



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

**Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations**

**Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov**

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 22, 2012

VA Offering Training for Rural Clergy *Finding New Ways to Connect Rural Vets with VA Services*

WASHINGTON — Members of the clergy in rural areas can sign up for free, one-day workshops offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs to educate these community leaders about the concerns of Veterans and the services offered by VA in their communities.

“VA has always recognized that faith is an important healing resource for many Veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “These new workshops will provide training that will help community clergy in supporting Veterans in rural areas.”

It is estimated that one-fourth of people who seek help for mental health problems go to members of the clergy. “In addition to providing good spiritual care, we hope clergy will recognize the presence and severity of mental health problems, and know when and how to collaborate with health care professionals,” said Chaplain Jeni Cook, Associate Director of VA’s National Chaplain Center in Hampton, VA.

Workshops will run through June in rural parts of Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Community clergy and Veterans Service Organization representatives are invited to attend.

Participants will learn about VA benefits and services and about how to contact local VA facilities to request information or assistance for Veterans.

Workshop topics will include post-deployment readjustment challenges, the spiritual and psychological effects of war trauma on survivors, and the important role of community in helping to reduce mental health stigma and support Veterans and their families.

Clergy Workshops 2/2/2/2

Seating for the workshops is limited and pre-registration is required. For more information about dates and locations, visit www.ruralhealth.va.gov/ruralclergytraining or contact Jim Goalder at 1-800-872-9975 or at jim.goalder@gmail.com.

#