

## SPOTLIGHT: FOCUS POPULATIONS

# Veterans

Data show that veterans often experience greater mental health needs at a higher incidence than the general population. One-in-five veterans of the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts have major depression or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and one in four show signs of substance use disorders.<sup>1</sup> Not only do veterans have higher rates of need, they also have a separate system serving them — the Veteran’s Health Administration — which comes with additional policy considerations.



### ENSURE SERVICES FOR ELEVATED NEEDS

Being a veteran is another intersection that requires intentional policy consideration. Policy also needs to ensure that the Veteran’s Health Administration is included in reform efforts and has sufficient capacity to meet needs. Federal policy can further build the capacity of the Veteran’s Health Administration for mental health and ensure that it remains cutting-edge.

### ① ACTION ITEMS

- The federal government should **ensure that the Veteran’s Health Administration is engaged in the same reform efforts as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services** for mental health, and that Veteran’s Health Administration sites are included in incentive programs for expanding access to underserved populations.
- The federal government should provide funding to ensure that all veterans transitioning to civilian life **are connected with comprehensive services and supports** and receive education on possible warning signs in the future, for which they may want to seek services (e.g. depression).

<sup>1</sup> Veteran Mental Health,” National Veterans Foundation, March 25, 2016, <https://nvf.org/veteran-mental-health-facts-statistics/>.