



Heroes at Home: Understanding the Impacts of Wartime Deployments on Military and Veteran Families

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Transformation of VA Mental Health Services

VA has made a commitment to evidence-based practices, Veteran- and family-driven care, and a recovery oriented mental health system where those with mental illnesses have the essential services and supports necessary to live, work, learn and participate fully in the community



How Have Public Laws **110-387** and **111-163** Changed 38 USC 1782?

§ 1782. Counseling, Training, and Mental Health Services for Immediate Family Members **and Caregivers**

- (a) Counseling for family members of Veterans receiving service-connected treatment:

In the case of a Veteran who is receiving treatment for a service-connected disability pursuant to paragraph (1) or (2) or section 1710(a) of this title, the Secretary shall provide to individuals described in subsection (c) such consultation, professional counseling, **marriage and family counseling**, training, and mental health services as are necessary in connection with that treatment



How Have Public Laws **110-387** and **111-163** Changed 38 USC 1782?

(b) Counseling for family members of Veterans receiving non-service-connected treatment:

In the case of a Veteran who is eligible to receive treatment for a non-service-connected disability under the conditions described in paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of section 1710(a) of this title, the Secretary may, in the discretion of the Secretary, provide to individuals described in subsection (c) such consultation, professional counseling, **marriage and family counseling**, training, and mental health services as are necessary in connection with that treatment*

* (Deleted if --(1) those services were initiated during the Veteran's hospitalization; and (2) the continued provision of those services on an outpatient basis is essential to permit the discharge of the Veteran from the hospital)



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(c) Eligible individuals: Individuals who may be provided services under this subsection are:

1. The members of the immediate family or the legal guardian of a Veteran
2. **A family caregiver of an eligible Veteran or a caregiver of a covered Veteran (as those terms are defined in section 1720G of this title); or**
3. The individual in whose household such Veteran certifies an intention to live



Uniform Mental Health Services in VA Medical Centers and Clinics

Family Services

Minimum clinical requirements for VHA Mental Health Services:

- Providers discuss family involvement with patient at least yearly & at inpatient discharge
- Treatment plan to identify family contact or reason for lack of contact
- Providers must seek consent from Veterans to contact families in the future, as necessary



Uniform Mental Health Services in VA Medical Centers and Clinics

- Family consultation, family education or family psychoeducation for Veterans with serious mental illness must be provided at VA Medical Centers and very large CBOCs
- Opportunities for these family services must be available to all Veterans with serious mental illness on site, by telemental health, or with community providers through sharing arrangements, contracting, or non-VA fee basis care



Continuum of Family Services

- A graduated continuum of services is necessary to meet the varied needs of Veterans and their Families
- The full continuum ranges from:
 - Family Education / Training
 - Brief Problem-Focused Consultations
 - More Intensive Family Psychoeducation and Marriage and Family Counseling



Family Education/Training

- Family Education: A set of techniques that provide families with the information necessary to partner with the treatment team and support Veterans' recovery
- Topics include: Symptoms, Prognosis, Treatments, Identifying & managing sources of stress and Factors associated with good outcomes
- May be offered via written & video materials, one-day workshops, and/or regularly scheduled meetings conducted by professionals (e.g., the SAFE program or the NAMI Family to Family program)
 - Veterans may or may not be present for these trainings



The Support And Family Education (SAFE) Program

- 18 session workshop for families of Veterans - organized in 4 sections:
 - Information about the Disorders
 - Skills for Family Members
 - The Experience of Caring about Someone Living with SMI/PTSD
 - Dealing with Family, Friends and Professionals
- Families attend whenever they wish. Each session can stand alone, so family members do not have to attend every session.



NAMI Family-To-Family Education Program (FFEP)

- Developed by National Alliance on Mental Illness
- 12 week program for family members of individuals with mental illness
- Taught by trained family members (i.e., peers) using a highly structured/scripted manual
- Families receive information on mental illness, treatment, medications, recovery, communication and problem-solving skills



VHA-NAMI Memorandum of Understanding

- Offer NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program (FFEP) in:
 - At least one VHA facility in each state
 - During a two year period June 2008 – June 2010
- Collaborative effort between the VA and NAMI on national, state and local levels
- A second MOU has been developed to reinforce the inclusion of this peer-led training into the continuum of VHA family services and serve as a model to continue the implementation of FFEP throughout each state after the MOU three-year time period has expired



Talk, Listen, Connect: Deployment, Homecoming, Changes

- Joint VHA, DoD, & Sesame Workshop™ bilingual educational outreach initiative designed for Military/Veteran families and their young children
- VA distributed 200,000 outreach kits to the VA Medical Centers and Vet Centers



Family Consultation

Veteran-Centered Brief Family Consultation (VCBFC):

- Family meets with mental health professional as needed to resolve specific issues related to the Veteran's treatment and recovery
- Intervention is brief including typically 1 – 5 sessions for each consultation
- Provided on as needed or intermittent basis
- If more intensive ongoing effort is required, family can be referred to Family Therapy



Marriage and Family Counseling Program Roll-Out

- Program funded and supported by Office of Mental Health Services at VA Central Office
- Part of effort to increase availability of psychosocial Evidence-Based Practices to Veterans
- Provides training, support, consultation to VA practitioners and Mental Health leaders working with Veterans with relationship distress
- Current model for national training initiative is Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy (IBCT)



Marriage and Family Counseling

Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy (IBCT; Jacobson and Christensen):

- Integrates goals of acceptance & change with behavioral treatment strategies
- Overarching goals are to reduce couples distress and strengthen family relationships
- VA also includes training in basic parenting skills and assessment of domestic violence



Evidence-Based Practices: Family Psychoeducation (FPE)

- Family Psychoeducation (FPE) is a component of recovery services for individuals with serious mental illness that focuses mainly on supporting the well-being and functioning of the individual – however improved family well-being is an important intermediate and additional benefit
- Behavioral Family Therapy (BFT) uses a single family format
- Multiple Family Group Therapy (MFGT) uses a multi-family group format



Evidence-Based Practices

Family Psychoeducation (FPE)

Key elements of intervention include:

- Mental illness training
- Crisis intervention
- Emotional Support
- Training in how to cope with illness symptoms and related problems
- Duration of at least nine months



DoD/VA Integrated Mental Health Strategy - #16 Family Resilience

- Prevent mental health problems for families and Service Members before, during and after deployment
- Prevent mental health problems during periods of stress throughout the lifespan for families and Veterans
- Workgroup to identify, recommend and promote effective family resilience programs in each Service and VA



DoD/VA Integrated Mental Health Strategy - #17 Family Members

- Family Coaching Centers— 3 Sites
- Provides concerned family and friends with a place to call and get information about how to help loved ones
 - Improved care of the Veteran is the goal
 - Veteran’s engagement in treatment is often facilitated by family members
 - Optimize family involvement in getting Veteran into care
 - Sets the scene for support of Veteran in treatment



DoD/VA Integrated Mental Health Strategy - #17 Family Members (cont.)

Identify methods to help family members recognize mental health needs in Service Members and Veterans by providing education and coaching:

- Family Education Program - Operation Enduring Families
- Five session manual program
 - Family Relationships
 - Communication and Intimacy
 - Anger
 - Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
 - Depression



Thank you for your interest!

QUESTIONS??

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What Does Research Tell Us About Military Families and Deployments?

RTI Policy Forum: Heroes at Home

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