

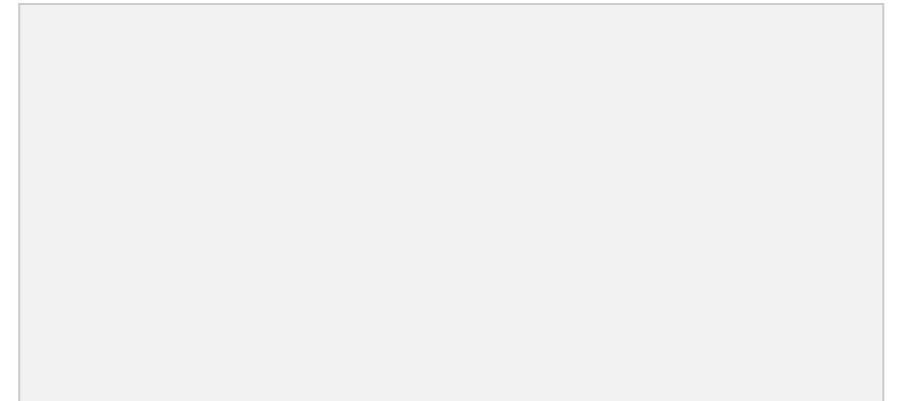
# Equine Assisted Services for Veterans

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## Overview

**Topic 1:** Veterans & Military Culture

Questions/Discussion



**Topic 2:** Collaborating with the VA  
Questions/Discussion

**Topic 3:** Creating Effective  
Programs Questions/Discussion

**Topic 1: Veterans  
& Military Culture**

**Veterans and  
military**

# culture

Veterans are not a homogenous group

- Many different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds
- Officer versus enlisted career paths are very different
- Diverse career fields – some may involve combat deployment - others do not
- A multitude of reasons for joining the military – including the draft

## Veterans and military culture

Veterans are not a homogenous group

- Career service member versus a few years of service
- Active duty versus reserve or guard duty
- Career fields have limitations based upon aptitude scores and gender
- Service experience can be very different based upon era (e.g., Vietnam versus post-nine-eleven)

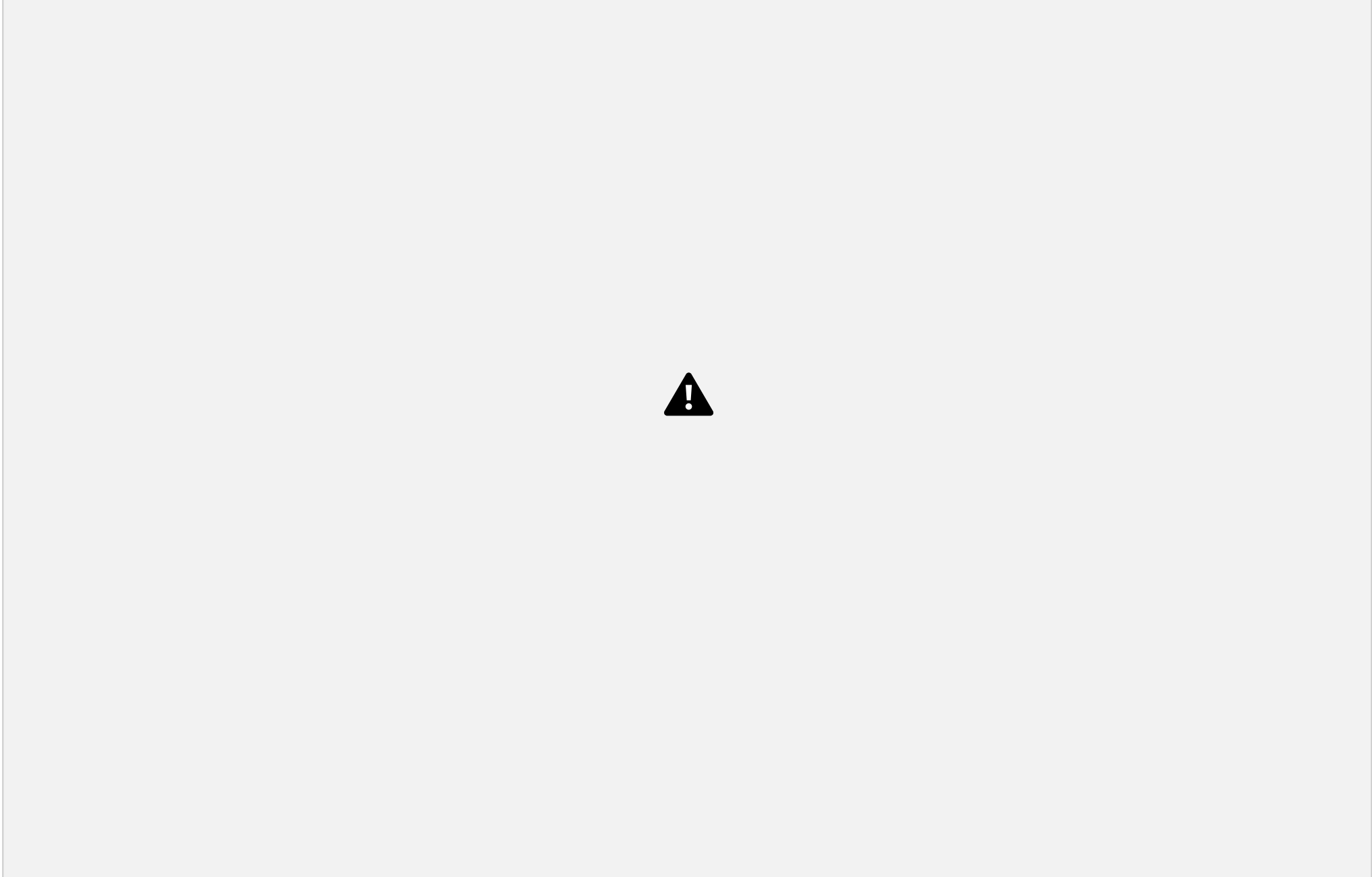
group

- Branches of the service are different
- Overseas duty versus stateside •

Veterans are not a homogenous

Exposure to danger versus not •

Combat deployment versus not



Veterans and

# military culture

Veterans are not a homogenous  
group

- Service-connected disability  
versus none
- Eligible for VA medical care  
versus not
- Level of identification with  
being a Veteran

## Veterans and military

# culture

Veterans are not a homogenous group

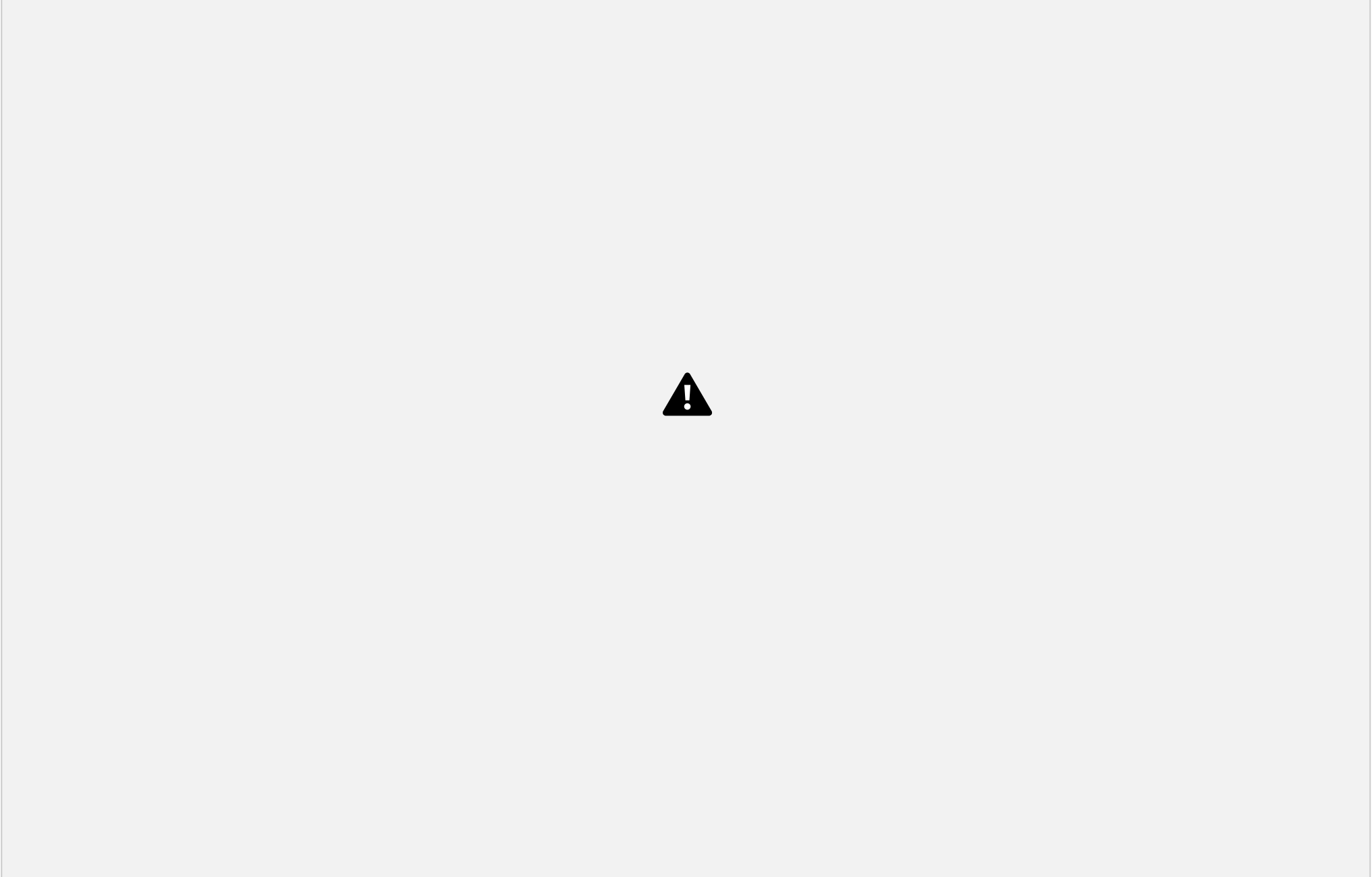
- Post-military experience in society (Vietnam versus post 9-11)
- Anger versus gratitude towards the military
- Post-deployment political decisions (e.g., withdrawal from Afghanistan)

## Veterans and military culture

Take home points



- Each Veteran is an individual with his/her unique experiences
- Don't assume
- Be careful with the label of "hero"



Challenges for

# EAS Centers

- Teachings style not geared for adult learners.
- Need for bigger, higher skilled herd.
- Male volunteers, peer leaders.
- Veteran Instructors.
- Challenge, risk and adventure.

Questions  
&  
Discussion

# Topic 2: Collaborating with the VA

## Collaborating with VA

Can be challenging.

Several VA medical centers offer EAS in partnership with community equine facilities.

The programming offered and mechanism of partnering are variable.

VA EAS programs are challenging to implement within the VA system.

# Collaborating with VA

Potential advantages to working  
with the VA:

- Contract funding for services.
- Appropriate referral of  
Veteran participants.
- Coordination of care.

## Collaborating with VA

## Potential challenges to working with the VA:

- Everything takes a long time.
- May be difficult to find internal VA staff contacts.
- May not be anyone in specific facilities who is willing and/or has the time to manage an EAS program.

# Collaborating with VA

## Potential approaches to working with the VA:

- Try to contact VA staff in mental health,

recreation therapy or whole health.

- Prepare to provide research regarding effectiveness.
- We are happy to consult, and our contact information will be provided at the end.

## Tips for EAS Centers

- Reach out to your local VA and Veterans groups.
- Create an Open House experience.
- Don't be afraid to start small.
- Offer to host a table at local Veteran events.
- Offer to provide a workshop about EAS for local providers.

# Questions & Discussion

- Collaborate with other centers on funding opportunities or events.



# VA Salt Lake City Program Horses Helping Veterans

- EAS program created as a collaboration between:
  - VA Salt Lake City Whole Health Service
  - VA Salt Lake City Mental Health Service
  - Utah State University Equine and Human Sciences Program
  - Utah State University Extension, Ride Utah!

# Horses Helping Veterans

Mission:

- Provide PIH/EAL, horsemanship skills

training and recreational riding to Veterans  
in the VA Salt Lake City Healthcare System  
catchment area

- Focus PIH on suicide prevention, PTSD and  
substance use disorders
- Conduct and publish research regarding  
the benefits of EAS for Veterans

# Equine Encounters

- Mental health/wellness focused intervention (3 to 4 hours)
- Weekly sessions in collaboration with the SLC VA mental health team
- Ground only
  - horsemanship skill focused
  - group EAL/EAP activities
- Study findings

# Pathways to Horsemanship

## Level 1- Ground-skills

- Basic Safety
- Catch/leading
- Grooming
- Leading an obstacle course

Skills can be taught in groups, can

# Para Sport/Recreation

take 4 to 6 weeks, depending on participant needs.

## Level 2- Mounted work

- Saddling/bridling
- Mounting, dismounting
- Start, stop, steering
- Navigation through an obstacle



- Para Dressage
  - Clinics
  - Schooling Shows
- NSBA Heroes on Horses
- Trail Rides
  - Retreats
  - Ride Utah

# Questions

# &

# Discussion

# Contact Information: