**Medicare Outreach Idea of the Month**

March 2019

**Reaching Veterans in Wisconsin**

According to the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), there are over 363,000 veterans in Wisconsin and 52 percent are age 65 or older.\* Many of them do not know how to navigate their health care options or if they are eligible for benefits. Conducting Medicare outreach to local veterans can help this group access the benefits and health care needed to maintain or improve the quality of their lives.

Veterans’ experiences vary from wars and eras. All have different needs. Asking “Did you serve in the military?” is the first step to take as you begin to build a rapport with your agency’s veteran clients. Be sure to thank them for their service. Another important step is to become aware of the different organizations serving veterans in your community. The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) provides support to Wisconsin veterans and also provides access to information and other available resources within the State of Wisconsin and nationally. To access their webpage with links to local, state and federal resources for veterans, click [here](https://dva.wi.gov/Pages/benefitsClaims/StateFederalResources.aspx).

Contact your County or Tribal Veterans Service Office to introduce yourself and share your resources. Make sure their staff members know about the assistance you can provide and when and how to make referrals. Find out about other local organizations focused on veterans support in your community. Conducting outreach to these organizations will help to get your message out to more veterans in your area.

Veterans who are American Indian may benefit from additional targeted outreach efforts. According to CMS, these veterans are more likely to lack health insurance and have a disability than other veterans. They may need additional help to find health care assistance from Veterans Affairs, Indian Health Service, Medicare, Medicaid and plans of the Health Insurance Marketplace. To view or download a CMS brochure that provides information about these programs for American Indians who are veterans, click [here](https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/American-Indian-Alaska-Native/AIAN/Outreach-and-Education/pdf/support-for-veterans_909439-N.pdf).

Understanding how Medicare works with Military benefits can be confusing. This [Medicare placemat](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CDBisswurm%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CWebsite%5CUpload%20to%20website%5CMedicare_Placemat_Vets_BrownCounty.doc) provides some basic information that may be helpful for veterans to be aware of regarding Medicare and Military benefits. Consider sharing the placemat with community partners such as the local VFW for use during a fish fry or other special events.

Your efforts to connect with veterans, either directly or through local organizations, will ensure that more veterans in your community learn about Medicare and Medicare-related benefit programs so they can make informed decisions about their health care options and access assistance when needed.

**To view all the GWAAR Medicare Outreach and Assistance Resources, follow the link to our webpage:**

<https://gwaar.org/medicare-outreach-and-assistance-resources>

***\*Veteran Population as of 9/30/2017. US Department of Veterans Affairs—National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. Contact:***[***www.va.gov/vetdata***](http://www.va.gov/vetdata)***.***

By the GWAAR Medicare Outreach Team