



Connecting Rural Aging Veterans to VA Benefits

Jennifer Morgan, BS^{1,3}, Bret Hicken, PhD², Kimber Parry, LCSW & Randall Rupper, MD^{3,4}

¹Utah Aging & Disability Resource Connection, ²Veterans Rural Health Resource Center-Western Region,

³University of Utah Division of Geriatrics, ⁴Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center
Salt Lake City, Utah



RURAL VETERANS

- 5.2 million (23%) of US military Veterans live in rural areas.
- 3 million rural veterans enrolled for Veterans Administration (VA) healthcare; 56% are 65 years or older.

2010 National Survey of Veterans

- 41.0% had basic understanding of their VA benefits.
- 20% had knowledge of specific benefits.
- 42% not aware of VA healthcare benefits.



Barriers to care:

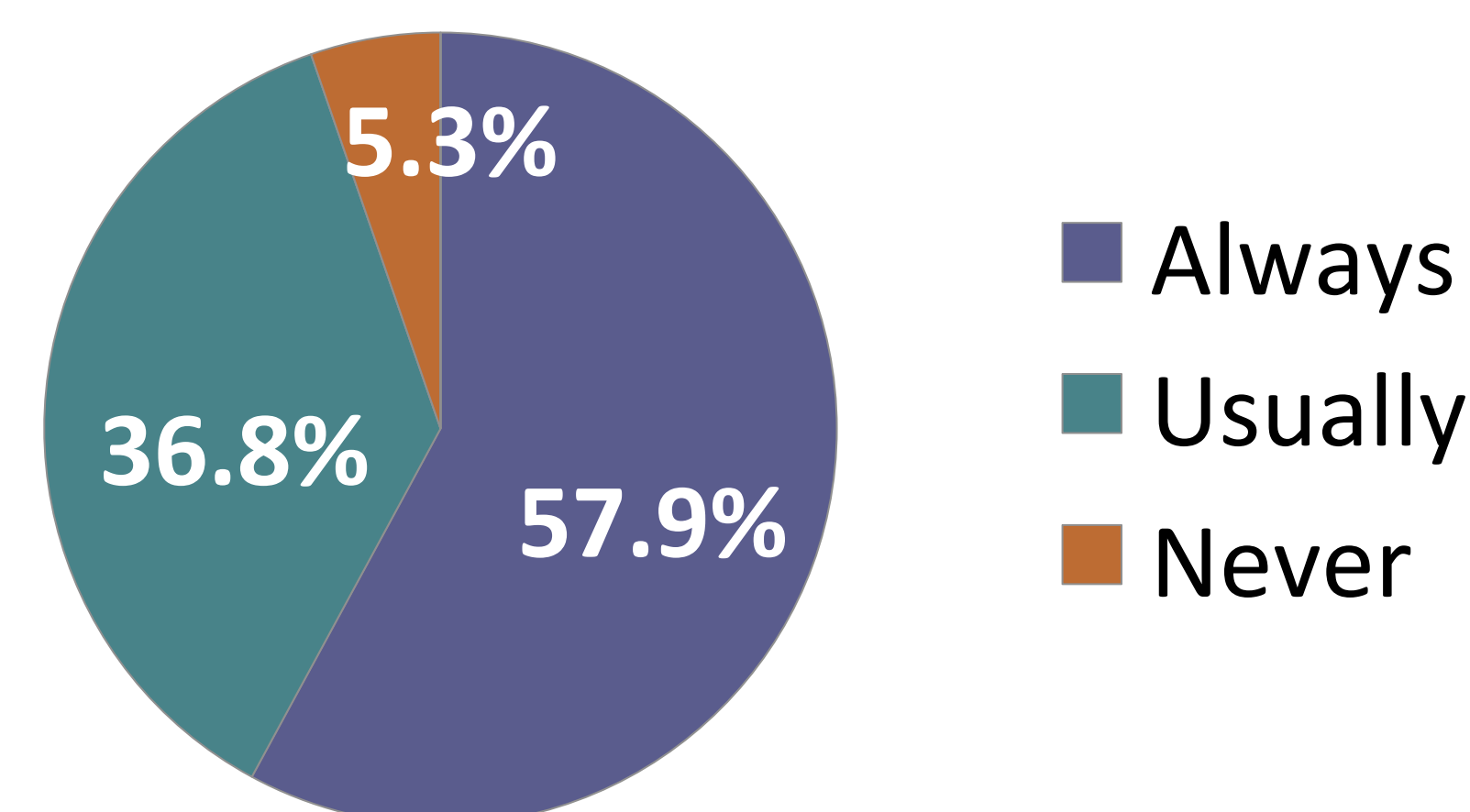
- Limited services in rural areas.
- Travel and transportation difficulties.
- 43% do not have broadband access at home.

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTERS (ADRC)

- Single entry points for long-term services and supports (LTSS)
- “No wrong door approach”
- Provide options counseling
 - Person-centered
 - Optimize LTSS needs and goals
- Potential access point for rural Veterans

2012 National ADRC Survey

- Do you regularly assess a caller’s Veteran status?



- Challenges
 - Infrequent contact with VA for Veteran needs.
 - Lack basic information about most VA benefits.
 - Information resources about VA benefits seen as unhelpful.
 - **Agencies want training on VA services and benefits.**

COVER to COVER PROGRAM

“Connecting Older Veterans (Especially Rural) to Community and Veteran Eligible Resources”

Program Goals

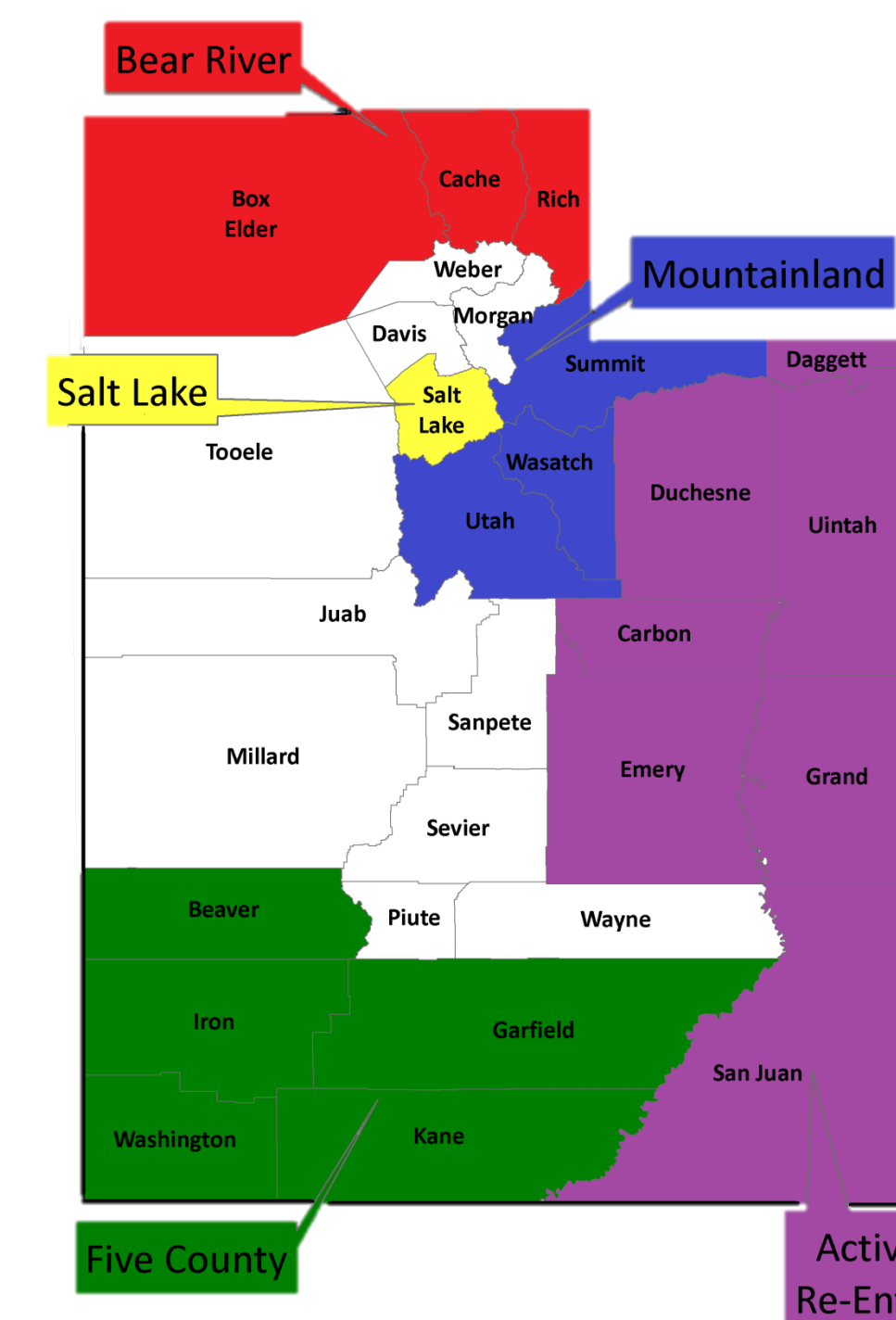
- Create an access point for rural Veterans.
- Train ADRC options counselors on VA benefits.
- Build relationships between ADRCs and VA.

Program Intervention

- In-depth VA benefit training for appointed ADRC employees.
- Training provided by local VA benefits experts.
- ADRC employees use new knowledge to serve rural Veteran clients.

Utah ADRC Pilot (2013-2016)

- 5 ADRCs serve 19 counties.
 - 14/19 counties are entirely rural.
- 72% of Veterans ≥65 live in ADRC catchment.
- 74 hours of VA benefits training for appointed ADRC options counselors.
- Developed relationships between ADRC and VA employees for future questions and needs.



CASE EXAMPLE



- **Clients:** Veteran Couple – 94 year old man and 96 year old woman.
- **Problems:** Serious health issues, want to stay at home, never applied for VA benefits.
- **Intervention:** ADRC options counselor connected them to community and VA benefits.
- **Results:** Monthly disability compensation, VHA healthcare, in-home services.
- **Still living at home.**

UTAH COVER to COVER PILOT RESULTS

Veterans served by ADRCs

ADRC Clients	FY13/14	FY15	FY16	Total*
Veterans	584	748	1166	2498
Total Encounters	**	1554	3064	4618**
Age				
80 +	289	347	505	1141 (45%)
70-79	126	135	209	470 (19%)
60-69	93	108	198	399 (16%)
59-	12	26	56	94 (4%)
Widow	73	132	198	403 (16%)

Types of Referrals to VA Resources

VA Program Referrals	FY13/14	FY15	FY16	Total*
VHA Healthcare	283	367	495	1145 (24%)
In-Home Services	57	246	360	663 (14%)
Aid & Attendance	269	274	441	984 (20%)
Pension	164	178	235	577 (12%)
Disability	85	132	407	407 (11%)
State Nursing Homes	110	157	266	533 (13%)
Burial Benefits	80	29	206	315 (6%)
Total Referrals	1,048	1,383	2,410	4,841

* Represents the total number of unique Veterans seen

** Data not collected for entire duration of FY13/14

Satisfaction

84% of clients were satisfied with the service and would refer other Veterans.

EXPANSION

We are expanding to other states! Interested in learning more?

Contact us:

Jen Morgan: jen.morgan@utah.edu

Rand Rupper: randall.rupper@hsc.utah.edu

Bret Hicken: bret.hicken@va.gov