



Building a community/regional, integrated public health prevention model to meet the crisis of Veteran suicide

Veteran Prevention Model

North Carolina-based 501 (c)(3) Pamlico Rose Institute (PRI) will leverage their extensive community and regional organizational memberships and relationships with government agencies and organizations, institutions of higher learning, Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) and faith-based and non-faith-based nonprofits to build a community/regional, integrated public health prevention model in eastern North Carolina to meet the crisis of Veteran suicide. Utilizing the leadership and expertise of PRI, strategy, operations and guidance source documents from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Veterans Administration (VA), guidance documents from local and regional veteran-serving organizations, and existing and current research into wellness and resilience as suicide prevention, PRI will bring together a network of Veteran-serving organizations to design and implement a multifaceted collaborative approach to prevention. The foundation of this “comprehensive, community-based” prevention model will be PRI’s ongoing innovative Total Life Fitness (TLF) wellness and resilience- building program for women Veterans that includes veterans serving as wellness coaches to other veterans. PRI’s mature website and social media presence, and multifaceted outreach program that features video briefs, panel discussions, TED-like VET Talks, a podcast, long-form writing and a newsletter will be the point of departure for developing a mature enterprise-wide strategic communication capacity to advance awareness prevention outreach to a variety of stakeholders at community, regional even national levels. The priorities of the collaborating organizations are three-fold:



Advance wellness & resilience building (Total Life Fitness/TLF) as prevention approach

TLF prevention-based programs will be offered to at-risk and marginalized women Veterans in eastern North Carolina while offering similar opportunities to Veterans at large and community populations that are also at-risk. and those individuals and groups and organizations that desire to informally and formally volunteer to become part of the solution. Primary programs elements include:

- 1-3-day TLF retreats
- 8-week Reintegration & Resilience (R&R) residential experience for women Veterans in the latter stages of recovery
- Woodworking, gardening and creative expression programs
- Garden Advocacy in Action (GAIA) - “Garden to Table” wellness and healthy living initiative

PRI will develop innovative partnerships with volunteer and service-oriented organizations to build a wellness corps centered on an garden to table healthy living approach

The Wellness Corps is part of Pamlico Rose Institute’s overall gardening approach Garden Advocacy in Action (GAIA). The Corps will consist of 8-10 Veteran members supporting a coordinated slate of activities occurring at Rose Haven Center of Healing and its healing gardens and community garden plots and include:

- Multi Month wellness program introducing a wellness approach to food security to women Veterans and Wellness Corps members. Included in program: training, education, application and sustainability on gardening, nutrition, meal preparation and overall healthy lifestyles
- Creation/sustainment of gardens by Wellness Corps members and participating women Veterans, other Veterans and community members to provide organically grown produce to help address food insecurity in women Veterans in two counties in eastern North Carolina, to include piloting a mobile delivery service
- Development of a network of local and regional organic community gardeners to plan, design, construct and sustain current and new garden spaces
- Advocacy and support for community gardens

Expand effective outreach messaging that reinforces the value of a holistic and integrated approach to wellness and resilience-building as prevention

This outreach includes, but is not limited to:

- Expand on existing multi-functional website to meet the needs of the enterprise
- Promote an active and calculated social media presence that advances all facets of the enterprise
- Produce and disseminate e-newsletters, short and long-form articles and podcasts

Continue to act as a thought-leader in advancing wellness and resilience programs for women Veterans

Engaging in, and reporting out evaluative and more general research on wellness and resilience prevention in Veteran populations would be the primary focus of this priority.

- Inform and detail prevention-based strategy for interested individuals, organizations and agencies
 - Offer a space to stakeholders to present on existing or ongoing prevention programs or to generate and/or propose models of prevention programs
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About the Pamlico Rose Institute

Pamlico Rose Institute is a Washington, NC nonprofit founded in 2016. A primary mission of PRI is to connect with women Veteran, specifically, and Veterans overall. The Institute's focus is to help veterans

- 1) overcome the effects of trauma, such as anxiety, stress, and addiction
- 2) ease the struggle of the post-military service transition to civilian life, including social and community reintegration.

PRI's operational anchor is the Rose Haven Center of Healing located in Washington's historic district, three blocks from the Pamlico River. The Center consists of an 1892 renovated farmhouse, adjacent large tin-skinned barn and 1/2 block of healing gardens.

PRI's prevention-based approach involves developing, and delivering results-based Total Life Fitness wellness and resilience- building programs. TLF borrows from the Department of Defense's (DoD) Total Force Fitness and the VA's evolving whole health approach to serving Veterans. Living Fit, or striving to be well and resilient, helps to develop behavioral and social skills such as mindfulness, anxiety management, and interpersonal competence. These skills are engaged through persistent attention to daily activities that integrate mind, body and soul, such as gardening, arts, yoga, woodworking, and hiking, to name a few. These living fit activities work at the intersection of nature, creative expression, movement, and self-transcendence. Onsite TLF programs include 1-3-day retreats, a future 8-week residential Reintegration and Resilience (R&R) experience for women Veterans in the latter stages of recovery from substance misuse, and day classes. Day classes are open to the community and include gardening, woodworking, creative arts, and Forest and Nature Hikes.

PRI is advocating for Veterans by

- 1) raising awareness and promoting understanding of pressing Veteran issues at community, regional and national levels
- 2) fostering communities supportive and inclusive to all Veterans who have served

PRI maintains a robust website and active social media presence and also hosts and/or sponsors events and activities, such as the annual Healing Vets Weekend, Veteran art exhibits, presentations, and other community events that inform and educate while also bringing communities of Veterans and non-Veterans together. Currently, COVID-19 has affected the Center's operations. The ongoing pandemic layers additional risk factors affecting an individual's physical, mental and emotional health and thereby complicating all facets of prevention. PRI recently expanded their outreach capability by developing ongoing virtual and online programming such as a Zoom Women Veteran Discussion Series, a schedule of virtual Veteran Art Exhibits and a podcast, while maintaining socially-distanced informal and formal activities at the Center of Healing.

PRI sits on local community and regional organizational Boards that have the opportunity to improve the lives of Veterans through their actions. PRI partners with a number of government organizations, Veteran Service Organizations (VSO), educational institutions and non-profits to help expand the footprint of awareness of Veteran issues and increase the chance of greater community support. PRI took the REACH pledge to promote awareness of suicide as a public health crisis, in addition to the strategy elaborated in The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and end a National Tragedy of Suicide (or PREVENTS). PRI strives to identify evidence-based prevention strategies and programs that utilize efforts and partnerships laid out in the Roadmap. Finally, as a community-based organization ourselves, we are very cognizant of our civic responsibility to contribute to the sustainability of the community through our missions and the Center of Healing. As good stewards, we direct our efforts toward the benefit of preservation and reutilization of local cultural, historic, and natural resources as we pursue our mission and projects.

About the Authors

Robert Greene Sands, PhD - Robert Greene Sands serves as Pamlico Rose Institute's CEO. Sands, an anthropologist and co-founder of PRI, brings over 25 years of work in applying theoretical aspects of culture to a diverse set of practical applications to meet organizational and community needs. Sands has been active for over 12 years in the design and development of critical culture and language learning programs for the DoD and other US Governmental organizations. Before that, Sands worked in such areas as archaeology, cultural resource management, and historical preservation in support of Federal agencies. A well published author and lecturer/presenter, Sands is also an adjunct anthropology professor at Norwich University where he teaches in the online Strategic Studies and Defense Analysis Department.

Betty G Beacham, PhD - Betty G Beacham serves as a consultant for the Pamlico Rose Institute. Beacham, a retired educator and Executive Director, has more than 50 years of experience in instruction and administration in K-16 education, grant writing, program design, program management and program evaluation. For the past 25 years, she has worked at East Carolina University in the Dean's Office, College of Education, building school/university/after school partnerships that link national service programs, (AmeriCorps and VISTA projects), with the educational needs of disadvantaged youth. Her programs have been recognized at the state, regional, and national levels.

Partner Organizations

North Carolina Works (NC Dept of Commerce)
 East Carolina Veteran Coalition
 National Veteran Intermediary/Bob Woodruff Foundation
 Beaufort County 360
 Vidant Beaufort Hospital Community Health
 VISTA/STEM Corps East
 Arts of the Pamlico
 City of Washington, NC
 Beaufort County Community College
 Beaufort-Washington Chamber of Commerce

Washington Tourism Development Board
 Disabled American Veterans
 Irreverent Warriors
 Daughters of American Revolution
 Center for Leadership & Civic Engagement, East Carolina University
 Women and Gender Office, East Carolina University
 Inner Banks Outfitters
 Edward Jones
 American Red Cross

Veteran Prevention Model

Priority #1 Advance wellness & resilience building (Total Life Fitness/TLF) as prevention approach

Advance wellness & resilience building (Total Life Fitness/TLF) as prevention approach TLF prevention-based programs will be offered to at-risk and marginalized women Veterans in eastern North Carolina while offering similar opportunities to Veterans at large and community populations that are also at-risk and those individuals and groups and organizations that desire to informally and formally volunteer to become part of the solution. Primary programs elements include:

Total Life Fitness is an integrated wellness and resilience building approach for women Veterans that promotes healthy living and positive prevention strategies. TLF involves meaningful and persistent attention to daily activities and events, such as healthy eating and cooking, yoga, gardening, creative expression, and movement through nature. Living fit also utilizes behavioral skills such as anxiety management and mindful approaches stress and uncertainty. As well as interpersonal skills to build and engage a supportive community. Finally, TLF includes self- transcendence – connecting to others, a cause or beliefs beyond self – as an important element in living fit. Wellness and resilience-building programs include:

 <p>1-3-day TLF Retreats for different women Veteran populations</p>	 <p>8-week Reintegration & Resilience (R&R) residential experience for women Veterans in the latter stages of recovery</p>	 <p>Day programs - woodworking, gardening, creative expression</p>
 <p>Virtual programming (zoom panel discussions, podcasts, webinars, long form writing) on the benefits of wellness and resilience as prevention</p>	 <p>Virtual and/or onsite creative expressive art exhibits</p>	 <p>Garden Advocacy in Action (GAIA) - A Garden to Table Initiative for women Veterans to ease food insecurity while promoting healthy living</p>

Populations to reach

1. Women Veterans (at-risk Veteran population) - local community, eastern and state-wide North Carolina & nation-wide
2. Other at-risk Veteran population - local through state-wide to local community members (at risk populations)
3. Spouses/families of Veterans
4. VA staff and community health care workers who work/serve Veterans

Protective Factors

1. Create protective environment
2. Connectedness
3. Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and nonviolent ways of handling disputes
4. Strengthen economic supports
5. Identify and support people at risk

Partnership (PRI Wellness Corps) - An innovative national service project

This effort will recruit women and other Veterans to support a wellness/prevention approach to promoting food security. GAIA involves initiatives, activities, and community-building efforts around the growing crisis of food insecurity among at-risk women and other Veteran populations. The PRI Wellness Corps designed and managed by the Pamlico Rose Institute, helps women veterans and their families gain knowledge and skills to promote healthy living and positive prevention strategies. Under the direction of the Institute's staff, the 8-10 full-time and part-time members will assist in the implementation of the Garden to Table wellness and healthy living initiative includes 1) five-month wellness program (two per year) introducing women Veterans to a Garden to Table approach to food security to include training, education, application and sustainability on gardening, nutrition, meal preparation and overall healthy lifestyles, 2) creation of a garden (s) for women and other Veterans in need program to mitigate food insecurity, to include a mobile delivery service, 3) development of a network of local and regional organic community gardens to plan, design, construct and sustain current and new garden spaces, 4) advocacy and support for garden learning and application programs for women and other Veterans, and community members. PRI Wellness Corps members receive a living allowance and an education award for their service.

The PRI Wellness Corps project will also represent a year-long formal and informal prevention- based jobs program for the members. Like the Veterans who participate in any of the TLF programs, Wellness Corps members, by virtue of their support of GAIA, and being a member of a year-long cohort, will benefit from the prevention aspects derived from their efforts supporting food security. In effect, members of PRI Wellness Corps become another Veteran population being served by PRI.

This initiative consists of:

- a. Two five-month wellness programs introducing to women Veterans a Garden to Table approach to food security to include training, education, application and sustainability on gardening, nutrition, meal preparation and overall healthy lifestyles
 - i. Two Food security retreats per wellness program
 - ii. Weekly nutritional and meal preparation sessions for Veteran, family and loved ones
 - iii. Certificated Community Gardening Courses provided by a collaboration of PRI and partners such as North Carolina Extension Agency in Beaufort County and/or Beaufort County Community College
 - iv. Pre, ongoing and post program health screenings provided by Vidant Beaufort community health personnel
 - v. Development of a community of women Veterans around wellness and healthy living
- b. Developing gardens for women and other Veterans in need program to mitigate food insecurity, to include a mobile delivery service
- c. Working with and sustaining cooperating organic community gardens and/or planning, designing, constructing and sustaining new garden spaces
- d. Supporting garden learning and application programs for women and other Veterans, and community members
- e. Providing peer support for women Veterans and other Veterans in the course of interactions during their AmeriCorps

Protective Factors

1. Strengthen wellness and healthy living skills
2. Connectedness
3. "Living Fit" or life skills
4. Thinking differently/cross-cultural competence
5. Interpersonal and/or intercultural communication competence to include problem solving, conflict resolution, and nonviolent ways of handling disputes

TLF Assessment/Evaluation

There will be three distinct, but related evaluation programs related to TLF programming. The first suite of measures will use social and emotional associated instruments to evaluate effectiveness across all of the TLF program. The second and third suite of measures refer to existing AmeriCorps performance measures as well measures similar to those given to Veterans who participate in TLF program (s).

1. The following social and emotional associated instruments are a representative sample of those that may be used in evaluating the effectiveness of TLF programs. Basically, the assumption is that wellness coaching and active involvement in the Garden to Table program, or other TLF efforts will show dramatic, if not at least appreciable, positive social, behavioral and self-transcendence change.

a. Stress - Perceived Stress Scale-4 (PSS-4) will be used to assess stress level. Participants will be asked how often they experience four symptoms of stress (perceived lack of control, confidence in problem solving abilities, how often they feel things are going their way, perceived ability to deal with all of their problems) in the last month. Participants will answer on this scale: 0=never, 1=almost never, 2=sometimes, 3=fairly often, and 4=very often.

b. Self-Transcendence - The Self-Transcendence Scale will be used to assess self- transcendence. Participants will be asked how they see themselves (have hobbies, accepting of themselves, involved in the community, adjusting well, sharing wisdom, finding meaning, helping others, interested in learning, letting others help, enjoying life, letting go of regrets). Participants will answer on this scale: 1=not at all, 2=very little, 3=somewhat, and 4=very much.

c. Wellbeing - A modified version of the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) will be used to assess wellbeing. Participants will be asked how often they experience seven signs of wellbeing (optimism, feeling useful, feeling relaxed, dealing well with problems, thinking clearly, feeling close to others, able to make up their own mind) in the past 2 weeks. Participants will answer on this scale: 1=none of the time, 2=rarely, 3=some of the time, 4= often and 5=all the time.

d. Resilience - The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) will be used to assess resilience. Participants will be asked how often they experience six signs of resilience (e.g., bounce back quickly, little difficulty with life, have a hard time with stress, and others). Participants will answer on this scale: Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree.

e. Social isolation - A version of the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (R-UCLA) will be used to assess Loneliness. Participants will be asked how often they experience twenty signs of Loneliness (e.g., lack of companionship, feel alone, have a lot in common with people around, outgoing, feel isolated, feel understood, people you can turn to and talk to). Participants will answer on this scale: 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4= often.

f. Mindfulness - A modified version of the day-to-day experiences scale will be used to assess mindfulness. Participants will be asked how often they are mindful during day-to-day tasks (attention to emotions, tasks, experiences, physical sensations, and ability to focus on the present). Participants will answer on this scale: 1=almost always, 2=very frequently, 3=somewhat frequently, and 4= somewhat infrequently, 5=very infrequently, 6= almost never.

g. Cross/Intercultural Competence

PRI Wellness Corps project is based on a culture of continuous improvement. Key to this model is the ongoing training and support system for veterans serving as PRI Wellness Corps members, allowing them to learn behavioral and interpersonal skills to improve their lives. This training ensures that PRI Wellness Corps members are prepared to serve as peer mentors and team leaders for those women veterans who participate in program activities. Our continuous improvement model also includes a comprehensive evaluation plan to determine the number of women veterans served and the impact of program activities on the personal growth of veteran AmeriCorps members and women veterans participating in the TLF program. In addition, members will be assessed/evaluated similarly to Veterans who participate in TLF activities on life skills development.

2. Priority Performance Measure for the PRI Wellness Corps project:

Objective 1: Veterans Served

- i) Measure number of veterans that received assistance to combat food insecurity directly from or supported by PRI Wellness Corps members
- ii) Measure the number of veterans who participated in Wellness Corps events and activities that members directed to or were involved in
- iii) Measure number of Veterans and non-Veterans who received materials on GAIA and prevention awareness from PRI Wellness Corps members or attended prevention awareness events given or directed to by members
- iv) Measure the percentage of veterans served by the project that demonstrated a change in behaviors and attitudes
- v) Measure knowledge gain in learning courses per cohort
- vi) Data Collection instruments to support performance measures objective include digital sign in sheets and activity logs

3. Priority Performance Measure for the PRI Wellness Corps project:

Objective 2: Potential Social, Emotional and Behavioral Scales and Measures used in assessing the efficacy of their member tenure in relation to social, behavioral and transcendental life skills development

Resource Documents Goals & Objectives that align with Priority #1

Resource Document	Goal	Objective
CDC - Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2020 – 2022 (SPSP)	Implement and evaluate comprehensive suicide prevention in vulnerable populations	Fund jurisdictions (e.g., states, communities, tribes) to implement and evaluate a coordinated and comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention based on data and using multiple strategies and approaches with the best available evidence - Wellness Coaching & Peer Support
National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide 2018–2028	Develop, implement, and monitor effective programs that promote wellness and prevent Veteran suicide and related behaviors	Encourage community-based settings to implement effective programs and provide education that promote wellness and prevent Veteran suicide and related behaviors - Wellness Coaching & Peer Support

**Priority #2
Expand effective awareness-raising outreach messaging that reinforces the value of a holistic and integrated approach to wellness and resilience-building**

Increased awareness and understanding of how wellness and resilience programs can advance prevention by mitigation of risk factors and promotion of protective factors and application of a CNS- based model for mitigating risk factors and promoting protective factors

This priority includes:

- 1) Active outreach programming to include:
 - a) maintaining a web-based home that includes the mission of the enterprise, member organizations and partners, programs, initiatives, and events at the Center and other locations that support programming and/or awareness and functions as a repository of supporting video, audio and written materials that inform and engage visitors.
 - b) operating an active and calculated social media presence strategically designed to reach and engage a variety of different populations.
 - c) publishing a newsletter, short and long-form articles and podcasts on the enterprise or its community of active or interested populations
- 2) Continue ongoing development and coordination/direction and management of a “corporate” consortium of community (local)/regional agencies, educational institutions, Veteran Service organizations, non-profit (non-faith/faith-based) organizations; efforts to include:
 - a) Development and coordination of outreach of effective prevention messaging campaigns for deployment consortium-wide and a secondary deployment of campaigns by consortium partners community/region-wide
 - b) Plan and host/sponsor the expansion of the annual Healing Vet Weekend (4th Annual in 2021)

Resource Document	Goal	Objective
CDC - Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2020 – 2022 (SPSP)	GOAL 7: Work with partners to advance a coordinated and comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention	OBJECTIVE 7.1: Develop and implement a partnership strategy to advance CDC strategic priorities and the public health approach and to support state and local health departments in suicide prevention OBJECTIVE 7.2: Foster and grow strategic partnerships in both the public and private sectors OBJECTIVE 7.3: Support program participants in developing partnership strategies
CDC - Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan 2020 – 2022 (SPSP)	GOAL 8: Raise awareness of CDC's coordinated and comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention	OBJECTIVE 8.1: Develop and implement a communication strategy to advance CDC's suicide prevention mission and the role of public health in suicide prevention OBJECTIVE 8.2: Communicate CDC's suicide prevention priorities, data and research, promising and best practices, and program successes with stakeholders
National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide 2018–2028	Goal 1. Integrate and coordinate Veteran suicide prevention activities across multiple sectors and settings.	Objective 1.1: Foster the integration of Veteran suicide prevention into the values, culture, leadership, and work of a broad range of organizations and programs with a role to play in supporting suicide prevention activities. Objective 1.4: Promote the development of sustainable public-private partnerships to advance Veteran suicide prevention.
National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide 2018–2028	Goal 2. Implement research- informed communication efforts designed to prevent Veteran suicide by changing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.	Objective 2.3: Increase multi platform communication efforts that promote positive messages and support safe crisis intervention strategies.
National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide 2018–2028	Goal 8. Promote suicide prevention as a core component of health care services.	Objective 8.4: Encourage collaboration between mental health providers and substance use services and community-based programs - peer support programs.

Priority #3

Continue to act as a thought-leader by engaging in and reporting out evaluative and more general research on wellness and resilience prevention in Veteran populations

Engaging in, and reporting out evaluative and more general research on wellness and resilience prevention in Veteran populations would be the primary focus of this priority to include:

- A) Establish and implement program evaluation for PRI Garden Corps
- B) Establish and initiate research agenda for other PRI Enterprise activities
- C) Establish a dissemination plan to advance state of knowledge on topics that deal with increased suicide risk, gender and ethnic differences, social and economic factors, genetic contributions, protective factors, promising interventions for suicide prevention and treatment, and interventions for Veterans who have been affected by suicide.

Resource Document	Goal	Objective
	GOAL 3: Improve understanding of the factors that increase or decrease suicide risk in vulnerable populations	OBJECTIVE 3.1: Conduct studies to identify population specific risk and protective factors that can be used to guide allocation of science and policy resources to prevent suicide OBJECTIVE 3.2: Work with partners to improve insights into risk and protective factors, inform prevention activities, and support sustainability of suicide prevention in vulnerable populations
	GOAL 4: Evaluate suicide prevention strategies in vulnerable populations	Objective 4.1: Rigorously evaluate existing policies, programs, and practices with the best available evidence in vulnerable populations Objective 4.2: Identify and rigorously evaluate innovative suicide prevention strategies that have not yet been evaluated or not evaluated in specific vulnerable populations
	Goal 12. Promote and support research on Veteran suicide prevention.	Objective 12.1: Develop a national Veteran suicide prevention research agenda with comprehensive input from multiple stakeholders. The Veteran suicide research agenda builds on existing knowledge of suicide prevention and surveillance findings to identify priority research areas. Topics could include Veterans with increased suicide risk, gender and ethnic differences, social and economic factors, genetic contributions, protective factors, promising interventions for suicide prevention and treatment, and interventions for Veterans who have been affected by suicide.

Summary

The community/regional, integrated public health prevention model for Veteran Suicide Prevention has been conceptualized by PRI staff, Board of Directors and community members committed to enhancing the lives of veterans and their families. It is ambitious, but doable. The crisis of Veteran suicide is a public health crisis and can only be addressed effectively through complementary and aligned efforts that include community-based enterprise-wide collaboration. PRI's efforts to build programming based on a community/regional, integrated public health prevention model are critical efforts to mitigate that crisis.

To Learn more about the Pamlico Rose Institute and the Rose Haven Center of Healing
 Visit us at www.pamlicorose.org
 On Facebook at [pamlicoroseinstitute](https://www.facebook.com/pamlicoroseinstitute)
 On Instagram at [pamlicorose1](https://www.instagram.com/pamlicorose1)
 On twitter at [pamlicorose](https://twitter.com/pamlicorose)

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