

Community Action Network Community Council

**Behavioral Health Initiatives for Veterans
and their Families**



Behavioral Health Initiatives for Veterans and their Families

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Central Texas Overview / Background

There are 215,178 veterans in the identified service area with an estimated economic impact of \$2.6 million

(Texas Veterans Commission – Veterans Population and Expenditure by County Report FY08)

Texas has the largest, established military presence in the nation

- It has 10% of all active service members, 15 military installations
- It is also home to the third largest population of veterans
- According to the US Census Bureau in 2008, over 1.6 million veterans lived in Texas, comprising 9.8% of the state's population
- It is estimated that since 2008, the veteran population has grown to exceed 1.7 million (Texas Veterans Commission)

OEF/OIF Veterans

- Over 2.2 million service members have been deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq as of March 2011
- Nearly half have been deployed more than once
- Over 95,000 service members have been wounded in action or evacuated due to injury or disease
- Casualties have exceeded 5,900
- The number of suicides has exceeded 280
- VA estimated 18 suicides per day by veteran population and 1000 suicide attempts per month

(2011 Veterans for Common Sense obtained from Department of Veteran Affairs)

OEF/OIF Experience

- 1,767 soldiers & Marines in Iraq who completed a well-being survey
- > 75% experienced situations where they could be seriously injured or killed
- > 60% reported knowing someone who was seriously injured or killed or a team member who was killed.

United States Army Surgeon General, 2007

OEF/OIF Experience

- Weaponry has changed even since Vietnam
- Increases in quantity and type of firepower
- Resulting increase in volume and type of injuries
- Because of advances in medical technology, up to 90% of the wounded are surviving their injuries.

Gawande, 2004

Behavioral Health Needs

- It is estimated that 16-49% of soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are reporting mental health symptoms (PTSD, anxiety, depression, substance abuse)
- It is estimated that 11-20% of soldiers are reporting cognitive and psychiatric symptoms resulting from a traumatic brain injury (TBI)

(National Council on Disability, Mar 2009)

Behavioral Health Initiatives for Veterans and their Families

The Governor's Office initiated expansion of mental health treatment for veterans by making \$5 million worth of state grant funding available to local mental health authorities in January 2010:

- To ensure that priority needs and gaps in behavioral health supports and services for veterans and their families are addressed statewide
- To ensure that community partnerships for behavioral health supports and services for veterans and their families are established statewide

Specific Program Focus

- Funding to recruit and train practitioners to help identify and provide additional mental health support for veterans.
- Improve ways to let veterans know about available resources by upgrading the TexVet website which serves as the portal to all federal, state and local benefits available to veterans.

Specific Program Focus

- To develop a vet-to-vet approach to reduce the impact of that warrior's aversion to seeking help by connecting them with fellow vets who are not only willing to help, but trained to make a difference.
- Expand programs to support veterans' families, since they share the challenges of adjusting to civilian life.

The target area for this program has been the 20 Counties being served by 4 Local Mental Health Authorities:

1. Austin Travis County Integral Care (ATCIC)
2. Bluebonnet Trails Community MHMR Center (BBT)
3. Central Counties Center for MHMR Services (CCCMHMR)
4. Heart of Texas Regional MHMR Center (HOTRMHMR)

Project Outcomes

- Vet to Vet training has occurred for **36** individuals across the region
- Stakeholder groups have been developed by each Local Mental Health Authority
- Regional Cultural Competency Training is taking place this summer
- Behavioral Health Stakeholder workshops are being developed to support enhanced knowledge around the military population and presenting behavioral health issues

Questions/Comments