



## Simulation Training Teaches Inclusive Practices To Improve Care For Transgender Veterans

*By Emily Sykes MSN, RN, Janet Sprehe DNP, RN, APRN, Deb Yu MSN, RN, and Betty Holte DNP, RN, James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital*



*(Simulation training empowers staff at James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital to provide inclusive and compassionate care to transgender Veterans)*

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice form the foundation for addressing discrimination. Encompassing aspects such as gender, culture, disabilities, and age, discrimination can take on many faces. The James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital Advanced Simulation Center in Tampa, Florida has made addressing discrimination a central mission. Simulation staff held meetings to discuss strategies for addressing discrimination in health care and decided to take an innovative approach to address conscious and unconscious biases in the transgender community through simulation trainings.

Transgender people are individuals whose gender identity or expression differs from their sex assigned at birth. The number of transgender people serving in the U.S. military is two to three times higher than the general population. In 2023, it was estimated that more than 134,000 Veterans were transgender, and greater than 15,000 were actively serving in the military (National Center for Transgender Equality 2023). Research shows that transgender Veterans experience high rates of discrimination, family rejection, homelessness, and suicidality (Chen, Granato, & Shipherd, 2017). In 2013, transgender-related diagnoses were five times more common in VA than in the general population (Blosnich et al., 2013).

To better serve transgender Veterans, the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital assessed learning needs for diversity, equity, and inclusion. They collaborated with the Disaster Emergency Management department to design and purchase lifelike simulator manikins for facility-wide training. The simulation

center developed manikins representing male and female transitioning patients in consultation with a VA psychologist.

Training was conducted in several medical center units, such as the emergency department, step-down unit, and mental health unit. Prior to the training, staff voiced concerns about not being adequately prepared to deliver culturally sensitivity care and wanted cultural competence training. The simulators were taken to the units, and 110 staff were trained. Pre- and post-training surveys revealed a 42% increase in staff knowledge about diversity, a 26% improvement in comfort levels surrounding creating inclusive environments, and a 39% decrease in challenges related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A strategic plan forward will include continuous cultural competence development through training for ethnicity, gender, disability, and age within simulation learning. This training is being offered to local universities to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion knowledge and application for nurses entering the profession.