

# Ready to Serve? Improving Community Care of Aging Veterans in Michigan

## Scope

The Center for Health Research and Transformation (CHRT) conducted a statewide needs assessment of Michigan health providers to serve older Veterans. The goals of the study were to:

- Assess the capacity of private, community-based providers in Michigan to provide high-quality care to older Veterans;
- Identify strengths, gaps and opportunities in community-based primary and specialty care for older Veterans, especially in treating and managing conditions specific to Veterans, such as PTSD, military environmental exposures leading to later health conditions (e.g., Agent Orange), and other service-connected conditions, and;
- Provide recommendations on strategies to further enhance the system of care for older Veterans in the community setting throughout the state of Michigan.

Domains for the survey were developed to collect key characteristics of providers and to assess the ability of these providers to provide high quality care for aging and older Veterans across Michigan. Capacity and readiness to serve older Veterans was assessed using a set of seven components that define and shape access to high-quality and cultural competent care:

- Currently accepting new patients (the minimum threshold for providing care and access);
- Prepared to deal with conditions common among patients (training and self-reported confidence in treating common chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, hyperlipidemia, etc.);
- Screens for conditions more common among veterans (assess patients for exposure to service related hazards and behavioral health conditions);
- Accommodate patients with disabilities (accommodations for patients with disabilities such as limb amputations, mobility issues, hearing loss, traumatic brain injury or functional impairments);
- Familiarity with military culture trained in military culture and displays level of familiarity with structure, terminology and other key features of military service);
- Screens for current service or veteran status (asks about current or former service and where they served to provide context and help flag potential risks);
- Train and ready to treat common conditions associated with an aging and older populations (including needs and supports for aging and older adults, assessment for aging related conditions).

## Methodology

CHRT obtained a sample of 116,249 licensed health care providers from the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. CHRT sent the survey to 73.2 percent of these providers (those with valid business email addresses) in two waves August and October 2019. In total, 8,879 (10.4 percent) opened the survey and answered the screening question about providing direct patient care. Since only respondents who indicated that they currently were providing direct patient care were eligible to take the survey, the final sample included 6,360 providers, yielding an overall response rate of 7.4 percent.

CHRT compared characteristics of the sample against those of the entire list of licensed health providers to assess how closely the sample resembled the population. Response rates differed by type of health care professional and geographic region. CHRT weighted the final sample to adjust for these differences and to ensure that the results were representative of the population of providers.