

Providing High Quality, Culturally Competent Health Care for Military Service Members, Veterans and Their Families

By J. Gregory Jolissaint, MD, and N. Vandervall Coots, MD



Figure 1. Military and Veterans Health Program Poster

Trinity Health, a 22 state and 94 hospital health care system headquartered in Livonia, Michigan, launched a new [Military and Veterans Health Program](#) that officially began April 1, 2018.

The goal of this program is to provide military service members, veterans, and their families convenient access to high-quality, safe, and culturally sensitive health care services that meet their specific needs. Those health care facilities participating in this program are committed to becoming the provider of choice for Tricare beneficiaries, Veterans, and their families.

Trinity Health has a long and distinguished history of offering compassionate health care to military service members dating back to the Civil War. The founding congregations of the, Sisters of Holy Cross, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Sisters of Charity helped staff U.S. military hospitals and the first US Navy hospital ship, caring for wounded Union and Confederate soldiers throughout the Civil War. It is a proud tradition that Trinity Health has now re-committed to continuing.

In Maryland, the Holy Cross Health system is serving as a pilot site for this new program. The participating Holy Cross Health sites are:

- Holy Cross Hospital (Silver Spring)
- Holy Cross Germantown Hospital
- Holy Cross Health Partners in Kensington (Primary Care Clinic)

Trinity Health's and Holy Cross Health's intent is to become the first major, non-federal health care system to provide culturally competent care to military service members, Veterans, and their family members. They are focused on providing care and services that meet or exceed federal health care access and quality standards.

To achieve the cultural competency goal, Holy Cross Health is equipping its colleagues with the information and training needed to understand and connect with this unique population of patients. The RAND Corporation (a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous) published important and relevant articles in 2008 (The Invisible Wounds of War), 2015 (Community Based Provider Capacity to Deliver Culturally Competent, Quality Mental Health Care to Veterans and Their Families), and 2018 (Are Private Health Care Providers Ready to Treat Veterans? Evidence from New York State). These articles emphasize the *importance of providing culturally competent health care for military service members, Veterans, and their families.*

In order to address the challenges described in these RAND articles, Trinity Health and Holy Cross Health partnered with the national leader in military cultural competency training to provide military and veterans with cultural training that ensures participating physicians, nurses, clinical support staff, administrators, and caregivers better understand military culture, the nuances of the various military services, and the key illnesses and injuries associated with military service and military deployments.

Holy Cross Health has adjusted its intake processes to ensure they are asking the right questions to better understand, connect with and provide competent, people-centered care to this unique group of patients. Additionally, they are taking steps to identify their own military and veteran staff members which will help ensure that military service members, veterans, and their family members feel welcome and more at ease in Holy Cross Health hospitals and clinics.



Figure 2. Holy Cross Hospital Lobby with Military Service Flags on Display

The Military and Veterans Health Program aligns closely with Holy Cross Health's Mission, Core Values, and People-Centered 2020 strategic plan. Through programs like this one, Trinity Health and Holy Cross Health are reinforcing their commitment to becoming the national leader in improving the care of its surrounding communities and addressing the unique needs of each person served.

Trinity Health and Holy Cross Health are dedicated to giving back to those who gave so much for the freedoms that residents of the United States enjoy – and that is why they developed the program's motto "**Serving You as You Served Us™**."

Additional information about this innovative program can be accessed by visiting the program's website via the following URL: <http://www.trinity-health.org/military-and-veterans-health-program>

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