

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) was allocated MHSa funds to identify best practice models and provide training to enhance the effectiveness of veteran referrals to County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) when the veterans present mental health issues in the community. MHSa funds would provide resources to CVSOs to administrate the development of community networks that would result in veteran referrals to U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs services.

The signature injury from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan is trauma that creates the mental health challenges often referred to as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). While over 90% of the wounded warriors in this conflict are surviving serious injuries, many are left with physical and cognitive impairments that are life long disabilities. The on-going relationship between CDVA and CVSOs is critical for ensuring veterans obtain the benefits they have earned. Through this relationship, CDVA and Counties can focus on veterans, facilitating veteran access to VA's mental health benefits. CVSOs act as CDVA's "distributed network" by providing for the direct veteran contact in the veteran claims process.

CDVA activities reported to DMH for the period 7/1/08 – 12/31/08 are as follows:

Brief summary of the major activities performed during FY 08/09

- Hired two outreach personnel at the Headquarters office and they have been invaluable in the outreach to our Guard, Reserve and returning veterans in hooking them up with their VA benefits.
- We have developed a resource guide with several mental health sections including suicide prevention, and TBI/PTSD resources. We will have 20,000 copies printed and distributed.
- We have developed a Reintegration booklet telling soldiers and veterans how to deal with PTSD/TBI. We have included a rough draft copy and will have 5,000 copies printed and distributed.
- We are in the process of producing a video PSA for airing on TV and radio talking about PTSD/TBI and other war injuries and how to get the resources needed to deal with them.

Identify 2 or 3 activities or accomplishments that are considered highlights and help further the intent of the MHSa (e.g., achieving system change)

- We are in the process of organizing nine separate resource collaborative areas to organize and document the resources that are out there for our veterans and their families. This includes mental health and medical resources along with financial, education and housing resources.
- We are investing resources in the creation of veteran courts. We have two counties that have veteran courts set up where veterans are being connected

with the VA treatment facilities for mental health and substance abuse instead of going to jail or using county resources. We have Orange and Santa Clara County on line and are working on Yolo, Contra Costa, Tulare and San Diego County. We are also working with the Department of Drug & Alcohol to use Prop 36 to help establish Veteran Courts for the troops coming home with adjustment problems created by the horrific events and multiple tours of Iraq and Afghanistan.

- We are sending welcome home letters to all recently discharged veterans that include information on PTSD/TBI and how to deal with these very serious conditions.
- We are upgrading our website to include information on TBI/PTSD. Blogging and live chat will be included. We are 2 months away from this project.
- Upgrading our processing of discharge documents with scanning to identify the soldiers who were in combat and were wounded, so we can reach out to them with special attention in the area of mental health.
- Improving our outreach on campuses to identify veteran students with adjustment problems, and getting them to counseling.

Identify activities being coordinated with the local mental health system

- We have distributed \$270,000.00 to San Diego, LA, San Bernardino, Solano and Fresno Counties to hire mental health outreach personnel. This has resulted in e FTE's and 2 half time employees doing outreach at our military installations that serve as discharge points. These personnel are also attending all pre & de mobs for the guard and reserve in California. They are also capturing contact information including email addresses so we can maintain an ongoing dialogue and communication with these recently discharged veterans.