate so simply into the clinical realm of the civilian social worker world.

For veterans who were injured or wounded during their service, an acquired disability adds another layer of complexity for leveraging effective support services on college campuses (Elliott et al. 2011). An estimated 30% of those who served will live the remainder of their lives with prevailing physical and/or psychological disabilities resulting from military service (Church 2008). Disability in the military signifies not only a personal adjustment at the individual level, but also a considerable potential for involuntary transition out of one’s military career. In the U.S. Army alone, the incidence of discharge from the military due to disability has grown by 10% each year over the past 25 years (Bell et al. 2011, 2008). Many student veterans with disabilities are unaware of the Americans with Disabilities Act, their rights as students with a disability, or how to acquire support for receiving academic accommodations (Madaus 2009). PROVE focuses on these aspects in addition to eligibility requirements for Chapter 36, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.

Replication of PROVE on Other College Campuses

The process of social work field education with the student veteran populations at college campuses is needed across institutions. The critical elements necessary to replicate and sustain the PROVE model are: (a) buy-in on both the social work school's field education department and that of the undergraduate and graduate campus where the student veterans attend school; (b) development of professional relationships with other campus units and the effective management and usage of resources; (c) a continued commitment to shared core values in supplemental clinical education around social work with veterans; and (d) trained professionals who have worked with veterans previously to serve as the subject matter experts. Once this has been acquired, schools of social work can take the following steps to replicate PROVE:

1. *Engage faculty and staff* It is essential to consult with School of Social Work personnel who have experience working with military service members or veterans, have themselves served in the military or are the dependents of veterans. These are important allies in the creation of this clinical internship due to the nuances of working with this underserved population and challenges of a non-traditional field setting.
2. *Set up a standardized process for recruiting and selecting social work interns* An initial project step is to select prospective interns who are screened with the help of the field education department. Students who have experience with individuals in the military or have served in the military are encouraged to interview. The intersectionality of their identities as graduate students and veterans affords them a unique entrée into building rapport with current student veterans and often allows them to reflect upon and gain insight on their own identities. Other candidates we try to recruit are individuals with work experience. They are of particular interest since student veterans are on average, 26–32 years old (Sherwood and Shudofsky 2014). Interns who are over the age of 30 have the shared experience of returning to school as a non-traditional student which assists in the engagement process with veterans. Once an intern is accepted into the Project, he or she is provided with extensive summer reading and online training to start building a foundation to develop military cultural competency. As with placements at the Veterans Affairs Medical Centers, the PROVE internship is associated with a modest stipend. After interviewing potential interns and both the Project and interviewee agree to move forward, PROVE then informs the student of the stipend. Thus, acquiring funding helps to ensure

that potential interns are fully vetted to understand the nature of working with student veterans and understand the scope of acquiring clinical experience in a non-traditional setting.

3. *Establish a unified setting for meeting and learning* On most of the campuses, the interns' work station is located in the SVRC. This space is sometimes shared with the veteran coordinator, student veteran mentors and student veterans. Much of the interns' experiential education takes place from listening and participating in informal group discussions with student veterans. Additionally, providing academic assistance, responding to interpersonal conflicts, and conducting needs assessments, create a rich "in vivo" learning experience for interns. A critical part of PROVE's success in a milieu-type setting owes itself to the application of the clubhouse model theory of psychosocial support (Hall and Valvano 1985).

The model's utility can be attributed to its community-building capacities, flexibility, and fostering of purpose through service. The importance of providing a historical based foundation for the work in a milieu setting is critical in terms of setting appropriate expectations and learning goals for the interns.

4. *Training* Once field placement starts, bi-weekly trainings begin. These trainings provide support to the interns and a space to discuss their experiences, so that the social work educational opportunities of a milieu-type setting can be explored and understood. Subject matter experts on topics such as Veterans Administration benefits, financial and legal resources, issues around women veterans, PTSD, and military sexual trauma serve as trainers. Sessions are also devoted to specific clinical topics such as how to conduct an interview and complete a needs assessment in the milieu-type setting. Trainings are an opportunity for the interns to explore challenges like veterans' mistrust of civilians and mental health professionals and role definition in a milieu-type setting.

Conclusion

Collaboration and teamwork are hallmarks of the PROVE model. Once the social work field education model is developed, it is important to enhance the level of support for veterans that currently exists on campus. The university should value veterans as students who have significant contributions to make to campus life. This includes utilizing social media to increase visibility of student veterans' presence on campus, and encouraging campus outreach efforts through workshops, seminars, and student groups. These outreach efforts afford opportunities to educate

faculty, staff and students about military culture, ways to effectively work with student veterans, and how to develop services toward military-connected students (Selber 2009). It is important that the social work field education department works with campus offices to accurately and effectively collect data on veteran enrollment, retention, number of veterans with disabilities, and graduation and placement to help evaluate the impact of the work accomplished and additional efforts needed via the clinical internship.

More research is needed to determine the efficacy of projects such as PROVE. Currently, there is a proposed research study, including surveys and focus groups centered on the needs of student veterans within the CUNY system, which is pending IRB approval. That study, along with an analysis of the data collected on persistence, retention and graduation rates of PROVE-served student veterans versus non-PROVE student veterans served on the same campuses will provide empirical data regarding the program's impact. The findings will supplement results obtained from pre- and post-internship interviews with the student veteran clients about the effectiveness of the PROVE model. These results will add to the growing body of research around student veterans and programs that help them transition successfully from the military to college life (Student Veterans of America 2013). PROVE intends to use these results for additional funds for replicability and sustainability as it enters its second decade working with this still underserved population.

Student veterans are a population that schools of social work need to be prepared to effectively serve. The PROVE model offers a unique training opportunity to prepare social work students to provide student veterans with social and emotional support, and meet educational, vocational and mental health needs.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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