

# **AHEC CALL TO ACTION!**



**Mobilizing  
AHECs to  
enlist and  
equip the  
civilian health  
workforce  
to care for  
veterans  
experiencing  
mental health  
issues and  
traumatic  
brain injury.**

## **HRSA Adds Veterans Mental Health Training Component to A-TrACC**

HRSA has modified the National AHEC Organization's (NAOs) contract for the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Training and Consultation Center (A-TrACC) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 to include a "Train the Trainer" component that will enable AHECs to serve a significantly underserved population – veterans, reservists, and their families seeking medical care in the civilian sector who are coping with post deployment mental and behavioral health and substance abuse issues.

Through this 12-month contract modification, A-TrACC will offer trainings that will equip AHEC program and center staff with the skills and information needed to provide professional continuing education to civilian primary care, mental and behavioral health, and other health care providers, giving them the knowledge and skills needed to recognize and address this disparity.

This opportunity stems from extensive internal discussions at HRSA and between HRSA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) on the need for a specific initiative to better serve returning soldiers. HRSA staff and NAO leadership have long promoted the use of existing expertise and resources within AHEC to address this need, firmly believing that the AHEC network is an expeditious and effective vehicle for getting information into the hands of providers. As a result, HRSA incorporated this work into the A-TrACC contract.

HRSA's scope of work for the A-TrACC Veterans Mental Health project includes providing technical assistance, competency and curriculum development and training to AHEC grantees. This HRSA funded contract incorporates the North Carolina AHEC program veterans and mental health training activities and the Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP). These programs have led the nation in developing continuing education (CE) to train health care providers on the mental and behavioral health and substance abuse issues of veterans and their families. The contract also includes an extensive evaluation component to measure the effectiveness of the technical assistance and identify areas of practice improvement among providers trained through these efforts.

Through this contract modification, A-TrACC will:

- conduct an assessment of areas of highest need within the AHEC network for technical assistance regarding the mental and behavioral health and substance abuse issues of veterans and their families, utilizing existing NAO PTSD/TBI Workgroups and resources;
- Provide monthly online trainings regarding the mental and behavioral health and substance abuse issues of veterans and their families;
- Provide 10 regional 1-day workshops to implement "Train the Trainer" continuing education modules for invited AHEC staff from areas with the highest need;
- Conduct a 1-day workshop for any interested AHEC staff in conjunction with the NAO National Conference in July 2012;
- Provide support to AHEC programs and centers, especially those identified through the needs assessment to have the greatest need for providing interprofessional continuing education to mental and behavioral health care providers and primary care providers.
- Develop AHEC-specific evaluation tools and methods to determine the effectiveness of the "Train the Trainer" continuing education modules and the resulting continuing education programming on improving the competency and practice of health care providers.

A-TrACC will continue to provide trainings that facilitate AHECs' capability to collect and report the new 2012 HRSA Performance Measures and build evaluation capacity and outcome measurement capability while undertaking this new and expanded work.