Operation Health: Resources for Veterans and Their Families

An Infopeople Webinar
Presented by Kelli Ham
June 13, 2012
Today’s Topics

- Defining the users
- Statistics
- Injuries and Conditions
- Unique issues for veteran subgroups
- Health resources
- Finding services
• Who are these library users?
  • Veterans
  • Military families
  • Caregivers of veterans
  • Active duty service members
A Few Statistics
Injuries and Conditions

- Different conflicts, different outcomes
  - Exposures: environmental, substances
  - Physical injuries
  - Mental health issues
  - Social issues
Military Exposures

http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/
Physical Injuries
Traumatic Brain Injury

“...TBI has become the “signature injury” of current warfare”.

Sharon Shively and Daniel Perl

Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation,
Vol 27, No. 3, pp 234-239
Mental Health Issues

- PTSD
- Depression
- Sleep disorders
- Anger
- Suicide

http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/
National Center for PTSD

http://www.ptsd.va.gov/
June is PTSD Awareness Month

A 4-week series dedicated to raising PTSD awareness.

Week 1: How I knew
Week 2: My family suffered
Week 3: How treatment helped
Week 4: My advice: Don’t wait

Week 2: My family suffered

CPT Sarah Humphries talks about how she isolated herself when she returned from deployment.

- Effects of PTSD on Family
- When a Child’s Parent Has PTSD
- Explore Help for Family and Friends. Support those who love someone with PTSD.
- Providers: Learn about Returning from the War Zone Guides. Learn about what service members and their families should expect after deployment.
Navigating the VA.gov Site: Mini Practice

- We’ll take about two minutes for this exercise. Go to http://va.gov/
- Click on Veterans Services
- Note the topics under Health and Well-Being
- Click on Mental Health and scan the page; go back later explore more
- In the Chat box: Reactions? Anything notable?
Navigating the VA.gov Site
Substance Abuse

http://www.drugabuse.gov/patients-families
http://www.easyread.drugabuse.gov/
Homelessness

http://www.nchv.org/veterans.cfm
HELP FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

Getting Started

Before beginning a search for assistance available to you, it will be helpful to make a plan. Think about what it is that you need. Do you need medical, substance abuse or mental health care? Are you ready to work or do you need to learn a job skill? Do you have legal issues that need to be resolved? Do you need to reapply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or VA benefit checks?

Make a list of your needs. This list is a tool to help you get organized and to help you figure out where to look for the kinds of help you may need. A sample list might look like this:

1. I need a place to live today.
2. I need a job.
3. I need clothing to wear to work.
4. I want to get counseling for PTSD.
5. I owe child support.
6. I need to find out what federal benefits I can get as a veteran.

Think about your list as you read through these web pages. Who do you think can help you with each of your needs? There may be one organization able to work with...
Special Issues for Women Veterans

- Family Issues
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Homelessness
- Suicide

http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/
http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/
California’s Women Veterans

• California has both the greatest number - more than 167,000 - and the greatest proportion of female veterans in the country (9.5 percent).

California’s Women Veterans Response to the 2011 Survey: Preliminary Report
http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/12/FINAL_REPORT.pdf
Older Vets
Support Services
Make the Connection

MakeTheConnection.net is a one-stop resource where Veterans and their families and friends can explore information about physical and mental health symptoms, challenging life events, and mental health conditions.

Highly recommended for any vet, family member or friend seeking support and information

http://maketheconnection.net/
Make the Connection

- Customizable
- Allows user to drill down to relevant info
Make the Connection: Signs and Symptoms

Trouble Sleeping

Connecting with fellow Veterans again
Tim thought because he hadn’t been wounded in combat, he was fine, but after struggling to sleep and dealing with survivor’s guilt and depression after his return, he went to VA to get the help he needed. Tim discovered being able to connect with other Veterans made a world of difference in his recovery.

Watch Now | See all Videos about Trouble Sleeping

What can it mean if I have trouble sleeping?

You lay awake at night and can’t sleep. You’re restless and feel tired during the day. Nightmares wake you up. You’re unable to go back to sleep. Are sleep problems making it hard for you to get through the day?

Sometimes sleep problems are a result of a traumatic experience or stressful event in your military or civilian life. Other times, negative thoughts or worry might make it hard to fall asleep or cause you to wake up easily during the night. You

Jump to a section below
If I’m having trouble sleeping, what can I do about it?
Take the next step – Make the connection.
Explore these resources for more information about sleep problems in Veterans.
Military Families and Friends

http://maketheconnection.net/family-friends
Hotlines Worth Noting

- Veterans Crisis Line 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans 1.877.4AID.VET (424.3838)
- VA Caregiver Support Line 1.855.260.3274
- Wounded Warrior Resource Center 1.800.342.9647
Veterans Crisis Line

Dial 1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1
Text to 838255

I am Veteran  I am Active Duty/Reserve and Guard  I am Family/Friend

Confidential Help for Veterans and Their Families

Welcome to the Veterans Crisis Line Website

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

More about the Veterans Crisis Line
Support For Caregivers

http://www.caregiver.va.gov/
For Stroke Caregivers

Welcome to the RESCUE Website

Resources and Education for Stroke Caregivers' Understanding and Empowerment, or RESCUE for short, is a lifeline to help caregivers “keep their head above water.” Stroke onset is very sudden and new caregivers are not always prepared for this new role. The caregiver may be overwhelmed and feel like the person who needs to be rescued. The RESCUE website provides stroke caregivers with information and resources to help them better care for their loved one. The website also gives caregivers information to help them take care of themselves. There are 45 easy-to-read “Fact sheets” about stroke and stroke caregiving on this website. They can be downloaded and printed. The 45 fact sheets are also available in Spanish.

http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/
Online Health Resources

• So many excellent sites; where to start?

http://medlineplus.gov
Mini Practice

- We’ll take about 3 minutes here.
- Go to http://MedlinePlus.gov
- Search for the key word veterans, then limit your results to Health Topics only
- Scroll the results; click on any one of the Health Topics of interest
- In the Chat box, add any comments!
Searching MedlinePlus

Search here first, then limit to Health Topics in the Refine by Type box

1. Veterans and Military Health (National Library of Medicine)
   People who serve in the military and veterans face some different health issues than civilians. During wartime, the main health concerns are life-threatening injuries. These include shrapnel and gunshot wounds, ...
   [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/veteransandmilitaryhealth.html - Health Topics]

2. Veterans and Military Family Health (National Library of Medicine)
   ... the U.S. military and over 23 million U.S. veterans. They face some different health issues from civilians. ...
   [www.nlm.nih.gov/.../veteransandmilitaryfamilyhealth.html - Health Topics]

3. Homeless Health Concerns (National Library of Medicine)
   Poor health can contribute to being homeless, and being homeless can lead to poor health. Limited access to health care can make it worse. That’s why the ...
   [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/homelesshealthconcerns.html - Health Topics]

4. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (National Library of Medicine)
   Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a real illness. You can get PTSD after living through or...
Vets in the Digital Age

Mobile Apps
• PTSD Coach
• T2 Mood Tracker
• Breath2Relax and Tactical Breather
Mobile Apps and Sites

- PTSD Coach
- Easy-to-use
- [http://t2health.org/apps](http://t2health.org/apps)
T2 Mood Tracker

http://t2health.org/apps/t2-mood-tracker
Online Support Groups

After Deployment
http://www.afterdeployment.org/

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
• Veterans Forum
• Homeless Forum
• Living with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
Support in Online Community
Military Kids Connect

- MKC is an online community of military children (ages 6-17 years old) is a safe site that provides access to age-appropriate resources to support children from pre-deployment, through a parent's or caregiver's return.

- [https://www.militarykidsconnect.org/](https://www.militarykidsconnect.org/)
The VA Health System

- Complex!
- Where to turn first?
- Helps to know how it’s organized
Snapshot of the System - Services and Facilities

- Veterans Administration
- Veterans Health Administration
- Veterans Integrated Service Networks
- State Veterans Services
- County offices
- Vet Centers
- Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs)
- MyHealtheVet
Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs)
Vet Centers

Family Counseling
Providing services and support to Veterans and their families

Here to Help
If you have served in any combat zone, Vet Centers are in your community to help you and your family with readjustment counseling and outreach services.

Our Staff

Featured Story
Memorial Day Event Honoring Vietnam Veterans.
For the past twelve years, the Bronx Vet Center and the DC Vet Center have joined together at the Vietnam Wall... Read the full article at Read More...

Our Services

Find a Vet Center
By the end of 2011, there will be 300 Vet Centers across the US and surrounding territories (US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa). Click the map to find one near you or to speak confidentially with a Vet Center Counselor at any time around the clock call: (927-8387)

Social Networking
Facebook
Twitter
YouTube

http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter_flsh.asp
State and Local Resources

• State Departments of Veteran Affairs
  • Essential resource for veterans
  • Each state has one
  • Additional benefits vary from state to state
  • http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm

• County Veteran Service Organizations
  • www.cacvso.org

• Search for all facilities based on your criteria:
  http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/rpt_fac_list.cfmhic_regions
CalVet: the California Department of Veteran Affairs

http://www.calvet.ca.gov/
CalVet App

Services
- Healthcare
- Education
- Housing
- Employment
- Other

Interests
1. Agent Orange
2. CalVet Home Loans
3. College Fee Waiver
4. Compensation & Pension
5. DD-214 Requests
6. Education/Training
7. Employment
8. Financial Assistance

Continue

Other Services
- Business License, Tax and Fee Waiver
- Claims Representation
- DD214
- Family Counseling
- Financial Assistance
- Fishing and Hunting Licenses
- GWOT Benefits
- Legal Assistance
- License Plates
- Property Tax Exemptions
- State Parks and Recreation Pass
- VSO
• Pilot outreach project to veterans and their families
• Three geographic areas identified
  • Shasta Public Libraries
  • Fresno County Library
  • San Diego County Library
• Veteran ‘resource stations’ in each library
  • Print resources, designated laptop for veterans’ use, trained volunteers and more!
My HealtheVet is a Personal Health Record and information portal for vets and their caregivers

- Refill VA prescription medicines
- Access links to Federal and VA benefits
- Take on-line courses to improve physical and mental health
- Create personal health records
- Track changes in health

http://www.myhealth.va.gov
More Ways to Find Services and Benefits

National Resource Directory
• Connecting wounded warriors, service members, veterans, their families, and caregivers with those who support them
Librarians are able to help vets (and public librarians) find health information

Located at some VA hospitals

Check out the consumer resources (some more up-to-date than others)

http://www.va.gov/VALNET/Consumer_Health.asp
A Few Recommended Titles

1. **AFTER the WAR ZONE**
   - Laurie B. Slone, PhD and Matthew J. Freedman, MD, PhD
   - *A Practical Guide for Returning Troops and Their Families*

2. **ONCE A WARRIOR, ALWAYS A WARRIOR**
   - Charles W. Hoge, MD, Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret.)
   - *Navigating the Transition from Combat to Home Including Combat Stress, PTSD, and mTBI*

3. **COURAGE After Fire**
   - Foreword by Senator Bob Dole
   - *Coping Strategies for Troops Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and Their Families*

*Reviews*

- "There's combat. Then, there's the rest of your life... This is the guide to surviving the war back here. We all need it. A hell of a book."
  — Marc Cleland, Former U.S. Senator and VA Administrator, wounded decorated combat veteran
A Few More
Finding Organizations: Mini Practice

- Using DIRLINE: Directory of Health Organizations
- Try a few searches with simple key words:
  - spinal
  - veteran
- Now try this: (be sure to capitalize OR)
  - amputees OR amputation
Final Words

- Barely scratched the surface
- Be cautious of websites targeted to veterans; many try take advantage of the vulnerabilities faced by this population
- Learn about your own state and county resources; often the personalized services help the veteran reintegrate more easily
Thank You!

Kelli Ham, MLIS
NN/LM Pacific Southwest Region
kkham@library.ucla.edu

http://nnlm.gov/psr/
1-800-338-7657

This project has been funded in whole or in part with Federal funds from the Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine, under Contract No. HHS-N-276-2011-00009-C with the UCLA Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library.