



The Forward March Community of Practice Charter

This Charter Template was adapted from CDC's Public Health Professionals Gateway's 'CoP Charter Template'

Approved [Date] by [Governing Body]

Version 1.0

I. Introduction

1a) Charter Purpose

This charter establishes the purpose, function, membership and essential governing practices of the Forward March Community of Practice, a workgroup of the PA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and Families (SMVF). It identifies the mission, values, and ground rules, defines the roles of the leadership team and outlines essential governance policies to be used by decision makers to manage this community. The charter will be used by sponsors or funders, contributors, the leadership team, and community members.

The charter helps us to create a community through sharing our vision and clarifying roles in ways that streamline communication, collaboration, and accountabilities.

1b) Community Background & Justification

The Forward March Community of Practice was initiated in 2025, as part of the five-year strategic plan of the PA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and Families.

Suicide death among SMVF remains disproportionately high. Individuals in the SMVF community and the larger Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) can be disconnected from local communities, leading to gaps in resources and support for SMVF.

A Community of Practice strategy and framework brings local and regional community service organizations together with the DMVA and each other to identify common barriers, resources, learning needs, and to create concrete strategies that improve SMVF-centric competencies and practices.

1c) Mission

The mission of the Forward March Community of Practice is to reduce suicide risk and suicide death among SMVF.

1d) Goals

To fulfill this mission, Forward March will:

- Recruit health/MH providers as members for regional CoPs (*work with DMVA regional VETConnect staff*)
- Implement regional CoP meetings (2x/year/region) (*work with DMVA regional VETConnect staff*)
- Identify needs and develop education plan for regional Health/MH CoPs (*work with DMVA Veterans Programs staff*)
- Develop and implement SMVF-centric trainings for providers (*work with DMVA Veterans Programs staff*)
- Distribute 'Ask the Question' pocket cards and LMS resources thru CoPs

1e) Member Values

Members of the Forward March ascribe to the following values:

1. Practices should be SMVF-centric and trauma informed, promoting respect, autonomy, evidence-based strategies, and cultural humility
2. Teamwork and collaboration are essential to building a community that supports the needs of SMVF
3. Each CoP member is committed to actively driving the work of the Forward March
4. Members will disseminate and share the CoP resources to enhance SMVF safety in their home organizations and communities

II. Membership

This Community of Practice is intended for members of the DMVA, SMVF, health, behavioral health, social service and law enforcement stakeholder groups, although it is open to all working to create communities safer from suicide for SMVF.

There is no cost to join, and membership is open, but the community is private. Members must submit a request to join the community via the email: RA-MVPAGOVCHALLENGE@PA.GOV. All requests will be reviewed and approved by the Community Manager.

Members are not required to contribute to any CoP discussions or activities but are encouraged to engage. Members who miss more than 2 consecutive meetings will be asked to send an alternative representative or to re-evaluate the ability to support the CoP.

III. Community Participation and Activities

3a) Member and Community Benefits

Through sustained discussion and interactions, this community enables members to:

- Participate in life-saving and culturally responsive initiatives for SMVF
- Share experiences and knowledge
- Access tools, resources, and expertise from professionals in the field
- Receive professional development opportunities
- Tap into a network of informal support and coaching from peers
- Collaboratively solve pressing issues or questions
- Connect with peers to expand your professional network
- Enhance professional reputation

The community will benefit from its members by:

- Improving or developing information sharing pathways
- Reducing duplication in efforts
- Streamlining and standardizing suicide prevention and cultural responsiveness practices
- Facilitating coordination and collaboration that can lead to innovative problem-solving
- Developing new practices, skills, resources, and tools to advance in respective fields
- Unifying professionals tackling similar problems across the Commonwealth

3b) Ground Rules

Members of the Forward March are encouraged to openly discuss and share relevant resources and materials that will advance understanding of suicide prevention and SMVF-centric practices in Pennsylvania. The inclusion of all diverse members perspectives is critical for community growth.

Members of this community will:

1. Be courteous, respectful, and considerate of fellow community members.
2. Encourage a collaborative environment that welcomes diversity and inclusion through open and thoughtful discourse.
3. Refrain from harassing, discriminatory, or derogatory speech, conduct, and materials.
4. Respectfully challenge one another, but refrain from personal attacks.
5. Try on new ideas and perspectives and approach new ideas with an open mind.
6. Commit to finding consensus and creative solutions.
7. Obtain approval before distributing materials or promoting services from which the member could financially or politically gain.
8. Disclose any personal or professional conflicts of interest that may impact participation in the community.

9. Keep confidential any information or experiences of a sensitive or personal nature shared by members.
10. Follow through on commitments and agreed upon activities.

IV. Leadership Committee

DMVA, fiscal sponsor of this group will staff a Community Manager to manage the day-to-day coordination, administration, and management of the community. A leadership team will work in close partnership with the Community Manager to provide general oversight of all the Forward March activities and direct the progress of the community towards reaching and developing strategic goals and outputs. The leadership team will serve for the 5-year strategic plan, with the understanding that the DMVA may make changes at any time in accordance with the Governor's Challenge Strategic Plan and that the DMVA will replace any leaders who are unable to continue to serve at any time.