

Veterans Mental Health Project Offers Centers' A Window of Opportunity

HRSA has modified NAO's contract for A-TrACC for FY 2011 to include a training component that will enable AHEC Centers 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 contract, A-TrACC will offer 10 one-day face-to-face trainings in each HRSA Region for invited AHEC Grantee program and center staff. The workshop will also be offered to all interested AHEC staff at the NAO National Conference in July 2012.

These one-day workshops will equip participants to be trained facilitators who can **plan CE programs** for civilian primary care, mental and behavioral health, and other healthcare providers. Participants will learn how to use and build upon existing curriculum developed by the North Carolina AHEC program and the Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) to develop CE programming that meets the specific needs of providers in their communities.

Additionally, A-TrACC will offer **monthly webinars for all AHEC staff** on the mental and behavioral health and substance abuse needs of returning combat reservists, veterans and their families, including issues relating to PTSD and TBI. This webinar series will create a learning community among all AHEC staff, giving them an understanding of issues unique to those who are or have been in the military and the clinical aspects of these disorders. Webinar participants will be energized and inspired to incorporate this topic and available curriculum into their Professional Education and Support activities, whether or not they participate in the face-to-face workshops.

The Vets Mental Health Project is an opportunity for NAO and AHEC to demonstrate to HRSA and other funders how the expertise and resources within **AHEC can be mobilized to expeditiously and effectively impact a specific health initiative** and make a significant impact.

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.

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.

Why This Issue?*

- As of November 27, 2006, the war in Iraq had been going on longer than WWII
- An all volunteer force = multiple deployments
- 2.2 million service members have served in Iraq and Afghanistan

Half of the 625,384 eligible OEF/OIF veterans presenting to the VA (50.2% or 313,670) report having possible mental health problems. Provisional MH diagnoses include:

PTSD (27% of all who presented to VA)	167,295	Affective Psychoses	72,972
Depressive Disorder	122,175	Nondependent Abuse of Drugs	27,714
Neurotic Disorders	102,767	Alcohol Dependence	33,660
		Tobacco Use Disorder	85,671

Identifying/Treating Post Deployment Mental Health Problems among New Combat Veterans and their Families

- OEF/OIF/OND veterans often seek care outside DoD/VA
- Estimated that **50%** of those seen in DoD/VA may also receive **part of their care in the community**
- Family members are also dealing with deployment-related stress and look for help in the community

Working at State and Community Levels

- May enhance access for Service Members, Veterans and family members
- Create new points of contact with VA across the community
- Educate community providers about the quality, accessibility and range of VA services
- May enhance quality of services Service Members, Veterans and family members receive in the community

*From Cultivating DoD, VA, State and Community Partnerships to Assist Returning Service Members/Veterans and their Families: A Public Health Response as a Nation at War By Harold Kudler, M.D. and Kristy Straits-Tröster, Ph.D., Mid-Atlantic Veterans Health Care Network Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center; <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn6>; Duke University Medical Center.