



making a  
**difference**

Using Patient-Centered Research Results in the Real World

# Engaging Veteran Spouses to Identify Research Priorities to Address Veteran Spouses' Needs

## Presenter Name

Elisa Borah, PhD, MSW, Research Associate Professor, UT Austin

Steve Hicks School of Social Work & Dell Medical School Department of Psychiatry

Director, Institute for Military and Family Wellness (Facebook: @UT.IMVFW)

Chair, Military Social Work & Behavioral Health Conference (April 8-10, 2020)

Twitter: @elisa\_borah

September 19, 2019

 **ANNUAL MEETING**  
SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2019  
WASHINGTON, DC

#PCORI2019

# Elisa Borah, PhD, MSW

- Has nothing to disclose.



The University of Texas at Austin

Institute for Military  
and Veteran Family Wellness

*Dell Medical School & Steve Hicks School of Social Work*

making a  
**difference**

Using Patient-Centered Research Results in the Real World

# The Veteran Spouse Network

PCORI Engagement Award, funded 2016-17

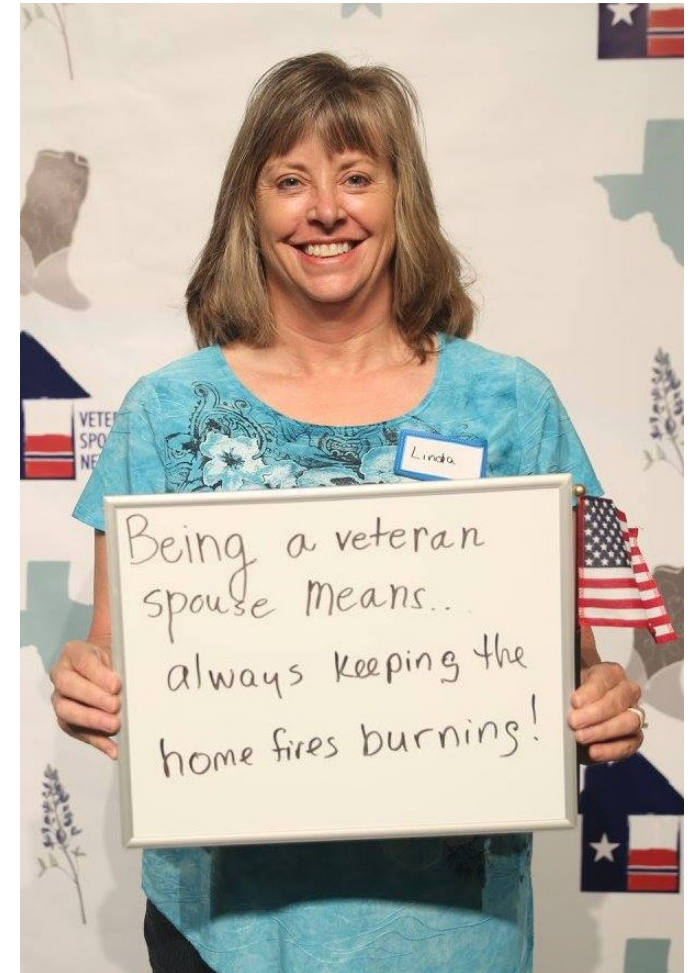
Purpose: Develop a network of veteran spouses to inform research and programming that supports spouses and their families.

Objectives:

1. Recruit 250 network members in 5 regional chapters: El Paso, Dallas, Harlingen, Houston and San Antonio through in-person events.
2. Host webinars to train VSN members on current research addressing families' needs, and research methods.
3. Facilitate opportunities for dialogue with research investigators addressing needs of veteran families with VSN Network members.

## Engagement strategies:

- Facebook discussions and polls
- In-person self-care events that also discussed current research and program gaps
- Co-design of member survey, administration and results sharing online and via email
- Forums with decision makers, program developers
- Activities designed to amplify family members' voices



# Methods & Activities

- Established steering committee of spouses to guide network
- Offered webinars in research methods and current research
- Involved network members in survey design and creation
- Offered professional titles and duties to members
- Utilized members' knowledge and experience to identify veteran family services to list on statewide online resource directory
- Created opportunities for dialogue with research investigators studying veteran families' mental health needs and programs

# Project Outcomes

- Developed survey of Texas Veteran Spouses Employment & Education Resources/Needs
  - PI presented survey findings of at Society for Social Work and Research, Jan. 2018, Washington, DC; manuscript in preparation
- Steering Committee presented panel on veteran spouses needs and experiences at the 2016 UT Military Social Work Conference
- Network members co-designed group-based peer-support program that has received 3 years of state funding (2018-21)
- Network has grown on Facebook to 800 and shares posts (on research findings, programs & research opportunities)

# Lessons Learned

- Emphasize and offer self-care to engage busy spouses
- Follow their lead; build project based on their input/concerns
- Empower leaders to lead others; they bring wealth of lived experience/local knowledge
- Offer multiple forms of information sharing: Facebook, email, in-person meetings, webinars
- Build on successes: let patients inform next steps and ongoing program development

# Learn More

- [Veteran Spouse Network](#)
- Facebook: @VeteranSpouseNetwork
- [New programming developed from VSN is highlighted on the Institute for Military & Veteran Family Wellness](#)



# Questions?

Elisa Borah, PhD, MSW, Research Associate Professor, UT Austin  
[elisa.borah@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:elisa.borah@austin.utexas.edu)

# Thank You!

Elisa Borah, PhD, MSW

Research Associate Professor, UT Austin

Twitter: @elisa\_borah

September 19, 2019