

CASE STUDY

Introduction to Social Connection as a Social Determinant of Health Course

Equipping Future Clinicians to Address Loneliness in Care

PARTNER **VA**



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

ADVISORY SERVICES

PROGRAM DESIGN & TOOL DEVELOPMENT

MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

The Opportunity

Few medical and nursing programs prepare future clinicians to recognize loneliness or incorporate social connection into care, leaving a gap in how providers can support veterans' social and emotional well-being. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs launched a pilot course to train students in social prescribing through lectures and weekly calls with veterans. As an early-stage program, it needed evidence of whether students were gaining knowledge, confidence, and skills, and feedback on how to strengthen the course for future cohorts.

Our Approach

In addition to advising on the course content, F4SC **co-developed the evaluation tools**, including pre- and post-surveys aligned to three goals: knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, and confidence to act. Over 14 weeks, we **led a mixed-methods evaluation** of 40 students from 10 universities, analyzing 412 surveys, journal entries, and reflection papers. We then **translated the findings into recommendations** for VA leadership on veteran matching, course structure, and communication with students.

The Impact

BEFORE	AFTER	
7.5%	87%	Students rating their understanding of social prescribing moderately high or high
1	4	Average comfort using the Educate, Assess, Respond (EAR) framework (1–5 scale)
34%	71%	Students comfortable assessing a patient's isolation, loneliness, and social support
	96%	Students likely to use social prescribing in future practice

"The knowledge gained by my experience within the course and in particular through my interactions with my veteran will be something I carry with me throughout my professional career and personal life....The course has provided me with the knowledge of what to look for and work with what I have to provide meaningful interventions through the lens of social prescriptions."

— **Course participant**

Explore More

Watch an overview about the course [here](#). Contact us to learn more about this project and explore how F4SC can support your work below.

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