

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Recruitment Case Study

Bringing Hope to Heroes: Innovative patient recruitment strategies that connected trauma survivors with clinical research.



Meeting Trauma Survivors with Respect and Understanding

Trauma leaves lasting marks. For the millions of Americans living with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, symptoms like hypervigilance, intrusive memories, emotional numbing, and sleep disturbances can make everyday life feel insurmountable. Clinical trials offer these individuals a pathway to innovative treatments—but getting there isn't straightforward. Many PTSD patients carry deep-seated wariness of medical institutions, face societal stigma around mental health, and struggle to navigate complex healthcare systems.

This Sponsor understood that recruitment success hinged on building authentic trust. Working alongside our team, they set out to create a study presence that would feel safe, transparent, and genuinely supportive—not transactional. Their goal was to reach diverse trauma survivors nationwide: combat veterans returning from deployment, first responders carrying the weight of critical incidents, survivors rebuilding after violence, and others whose trauma stories are as varied as they are profound.

What made this program distinctive wasn't just logistics—it was philosophy. Every enrolled participant made a brave decision to seek help, often after years of silence. Our role was to honor that courage by creating recruitment experiences built on respect, clarity, and unwavering commitment to participant wellbeing.

This case study reveals how trauma-informed communication strategies and culturally responsive outreach can drive meaningful enrollment while advancing critical PTSD research—proving that when recruitment is done right, everyone benefits: patients gain access to promising treatments, and science moves closer to breakthrough solutions.

01. GOALS

Strategic Vision That Shaped Our Approach

Build a Stigma-Free Brand Identity

Create a welcoming, respectful brand that would resonate with trauma survivors while maintaining credibility. The brand needed to acknowledge the courage required to seek help and participate in research, while offering hope through participation.

Reach Underserved Patient Populations

Develop targeted strategies to engage veterans, first responders, survivors of violence, and other groups experiencing higher rates of PTSD but lower rates of clinical trial participation. Materials needed to reflect diverse trauma experiences and acknowledge the unique challenges faced by different communities.

Drive Efficient Study Enrollment

Meet aggressive recruitment timelines by implementing multi-channel outreach strategies. The program needed to generate qualified referrals quickly while maintaining high conversion rates from initial inquiry to enrollment in a population that often experiences difficulty with trust and commitment.

Maintain Quality While Scaling

Ensure all enrolled participants met strict inclusion criteria while processing high volumes of inquiries efficiently. The screening process needed to be thorough yet trauma-informed, respectful of patients' emotional state and past experiences.

02. STRATEGY

Strategic Design for Trauma-Impacted Patient Populations

Establishing Trust Through Trauma-Sensitive Design

- + Built messaging framework rooting every touchpoint in principles of safety, transparency, and participant control
- + Developed visual language prioritizing authenticity over clinical aesthetics
- + Shifted communication focus from pathology to possibility—highlighting recovery, not just symptom management

Strategic Community Partnerships

- + Built collaborative relationships with community groups and advocacy organizations
- + Launched precision-targeted digital campaign where survivors seek support
- + Designed outreach materials that positioned participation as an empowered choice, never an obligation
- + Executed location-based advertising prioritizing proximity to study sites

Removing Friction from the Enrollment Process

- + Engineered an online prescreening tool using non-triggering terminology
- + Collaborated with study sites to extend appointment windows including evenings and weekends to accommodate shift work and anxiety
- + Developed enrollment tools that led with privacy protections and patient rights
- + Simplified study retention tools, stripping away medical jargon that could create unnecessary barriers

03. RESULTS

Enrollment Goals Surpassed, Budgets Optimized

Enrollment Excellence Across Every Metric

- + Successfully enrolled 150 qualified study participants
- + Exceeded enrollment target by 15% ahead of schedule
- + Maintained 92% screen-to-enrollment conversion rate
- + Achieved full enrollment 2 weeks ahead of projected timeline

Reaching the Right Populations

- + Enrolled study participants from sites nationwide
- + Achieved 40% representation from veterans and first responders
- + Reached diverse trauma survivor demographics across study locations
- + Received positive feedback on study materials from 94% of study sites

Operational Efficiency

- + Processed 560 initial inquiries with strategic triage system, maximizing inquiry-to-screen conversion
- + Reduced cost-per-enrollment through aggressive A/B testing
- + Optimized digital spend across channels, concentrating 70% of budget on top three performing platforms
- + Accelerated enrollment timeline from 3 weeks to 11 days through optimized communication workflows

04. CONCLUSION

A Case for Empathy-Driven Patient Recruitment

The success of this clinical trial demonstrates how trauma-informed communication and strategic execution can transform patient recruitment challenges into enrollment excellence. By truly understanding the experiences of trauma survivors and meeting them with respect, empathy, and unwavering support—we didn't just fill enrollment slots; we created meaningful connections that supported both individual healing and medical progress.

Our approach proved that effective clinical trial recruitment for trauma-related conditions requires more than demographic targeting—it demands genuine understanding and cultural sensitivity. By acknowledging the courage, strength, and resilience of PTSD patients in every piece of communication, we built trust that translated into exceptional enrollment and retention rates.

Impact at a Glance

- + Enrolled 150 qualified participants across multiple U.S. sites
- + Exceeded enrollment target by 15%, completing 2 weeks ahead of schedule
- + Reached 40% representation from veteran and first responder populations



“Recruiting for PTSD trials requires understanding that you’re reaching people who have survived profound trauma and are now taking an incredibly brave step toward healing. We built a messaging and media strategy that honored their courage first, emphasized their agency and control, and offered genuine hope for recovery. Every touchpoint was designed to be trauma-informed and empowering. That respectful, strength-based approach didn’t just drive enrollment numbers; it created a recruitment experience that reflected the dignity and resilience these participants embody.”

– Matthew Stumm
President + Founder
Stark Raving Health

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Stark Raving Health: Where the world's leading research organizations turn for clinical trial enrollment success.

We are more than just a clinical trial marketing agency - we're passionate about transforming seemingly impossible recruitment challenges into enrollment success. We craft integrated experiences that breathe life into complex science, making it instantly accessible and sweeping away barriers that stand between patients and potentially life-changing research.

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