Omnibus Veterans Bill Passed by House and Senate (DAV) http://bit.ly/2hL8aNV

On December 10, 2016, the Senate passed H.R. 6416, the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016.

H.R. 6416 now heads to the President's desk to be signed into law. The bill contains legislation consistent with several of DAV's national resolutions. Highlights of the measure include provisions to:

Benefits
- Establish automatic entitlement to survivor benefit payments in certain cases;
- Streamline the Board of Veterans Appeals video hearing process;
- Enhance the Veterans Benefit Administration's contract medical examination process;
- Temporarily increase the number of judges presiding at Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims;
- Require continuous review of the Transition Goals Plans and Success (GPS) program, its workshops, training methodology, delivery of services, collection and analysis of course critiques and VSO involvement;
• Establish a three-year transition period for Service Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses following the non-service-connected death of the service-disabled veteran owner, rated less than 100 percent;
• Express a sense of Congress that October 5 be recognized annually as American Veteran Disabled for Life Day;

Health Care
• Authorize advanced appropriations for VA’s Medical Community Care account;
• Improve access to standard immunizations for veterans;
• Provide priority services to Medal of Honor recipients within VA’s health care system;
• Establish procedures for mental health treatment for veterans who performed classified missions while on active duty;
• Provide examination and treatment by VA for emergency medical conditions and women in labor;
• Authorize several major VHA medical facility projects;
• Authorize research for descendant health conditions potentially related to veterans exposed to toxic substances during their service in the Armed Forces;

Homeless
• **Expand the definition of “homeless veteran” to authorize access to VA services and benefits to this group of veterans;**
• Increase per diem payment rates for transitional housing assistance that later become permanent housing for homeless veterans;
• Establish a program to improve retention of housing by formerly homeless veterans and veterans at risk of becoming homeless;
• Establish a National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans and
• Require VA to assess comprehensive service programs for homeless veterans.

For detailed information about H.R. 6416, please [click here.](#)
• [(Stars & Stripes): Congress passes gutted veterans reform bill](#)
• [House passes six veteran-related bills](#)

(December 13, 2016) All retired National Guardsmen and Reservists are now only a presidential signature away from finally being recognized as veterans.

Congress approved legislation last week that would expand the legal definition of a veteran to include Guardsmen and Reservists that honorably serve 20 years. It now goes to the White House as part of a package of veterans bills.


*Editor’s Note: Unfortunately, the President’s action to sign this bill has become highly politicized. This article provides a summary of the bill. The author’s comments are his own.*

When President Obama signed the 21st Century Cures Act on December 13th, he signed into law one of the most sweeping efforts to provide additional programs and funding for health conditions and innovation in America, including cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, opioid addiction, medical devices, access to new drugs, and mental health.

The Cures Act includes the major provisions of the Senate mental health compromise bill, Mental Health Reform Act of 2016, as well as a few additional provisions from the House’s over-reaching Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2016 bill.

While the bill goes a long way in helping fix certain components of mental health care in the nation, it does little for the vast majority of people who suffer from mental health concerns and receive outpatient treatment. Here are the highlights of what just became law.
Editor’s Note: This article provides a brief description under each of these headings.

- Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use & Chief Medical Officer
- Interdepartmental Serious Mental Illness Coordinating Committee
- National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory
- Mental Health Parity Enforcement
- Early Intervention Programs
- Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) and Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)
- Pharmaceutical Companies
- Suicide Prevention Technical Assistance Center
- HIPAA Patient Privacy Protections to Be Re-evaluated
- Medicaid Same-Day Billing Glitch Fixed

The House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate HELP Committee have engaged in a public, nonpartisan conversation with patients, researchers, innovators, and health care providers about what steps can be taken to expedite the discovery, development, and delivery of new treatments and cures and maintain America’s global status as the leader in biomedical innovation. The 21st Century Cures Act (“Cures”) is the product of that conversation.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) today announced that the “21st Century Cures” initiative, a $6.3 billion medical innovation package that is designed to accelerate the discovery, development, and delivery of new cures and treatments that passed the Senate with his support last week, has been signed into law by the president.

Portman urged that opioid funding be included in the package, and it includes $1 billion in new funding for state grants to fight opioid abuse. The measure also includes a number of Portman initiatives to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid. Following the passage of the bill, Senator Portman released the following statement:

"With one Ohioan dying of an overdose of heroin or prescription drugs every three hours, our state is in a crisis. But help is on the way.

This summer, Congress passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA, which authorized $181 million in new funding to fight this epidemic, and now, with the 21st Century Cures Act, Congress has authorized another $1 billion in funding over the next two years to deal with this national emergency.

This new law also strengthens Medicare to help cancer patients, seniors on Medicare Advantage, and seniors with disabilities. I am proud to have voted for it because it will make a difference in the lives of so many of the most vulnerable in Ohio and across the country.”"

- Virginia Governor proposes investing $31 million to tackle mental health and substance abuse treatment
- White House moves quickly to release opioid money

OPPORTUNITIES

WASHINGTON – Building on President Obama’s commitment to end Veteran homelessness, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is announcing the availability of funding for non-
profit organizations and other groups that serve Veterans through VA’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program.

The SSVF program assists very low-income Veteran families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These SSVF grants are available to current grantees seeking renewals and make new funding available for eight high-need communities.

VA relies on strong, targeted collaborations in key areas at federal and local levels and engages community partners to develop innovative and forward-thinking solutions that can lead to scalable and replicable models of service.

SSVF grantees currently operate in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam, working within their communities to end or prevent homelessness among Veteran families.

**VA Research Study Participants Needed:** VA Houston – Treatment Resistant Depression


A research Study to determine the benefits of Ketamine for the treatment of depression in veterans over the age of 55 with a history of treatment resistant depression.


**BRAIN Initiative: Research Career Enhancement Award for Investigators to Build Skills in a Cross-Disciplinary Area (K18)**

This funding opportunity announcement (FOA) invites applications for mentored career enhancement (K18) awards in research areas that are highly relevant to the NIH BRAIN Initiative. This career enhancement program will support the development of research capability for the BRAIN Initiative, with specific emphasis on cross-training independent investigators in a substantively different area.

Open Date (Earliest Submission Date): March 14, 2017
Letter of Intent Due Date(s): March 14, 2017
Application Due Date(s): April 14, 2017

[Read More >>](http://bit.ly/2hxQdTa)

**BRAIN Initiative Fellows: Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Individual Postdoctoral Fellowship (F32)**

The purpose of the BRAIN Initiative Fellows (F32) program is to enhance the research training of promising postdoctorates, early in their postdoctoral training period, who have the potential to become productive investigators in research areas that will advance the goals of the BRAIN Initiative.

Open Date (Earliest Submission Date): February 15, 2017
Letter of Intent Due Date(s): February 15, 2017
Application Due Date(s): March 15, 2017

[Read More >>](http://bit.ly/2hxQdTa)

**About the NIH BRAIN Initiative**

The Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies® (BRAIN) Initiative is part of a Presidential focus aimed at revolutionizing our understanding of the human brain. By accelerating the development and application of innovative technologies, researchers will be able to produce a revolutionary new dynamic picture of the brain that, for the first time, shows how individual cells and complex neural circuits interact in both time and space. Long desired by researchers seeking new ways to treat, cure, and even prevent brain disorders, this picture will fill major gaps in our current knowledge and provide unprecedented
opportunities for exploring exactly how the brain enables the human body to record, process, utilize, store, and retrieve vast quantities of information, all at the speed of thought.

View all active NIH BRAIN Initiative FOAs >>

**SAMHSA Grants:** SAMHSA provides up to $121 million for adult mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery [http://bit.ly/2hLJdCk](http://bit.ly/2hLJdCk)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has awarded up to a total of $121 million over the next five years for mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery.

These SAMHSA grants are geared toward expanding and enhancing behavioral health care services for adults across the nation.

“This funding will help fulfill SAMHSA’s commitment to reduce the impact of substance use and mental health disorders on America’s communities,” said SAMHSA Principal Deputy Administrator Kana Enomoto.

“It will provide services to a number of vulnerable groups including people with HIV/AIDS and the homeless, among others.”

The grant programs include:

- Statewide Consumer Network Program
- Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI)
- Minority AIDS Initiative Continuum of Care Pilot (MAI-CoC) - Syringes Services Programs
- Grants to Expand Care Coordination Targeted Capacity Expansion (TCE) through the Use of Technology Assisted Care (TAC) in Targeted Areas of Need (TCE-TAC)
- Targeted Capacity Expansion Peer-to- Peer (TCE-PTP)
- Violence Intervention to Enhance Lives (VITEL)
- Statewide Peer Networks for Recovery and Resiliency (Statewide Peer Networks for R&R)

**SAMHSA Grants:** SAMHSA To Award Nearly $1 Billion in New Grants To Address the Nation’s Opioid Epidemic [http://bit.ly/2hLFULb](http://bit.ly/2hLFULb)

SAMHSA today announced the availability of new funding to combat the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic. The funds, made available through the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grants, will provide up to $970 million to states and territories over the next 2 years, beginning in fiscal year 2017.

These grants will help address the opioid crisis by providing support to states for increasing access to treatment, reducing unmet treatment needs, and reducing opioid-related overdose deaths. States and territories will be awarded funds through a formula based on unmet needs for opioid use disorder treatment and drug poisoning deaths.


The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) is accepting applications for fiscal year (FY) 2017 Addiction Technology Transfer Centers (ATTC) Cooperative Agreements.
The purpose of this program is to develop and strengthen the specialized behavioral healthcare and primary healthcare workforce that provides substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and recovery support services.

This is done by accelerating the adoption and implementation of evidence-based and promising SUD treatment and recovery-oriented practices and services; heightening the awareness, knowledge, and skills of the workforce that addresses the needs of people with substance use or other co-occurring health disorders; and fostering regional and national alliances among culturally diverse practitioners, researchers, policy makers, funders, and the recovery community.

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**


Lawmakers passed a veterans omnibus bill in the waning hours of Congress’ legislative session last week, but without many of the most sweeping and controversial provisions the two chambers had struggled with in recent months.

Instead, the measure heading to the president’s desk is a collection of mostly non-controversial items, including small changes in the benefits appeals process, an extension of education benefits to some war widows and increased access to benefits for homeless veterans.

It doesn’t include accountability provisions championed by critics of the Department of Veterans Affairs, who insist the bureaucracy does not have the ability to properly discipline criminal employees. It also omits a costly expansion of veteran caregiver benefits and proposed trims to the post-9/11 GI Bill, which several veterans groups had protested.

And it doesn’t include an overhaul of the benefits appeals process or a consolidation of VA’s outside care programs, two priorities that department leaders had pleaded with lawmakers to approve before the end of the year.


WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it is amending provider regulations to permit full practice authority to three roles of VA advanced practice registered nurses (APRN) to practice to the full extent of their education, training, and certification, regardless of State restrictions that limit such full practice authority, except for applicable State restrictions on the authority to prescribe and administer controlled substances, when such APRNs are acting within the scope of their VA employment.


Rep. Phil Roe has been a licensed physician for the last 46 years, so it comes as little surprise that health care issues will be among his top priorities when he takes over the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee next year.

“You have got to put patients and doctors, veterans and doctors back in charge of the [department’s] health care system,” the 71-year-old Tennessee Republican said in an interview with Military Times.

“Not bureaucrats deciding everywhere you go and everything you do. You’ve got to let patients decide what is best for them. That may be staying inside the VA system. Or it may
be having your private doctor outside the system. But the veteran can decide that.”

Roe, an Army medical corps veteran entering his fifth term in Congress, will become House Republicans’ top voice on VA reform efforts next month, replacing retiring committee chairman Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla.

**DoD: AMSUS Conference & Health.mil News**
- AMSUS: How to care for warriors who used to be wounded
- Military and civilian experts came together at AMSUS to share practices in providing best care possible
- VA Deputy Secretary highlights successes, vision to improve care as AMSUS 2016 concludes
- Virtual health extends Army Medicine reach
- Proper nutrition can help manage diabetes
- Walter Reed doc receives AMSUS award for work on antibiotic resistant bacteria
- AMSUS Recognizes Belvoir Hospital Providers
- Good plan, right materials essential to effective Military Health System
- Dailey: Accessing behavioral health care should be as easy as seeing a medic

SAN DIEGO (Tribune News Service) — Nearly a year into his job as the Navy’s top doc, Vice Adm. C. Forrest Faison III wants to make wide-ranging reforms designed to better heal millions of sailors, Marines, military retirees and their families.

The 38th surgeon general of the Navy wants to wage war against complacency on three fronts — making health services more convenient for troops and their families; ensuring positive, “friction-less experiences” with Navy medical providers; and using technology to connect troops with the best physicians.

**VA Local Events & Other News**
- [VA Minneapolis Women Veterans Open House, Dec. 19th](http://www.va.gov)
- [New Regulation Decreases Cost of Outpatient Medication Copay for Most Veterans](http://www.va.gov)
- [VA Recommends 14 Future Sites for Fisher House Construction](http://www.va.gov)
- [VA prescription refill and secure messaging now available at Vets.gov](http://www.va.gov)
- [Veterans Affairs taps new director for NJ medical centers](http://www.va.gov)
- [Sean Kelley is helping transform how the VA operates](http://www.va.gov)
- [Editorial: VA’s secret star system](http://www.va.gov)
- [VA study confirms high cure rates with use of new hepatitis C drugs](http://www.va.gov)
- [VA working on lingering problems at Phoenix hospital](http://www.va.gov)
- [Man detained after shooting at VA clinic in the Villages](http://www.va.gov)
- [The VA is consistently looking to improve: Robert McDonald & Sloan Gibson](http://www.va.gov)
- [Hospital services in Tucson will improve, VA deputy chief says](http://www.va.gov)
- [VA Pittsburgh: We’re hiring Veterans!](http://www.va.gov)
- [Risky dual-use prescribing for Veterans](http://www.va.gov)
- [Report Finds Flaws in Mental Health Care at St. Louis VA](http://www.va.gov)
- [Cleveland VA: Enhanced Technology Empowers Veterans](http://www.va.gov)

**VA OIG Reports**
- [Pharmaceutical Executives Charged in Racketeering Scheme](http://www.oig.va.gov)
- [Iowa Woman Sentenced for Mortgage Fraud](http://www.oig.va.gov)
- [Review of Alleged Wasted Funds at Consolidated Patient Account Centers for Windows Enterprise Licenses](http://www.oig.va.gov)
- [Palm Beach County Man Sentenced to 150 Months’ Imprisonment for Role in Bonding Fraud Scheme](http://www.oig.va.gov)
- [Bossier City Woman Sentenced to 12 months in Prison for Stealing More than $90,000 in VA Benefits](http://www.oig.va.gov)
WASHINGTON — As Congress headed toward its summer recess in late June, the fate of a bill that would dramatically reform the opioid treatment industry was in doubt.

Despite a lopsided 94 to 1 win in the Senate earlier that year, House Republicans had moved at their own pace, having only passed their version in May. Meanwhile, the White House and Senate Democrats were making renewed demands that any policy improvements come with the federal funds to make a real dent.

The White House wanted just over $1 billion, while Senate Democrats were calling for $600 million. The bill’s lead co-sponsor, Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), worried that either amount would have made the bill untenable in the Republican-controlled House.

So he asked for a meeting of Republican leaders to hash out a way forward. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) agreed to convene it, hosting the previously unreported gathering in his conference room with Portman and Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa).

Portman laid out the predicament for the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, arguing that it would likely be fatal for the bill to slip past the recess. It would be nearly impossible to get it taken care of in the short time the Senate came back in September, before breaking again for the election. It was now or never, but there was no way he could get enough Republican votes to attach money to it.

Alexander volunteered a solution. He had been working for months on a massive bill to fund medical research, including Vice President Joe Biden’s moonshot bid to cure cancer. It was a multibillion-dollar package. Why not add $1 billion more to it for opioids?

Portman and the other senators in the room gave a thumbs up, and McConnell told Alexander to try to make it happen.

In first-of-its-kind plea, Columbus Foundation, ADAMH seek 'critical-need' donations to battle opiate abuse http://bit.ly/2hLM4uO
As the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board of Franklin County took new steps this week to fight the still-raging opiate crisis, the Columbus Foundation added support by announcing a first-of-its kind community fundraising effort to aid in the battle.

“Unfortunately, the problem has not gotten better, and it’s not going to go away anytime soon,” said David Royer, CEO of the ADAMH board.
He and leaders at the Columbus Foundation say the partnership can help hone a comprehensive community strategy and pull in more resources for education, prevention, treatment and recovery.

The foundation has never before issued a “critical-need alert” to its donors and the public that focuses exclusively on an addiction issue. But with Ohio leading the nation in opiate-overdose deaths, officials said, action is crucial.

**Senator Brown urges VA to protect vets from high ER bills** [http://bit.ly/2hWVeVC](http://bit.ly/2hWVeVC)
WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) today announced a bipartisan letter with several of his Senate colleagues to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert McDonald, urging him to comply with the Emergency Care Fairness Act (ECFA) to ensure veterans are not charged exorbitant ER bills.

The ECFA, which was enacted in 2010, directs the VA to cover veterans who have private insurance if their insurance doesn’t cover the full cost of non-VA emergency care. Yet since 2010, the VA has not complied with the law, denying hundreds of thousands of veterans’ reimbursement claims for emergency care.

“Veterans who seek emergency care should be focusing on their recovery, not worrying they’ll have to deal with sky high medical bills,” Brown said. “The VA must ensure that veterans are reimbursed for these often lifesaving emergency visits.”

Earlier this year, a federal court ordered the VA to write regulations that comply with the EFCA. In addition to urging the VA to comply with the law, the senators also requested that the agency fix its mistake and re-open all previously-denied claims.

Imagine being able to call for a nurse, adjust your bed, manage lighting, open a door, make a phone or video call, use social media and control the television using only your eyes or by puffing on a straw. These tasks may seem simple but for a Veteran with a severe disability, these everyday tasks may be nearly impossible without assistance.

When Fran McClellan, Rehab Program Manager for Spinal Cord Injury at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center learned about a Veterans Health Administration Innovation called the Advanced Environmental Controls (AEC) unit, she knew she had to investigate further. She learned that the AEC would enable injured Veterans to perform many important tasks independently, and that it could be obtained through the VHA Innovation Program.

The VHA Innovation Program worked with McClellan to provide and install 59 AEC units at the Cleveland VAMC on January 25. Since then, this new technology has given back independence to countless injured Veterans at the Cleveland VAMC.

. . . The Advanced Environmental Controls innovation closed this gap by providing a solution which integrates multiple existing ECU functions into one comprehensive hospital product. It was designed specifically for Veterans with a wide variety of needs and disabilities to enable them to perform everyday tasks.

**Ohio Supreme Court Considers Military Spouse Attorney Rule, Adopts Interim Solution , Asks all Ohioans and others to comment** [http://bit.ly/2hxom5w](http://bit.ly/2hxom5w)
The Ohio Supreme Court today announced that it is accepting public comment on amendments to enable an attorney spouse of an active duty member of the U.S. military temporarily stationed in Ohio to practice law under certain conditions.
The proposed amendments to the Rules for the Government of the Bar of Ohio outline the eligibility and application requirements, the approval process, and the limitations of the designation. The Supreme Court noted the “unique mobility requirements of military families who support the defense of our nation.” Public comment is due Jan. 18, 2017.

The Court’s Task Force on Access to Justice and the Ohio State Bar Association recommended the rule adoption. Twenty-one states have adopted a military spouse attorney program.

To account for military spouses currently in Ohio seeking to practice law on a temporary basis, the Court adopted amendments that take effect on Jan. 1, 2017.

Under these amendments, out-of-state attorneys could use the existing admission process to be granted pro hac vice status by a local court or other tribunal in order to be eligible to practice law for two years. They also would be exempted from the pro hac vice participation limit of three proceedings a year.


2017 O H I O S P E C I A L I Z E D D O C K E T S R O U N D T A B L E S
All roundtables are 10:00am – 2:00pm and at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center unless noted otherwise.

Additional topics are under consideration and may be added to our offerings for the year. Please feel free to contact Sarah Jeu at sarah.jeu@sc.ohio.gov if you have any suggestions.

2017 S P E C I A L I Z E D D O C K E T S C O N F E R E N C E
SAVE THE DATES! Conference Date: October 23-24, 2017 Full days Location: The Ohio State University, Ohio Union The 2017 Annual Specialized Docket Conference will occur on October 23 and 24.

In order to continue offering access to national speakers, meals and continuing education credits at a venue that is able to accommodate all of our participants, a registration fee of $50 per person will be collected. We think you will find the expanded event to be well worth the cost. Registration is not yet open.

We will let you know more as details become available. Speaker materials from the 2016 Specialized Dockets Conference are still available here.

The 2017 Commission on Specialized Dockets meeting dates are scheduled as follows: Thursday, December 22, 2016 (Telephonic) Friday, January 27, 2017 (Telephonic) Thursday, March 9, 2017 (In-Person) Friday, June 16, 2017 (In-Person) Friday, September 8, 2017 (In-Person) Thursday, November 9, 2017 (In-Person)

Local veterans graduate from Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court (News Video) http://bit.ly/2hWQ4sJ

DAYTON, Ohio (WDTN) – A special graduation ceremony happened Wednesday at the Montgomery County Common Pleas Court. Eight veterans graduated from the Veterans Treatment Court, a program that helps local veterans who have entered the criminal justice system get back on track.

Judge Dennis Adkins started the program in 2013.

“They were serving their country on multiple deployments, and they were coming back different.” Adkins said. “Of anyone that needs our help, it’s the ones who were willing to lay down their lives for us as Americans.”
The program gives veterans a second chance. It sets goals, assesses needs and helps them become productive members of society.

“I can’t be prouder,” Adkins said. “These guys have fought to save their lives, to save their families, and we have a motto that we leave no veteran behind.”

**Athens County Veteran charged with cocaine trafficking enrolled in Veterans Court**  
(Subscription) [http://bit.ly/2hX0dWm](http://bit.ly/2hX0dWm)  
Athens County Common Pleas Court Judge Georg McCarthy released from jail Tuesday a 65-year-old Vietnam-era Army veteran facing cocaine trafficking and possession charges and enrolled him into the Veterans Court program during a closed hearing.

Read the full article here: [The Athens Messenger](http://bit.ly/2hX0dWm)

West Liberty-Salem Schools recently launched a Drug Free Project for middle and high school students that was created by the high school’s Key Club members and is funded through a grant received from the Mary Rutan Foundation.

The purpose of the project is to encourage students to be drug free, and it will serve to educate and build camaraderie and morale of the student body, school representatives said.

Students in grades 6 through 12 recently participated in a kickoff day with an obstacle course hosted by the Ohio Army National Guard. Pupils competed in the challenge activities that focused on leadership, team and confidence-building skills.

**EVENT: NAMI Summit County NAMI Six-Weeks Basics Training** starting Jan 3rd, 2017  
NAMI Summit County (The National Alliance on Mental Illness) is currently registering for its free NAMI Basics training which begins January 3, 2017, 5:30-7:30 pm.

It is a six-week course, which meets once a week, conducted by trained parents, and designed for parents and family of children with emotional/behavioral/neurological disorders including Bipolar, ODD, OCD, Autism/Aspergers, Anxiety, and Depression etc.

**It will cover:**
- Managing crises, solving problems and communicating effectively
- How to take care of yourself and handle stress
- Developing the confidence and stamina to support your child with compassion
- Advocating for your child's rights at school and in health care settings
- Learning about current treatments, including evidence-based therapies, medications and side effects
- Gaining an overview of the public mental health care, school and juvenile justice systems
- Understanding the challenges and impact of mental health conditions on your entire family

The course is offered free of charge with all materials provided. It will be held at Summit County Juvenile Court, 650 Dan Street, in the first floor conference rooms. Registration is required. To register contact 330-252-1188 or info@namisummit.org

Additional resources from my blog
- [OPERATION LEGAL HELP OHIO](http://bit.ly/1Gg0HbK)
- [RESOURCES FOR VETERANS](http://bit.ly/1Gg21LH)
- [OHIO JOBS FOR VETERANS](http://bit.ly/1CL3Ay0)
Editor's Note: Closely associated with Veterans Treatment Courts and other specialty docket courts dealing with mental illness is the new STEPPING UP INITIATIVE. Stepping Up is a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illness in Jails.

Stepping Up and similar initiatives are an important evolution in the treatment of veterans and others incarcerated with mental illness.

Supreme Court of Ohio Justice Evelyn Lundeberg Stratton (Retired) is the Director of Stepping Up Ohio. We have decided to create this new section of Retired Justice Stratton’s News Clips, rather than bury the stories somewhere else.

We particularly wish to thank County Court Judge Ginger Lerner-Wren in The Criminal Division of the 17th Judicial Circuit, Broward County of Florida, a Pioneer and Creator of America’s first mental health court dedicated to the decriminalization of people with mental illness, for sending us news articles to share with you.

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Judge Hollie Gallagher to lead Cuyahoga County Ohio’s mental health docket

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- A Cuyahoga County judge will take over a specialized court docket that deals with defendants who suffer from mental illness or developmental disabilities, after years of serving as its co-chair.

Common Pleas Judge Hollie Gallagher has been the co-chair of the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court’s Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Court since 2014.

Administrative Judge John J. Russo on Tuesday named Gallagher the sole chairperson after the other co-chair, Judge Jose Villanueva, retired from the bench.

The docket also includes judges Deena Calabrese, Cassandra Collier-Williams, Michael Donnelly and Robert McClelland.

Gallagher said in a news release that she has a passion for handling cases involving defendants with mental illness and is proud of the work the judges have done.

Mental Health Court could change criminal justice system in Tazewell Co., IL

PEKIN, Ill. -- Non-violent offenders in Tazewell County who are struggling with mental health issues will now get the help they need.

Law enforcement believes this program will stop many repeat offenders.

Tazewell County is currently processing it's first case in the state's first certified Mental Health Court.

Officials think the program will change the way justice is served in the county.

"The current model of punishment and 'lock em up' doesn't have the best results for a person who gets out," said Tazewell County Circuit Court Judge, Michale Risinger. "What do they do? They get back in trouble again and it's this cycle."
Tazewell County is attempting to right a criminal justice system that is returning offenders back to jail at an alarming rate.

The Mental Health Court will meet every week to consider candidates for the program.

**Mental health courts improve relationships, help people manage health care**
http://bit.ly/2hTmcgC

Mental health courts provide a voluntary option for criminal offenders. These courts incorporate mental health assessments, treatment plans and ongoing monitoring to address the health needs of offenders in an effort to keep them out of jail, while also ensuring public safety.

Proponents point to reductions in recidivism, or relapse into criminal behavior, as evidence to the effectiveness of mental health courts.

Now, new research from the University of Missouri has found additional mental, social and health benefits for mental health court participants as an alternative to serving time in jail or prison.

"When interviewed, participants of mental health court programs consistently noted positive changes in their relationships with friends and family while participating in a mental health court program," said Kelli Canada, assistant professor in the MU School of Social Work.

"Participants discussed improvements in psychiatric stability thanks to corrections in medication and counseling. They also reported longer periods of sobriety since entering treatment."

**Jail Suicides Are Largely Preventable. So Why Are They On The Rise?** - More people committed suicide in jail in 2014 than in any other year since at least the turn of the century. http://huff.to/2hSYwct

WASHINGTON — More people committed suicide in jail in 2014 than in any other year since at least the turn of the century, according to newly published federal statistics.

One thousand fifty-three people died in local jails in 2014, according to a report released by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics this week. That's an 8 percent jump in the number of jail deaths from 2013 to 2014, and the largest number of jail deaths counted since 2007. The jail death rate, 140 deaths for every 100,000 inmates, was also the highest it has been since 2007.

Even more alarming is the rise in the number of suicides — which, as The Huffington Post reported in July, are largely preventable. There were 372 jail suicides in 2014, an average of more than one per day. That’s a 13 percent jump from 2013.

“This was the largest number of jail suicides reported to the [Deaths in Custody Reporting Program] since its inception in 2000,” BJS stated. “The suicide rate in local jails in 2014 was 50 per 100,000 local jail inmates. This is the highest suicide rate observed in local jails since 2000.”

“For too long we have been indifferent to the human beings that we condemn to our jails,” Alec Karakatsanis of the organization Civil Rights Corps said following the release of the statistics. “We have put them there in unprecedented numbers without requiring good reasons, and we have allowed our jails to become places of disease, neglect, and everyday brutality.”

**California Wraparound Program Reduces Juvenile Recidivism by Focusing on Mental Health** http://bit.ly/2hTjt6W
. . . Dircio credits the Youthful Offender Wraparound program (YOW), which he says “helped [him] grow successfully.” It’s what’s known as a full-service partnership (FSP) in Orange County, California, that uses a nontraditional approach to help kids identified as having “complex needs.”

Dircio was a dual status youth, meaning he had been under the supervision of both the county’s child welfare system and the juvenile justice system.

Dual status or “crossover youth” have higher rates of detention and recidivism than other justice system-involved youth.

They are also statistically more likely to develop substantial behavioral health needs, according to a 2014 report from the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice.

YOW is available to 16- to 25-year-old Orange County residents who have both a mental health diagnosis and a history with the county’s juvenile justice system. It provides traditional individual, family and group therapy, along with substance abuse treatment and anger management. In addition, YOW offers skill-building opportunities, like computer tutorials, career and education guidance, as well as job interview outfits.

The atmosphere inside YOW’s Fountain Valley strip-mall guidance center is a lot warmer than the formal listing of its services might suggest. There youths have access to a couple of game rooms with air hockey and ping pong, access to art supplies and musical instruments, culinary arts classes and fitness classes, like yoga and jiu jitsu.

According to YOW staff, this array of activities accomplishes two goals: creating a safe, healthy space where the kids actually want to spend time, and using unconventional techniques to provide services without the kids necessarily even knowing they’re getting help.


BOSTON -- Ending mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses will be a top priority next year for criminal-justice reform advocates, who said they are worried legislation from Beacon Hill leaders will not address all aspects of the system.

The Jobs Not Jails coalition rallied Tuesday at a Bowdoin Street church, where SEIU Local 509 deputy political director Calvin Feliciano said mandatory minimum reform is "the number one thing we need to nail down."

"If we just do a couple things and we don't really deal with the major, major problem, we'll be in the same place in two years," Feliciano said.

Ralliers called on Gov. Charlie Baker, House Speaker Robert DeLeo, Senate President Stan Rosenberg and Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Ralph Gants to include the elimination of mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug crimes and other reforms in criminal justice legislation they are expected to file together in January.

The four state leaders sought assistance from outside researchers in August 2015 to study the state’s justice system, with an eye toward instituting new cost-effective and data-driven practices. That review, conducted by the Council on State Governments Justice Center, is nearing completion, with policy recommendations expected to be discussed this month and a bill filed in January when the new legislative session begins.

A Deadly Virginia Jail Is Now Under Federal Investigation - Hampton Roads Regional Jail saw eight inmate deaths in less than a year and a half http://huff.to/2hxst1g
WASHINGTON — Federal investigators are launching a civil rights investigation into the conditions at Hampton Roads Regional Jail in Virginia, a facility where eight people died in less than a year and a half. The Justice Department made the announcement Monday, several months after Virginia lawmakers requested a probe.

Justice Reinvestment Roundup – Collaborative Approaches in Public safety (CSG Justice Center) http://bit.ly/2hTw8Ha

- Justice Reinvestment in Pennsylvania: Fifth Presentation
- Group Recommends Ways to Reduce Pennsylvania’s Prison Population
- States Shutter Prisons as Inmate Numbers Fall
- Apply Now: Justice Reinvestment Initiative, Maximizing State Reforms
- A Tipping Point for Criminal Justice Reform in Massachusetts
- Arkansas Prisons Proposals Endorsed, Advanced
- Editorial: A Stronger Focus Is Needed in West Virginia on Prison Recidivism
- Opinion: To Err Is Human
- Idaho Department of Correction Deputy Director Chosen to Lead Department
- Coalition Proposing Reforms in Rhode Island to Reduce State’s Prison Population
- There May Be No Worse Place for Mentally Ill People to Receive Treatment Than Prison
- Idaho Seeks $11 Million for Parolee Mental Health Services

VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS

High Court to Wade Into Military Divorce Case http://bit.ly/2hWVkfD

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to decide whether federal law bars a state divorce court from ordering a veteran to make up deductions in his military retirement pay so that his former spouse still receives the same amount she was originally decreed.


The Veterans Treatment Courts: 2015 Survey Results publication is available to view and download as a PDF. An Executive Summary of these results is also available to view and download as a PDF.

As part of the services provided by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) Adult Drug Court Technical Assistance Project, Justice Programs Office, a center at American University's School of Public Affairs (JPO at AU) conducted a survey to provide a snapshot of the range of policies, practices, and services in operating VTC programs.

JPO at AU hopes this information will provide the foundation for further data refinement and development, and the continued improvement of these important programs.

Kerwin Henderson, Program Associate at JPO at AU, discusses what Veterans Treatment Courts are, why JPO decided to conduct a survey, and what the main results from the survey are in a video found on JPO’s YouTube Channel.

Operational and Planned Veterans Treatment Courts

A list of all operational Veterans Treatment Courts is available to view and download as a PDF.

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A list of all planned Veterans Treatment Courts is available to view and download as a PDF. Those marked with an asterisk are unverified. If you are able to verify a program or believe that we are missing a program that is not listed, please email the Justice Programs Office at American University with this information at justice@american.edu.

... Within judicial circles, the drug court is considered an “accountability court,” established to provide effective alternatives to sentencing for nonviolent offenders struggling with substance abuse, mental illness and other issues. Accountability courts — with their treatment plans, drug screening and goal-setting approach — are a growing trend across the United States, expanding court services to case management typically found in the social services arena.

Muscogee County has four accountability courts. In addition to the Adult Drug Court, there’s the Juvenile Drug Court, the Mental Health Court and the Veterans Court. Local judges said those programs are so successful that they’re planning to add two more accountability courts in the near future — one for parents not paying child support and another for families struggling with addiction.

“Accountability courts have really, really come into vogue,” said local Juvenile Drug Court Judge Warner Kennon. “They were the cutting edge when we got started a number of years ago. It’s a very hands-on, intensive, court-supervised probation.”

Jordan said accountability courts are a more cost-effective way to deal with non-violent offenders than traditional courtrooms.

“We spend about $50,000 a year to keep someone in prison,” he said. “And by putting them out on the street in the community, they become, hopefully, money-earning citizens who can turn themselves around.”


The Judiciary of Guam will be recognizing veterans and military service members today at 4 p.m. in the atrium of the Guam Judicial Center. The Judiciary will hold a special recognition ceremony for its employees who are veterans of various branches of the military, as well as those who are currently serving as guardsmen and reservists. The keynote speaker will be Commander of Joint Region Marianas Rear Adm. Babette Bolivar.

“The Judiciary holds the men and women who serve in the defense of our country in high regard for their service,” the Judiciary stated in a press release.

The Veteran Treatment Court of Guam anticipates graduating its first class of veterans on Jan. 13, 2017. The VTC was established by the Judiciary on Sept. 10, 2015, and was the brainchild of Superior Court of Guam presiding Judge Alberto Lamorena, said Maria T. Cenzon, presiding judge of the VTC.

Judge Cenzon sat down and spoke with the Post in her chambers and described Judge Lamorena’s idea to bring to Guam a therapeutic court, rooted in an evidence-based treatment approach, and modeled after the first Veterans Treatment Court in Buffalo, NY.

The Judge also shared her experience in handling the VTC and its approximately 28 current cases. According to Cenzon, Guam has the most VTC cases of any jurisdiction in the U.S. There are, on average, two to four cases at the most in other jurisdictions.

**IL: Will County Specialty Court Services Move to New Downtown Joliet Location** [http://bit.ly/2hWXbBq](http://bit.ly/2hWXbBq)

... In addition, the Will County Children’s Advocacy Center and all Specialty Court Services (Drug Court, Mental Health Court, Veterans Court and Adult Redeploy Illinois) have been relocated to a new downtown Joliet location. The new address for both is: 25 N. Ottawa Street, Joliet IL 60432.

MICHIGAN CITY — Local organizations supporting military veterans received more than $39,000 from Blue Chip Casino on Tuesday as Jack Elia, assistant general manager of Blue Chip, dispersed proceeds from the Salute to Veterans event held in October.

"We are supporting the people who are supporting our veterans," he said after handing out four oversized checks to Operation Combat Bikesaver, Empowering Patriots, the La Porte County Veterans Treatment Court and Porter Starke Services.

In October, Blue Chip Casino hosted the Salute to Veterans event with a motorcycle ride organized by the Guardian Riders.

Elia said the idea originated as a way to address veteran suicide and support organizations that exist to prevent it. With no local agencies with that sole purpose, the event expanded its approach and chose to support organizations that address post-traumatic stress disorder among veterans.

**IN: Lake County Veterans Treatment Court holds graduation ceremony** [http://bit.ly/2hX3zZ4](http://bit.ly/2hX3zZ4)

CROWN POINT — The Lake County Veterans Treatment Court program held its second graduation ceremony earlier this month. A number of guests spoke about the graduating veterans' dedication to their country and great efforts in the treatment program.

Sheriff John Buncich spoke about fighting for the veterans who fought for our country, and the life- and money-saving attributes of the court. An active mentor for the program, Magistrate Terry Wilson thanked the veterans for their participation, and encouraged each individual to lend a hand to another veteran in need.

Another mentor for the program, Jim Chancellor, spoke about the great obstacles to be overcome by veterans. Commissioner Michael Repay said he was a cheerleader for the program and its participants. Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. reminded the veterans they have made it through worse, and they can handle anything thrown at them now.

Judge Julie Cantrell, who presided over the program, gave antidotes about and congratulations to each graduate as he received his plaque. Cantrell told stories of the graduates, and invited them back to keep in touch with her and staff members.

*Attorney Ronald Layer suggested the Veterans Treatment Court is the best thing any judge has ever done in Lake County.*


NORTH ADAMS, Mass. — Local veterans in need can look forward to a merrier Christmas this year as the piles of donations at City Hall continue to grow.

Bags and boxes of canned and boxed foods, quilts, jackets, scarves, hats and gloves, and a thick envelope full of gift certificates were delivered to the Veterans' Office on Wednesday morning from the local court system, thanks to Bonnie Fachini and Tori Wilhelm of the Probation Department.

The two had been gathering donations from District and Juvenile court employees and friends for about month and transported the goods over with the help of the Office of Community Corrections' Trial Court Community Service Program.

**MA: Military veterans sought to mentor veterans who participate in specialty court in Holyoke (photos)** [http://bit.ly/2gwQ01g](http://bit.ly/2gwQ01g)
HOLYOKE -- A specialty court is seeking military veterans to be volunteer mentors for other veterans who participate in the court that emphasizes getting them treatment instead of prison.

"They are really the special aspect of this court," Judge Laurie MacLeod said Thursday of the mentors.

MacLeod is presiding judge of the Western Massachusetts Veterans Treatment Court that operates at Holyoke District Court. It marked its one-year anniversary in November.

One of five veterans courts in the state, the goal of the program is to reintegrate veterans who have committed crimes and misdemeanors by honoring their military service with an effort to try helping them instead of locking them in a cell.

The veterans court here currently has 29 participants, three of whom are women, MacLeod said.

MN: Probation for Meeker Co. former deputy who stole drugs, donated toys

LITCHFIELD — A former Meeker County sheriff's deputy will serve five years of probation and perform 100 hours of volunteer work for stealing drugs from the county law enforcement center's drug take-back box and stealing toys from a toy drive, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Travis Hal Sebring, 34, of Grove City, an Iraq War veteran said to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and drug addiction, will not serve any jail time if he complies with all conditions of the probation, including attendance at some sort of support group for addicts.

"I can't even begin to say how sorry I am for the trust I have lost," Sebring said Wednesday at his sentencing, taking full responsibility for the crimes.

... Judge Michael Thompson compared Iraq veterans to those from the Vietnam War, in that many turn to alcohol and medication to "drown out" the horrific memories of wars more ethically murky than World War II was thought to be.

"I have no idea what you saw over there," Thompson told Sebring, as Sebring nodded. "To expect that our veterans come back without being affected by that is ridiculous."

Meeker County does not have a local "veterans court," a specialized court at the county level meant for vets struggling with addiction and mental illness.

Thompson said he would treat Sebring's case as though it was in such a court, saying that because of PTSD, Sebring "lacked the substantial capacity for judgment" when the crime was committed.

NV: A decision on the diversion of an Indian Hills man who pointed a loaded handgun at his wife will await his February sentencing http://bit.ly/2hWNpP1

Marc W. Crossley, 42, was arrested Sept. 27, 2015 after allegedly threatening his wife with a gun during a domestic dispute. He was charged with assault with a deadly weapon and domestic battery.

Crossley was ordered to participate in Veterans Court in Reno and his sentencing was delayed. However, he was transferred to drug court in Douglas County for supervision.

Crossley has completed domestic violence courses and "this is his only arrest and only criminal contact in his life," public defender Maria Pence said.
Prosecutor Ric Casper said that statement wasn’t true, and that Crossley has been in trouble before for forgery and domestic violence.

Judge Tom Gregory ordered a sentencing hearing set for Feb. 8 due to Crossley “not being successful at Veterans Diversion Court.”

“I’m not sending him back to Veterans Court,” Gregory added.

After his sentencing date was announced, Crossley stood with the help of a cane and turned toward his wife, who was sitting in the courtroom, took a deep breath and raised his eyebrows at her.

Crossley was booked on alternative sentencing violations on Nov. 18.

**NV:** Justice Douglas speaks in Elko about the need for specialty courts

ELKO – The most expensive bed in any city is the one in the local jail, but specialty courts can help lessen the number of people using them, Nevada Supreme Court Justice Michael Douglas told a group Friday in Elko.

Elko District Judge Nancy Porter invited Douglas to help with a program she set up to educate the legal community and local organizations that assist people with addictions by making them aware of new street drugs, what is happening in the court system, and how drugs, alcohol and mental health issues are contributing to crimes in the state.

Specialty courts have been increasing in number throughout the country for about 25 years, Douglas said. They have been in Nevada since 1992.

"We were one of the first five states to have a specialty court," he said.

According to the annual report of the Nevada Judiciary, “the goal of a specialty court is to break the cycle of addiction and to support participants in achieving total abstinence from drugs and/or alcohol.”

. . . "Please understand that the most expensive bed in the community that you live in is not in Las Vegas … it’s the jail, with fulltime correctional officers to wait on you and serve you food,” he said. "The worst place, but the most expensive place, let’s take that money and put it back into education and roads and parks and other things that benefit everybody."

Douglas said both liberals and conservatives have come together to bring specialty courts into existence.

"If you put someone in jail, it’s costing the taxpayers," he said. "If you attempt to rehabilitate them, and I’ll use the term to fix them, so they can help themselves, they can continue to contribute to the community and more importantly their family, and lastly they can take care of themselves so they’re not a burden."

If people in Nevada want to fix the problems in their communities they have to begin talking to each other to solve them, Douglas said.

“We can start. It’s like every long journey, it begins with the first step, and so that’s what we have to do, we have to take that step," he said. "We have to decide what we want to do, figure out how we’re going to do it and get good, smart people and let them do (it), and it’s thinking outside the box. We can’t do what we did five years ago, 10 years ago. We have a new problem. We have more things out there than we’ve ever had before – good and bad."
PA: Therapy dogs offer support at Erie County Veterans Court [http://bit.ly/2hTrGYI](http://bit.ly/2hTrGYI)

... For Rachel Sykes, a law clerk for Judge Robert A. Sambroak Jr., who oversees Veterans Court, the hallway conversations on the second floor of the Erie County Courthouse are a good sign.

"We always joke about how loud (the veterans) are in the hallway before court, but it's because they talk to each other," she said. Skyes thinks having familiar therapy dogs present helped initiate that camaraderie.

"They sort of became the staple and the vets really started opening up and communicating with each other," she said.

Veterans Court is aimed at dealing with the addiction and mental health issues that can lead veterans to commit crimes. Veterans who are approved for the treatment court get a chance to stay out of prison by participating in treatment programs and meeting other supervision requirements.

The veterans are assigned a volunteer mentor, also a veteran, who offers guidance and support throughout the process.

"It gives them the support that they need to know that they're not alone," Sykes said of the treatment court. "While acknowledging that they are involved in the criminal justice system, it gives them a way to better themselves."

And, for about a year, therapy dogs have attended the court's weekly sessions, where vets go before Sambroak to discuss their progress. Fourteen veterans are currently enrolled in Veterans Court, and three have graduated since the court began in January 2015.

Sambroak considers the therapy dogs a success.


Montgomery County, TN – Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) celebrated promoting their 100th participant on Tuesday, November 15th at the Montgomery County Courthouse. Family and friends of participants were present as well as local community and state leaders.

This was a great milestone for the VTC as well as the twelve individuals promoted. During this ceremony, Judge Kenneth Goble Jr. introduced the final Phase 5 promotion in lieu of graduation.

This change reiterates that VTC support is never ending and once you complete the program you are then in Phase 5, VTC for Life.


RACINE — The Veterans Treatment Court of the 2nd Judicial District is looking for volunteers to become veteran mentors.

There is no bond that is as strong as the one that exists among those who have fought for and serve their country. Volunteer veteran mentors come to the aid of their fellow veterans who are going through the Veterans Treatment Court with mentoring and peer support. Veteran mentors volunteer their time and energy to assist their fellow veterans with peer support and assist with finding resources such as housing, employment linkages, job training, education, transportation, disability compensation claims, discharge status and other linkages available at the local, state and federal level.
The duties, responsibilities and criteria of a volunteer mentor are:

- Must be a veteran of the U.S. military.
- Adhere to 2nd Judicial District Veterans Court Program policies and procedures.
- Be familiar with Veterans Affairs services and veterans community resources.
- Serve as an advocate and role model for a veteran in the Veterans Court Program.
- Attend training and court sessions, if and when needed.
- Interact respectfully and professionally with other veterans and staff.
- Must agree to serve for a period of one year or more.

For more information on volunteering to become a mentor, contact Brad Behling, Racine County veterans service officer, at Bradley.behling@racinecounty.com or 262-638-6667, or Louis Moore, Second Judicial District Court administrator, at Louis.Moore@wicourts.gov or 262-636-3133.

Additional resources from my blog
- LIST OF NATIONAL AND STATE LEGAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES FOR VETERANS http://bit.ly/19DC5zu

PTS/TBI/MST


Traumatic brain injury (TBI) research in the military has come a long way, even before the recent conflicts, said Dr. Louis French, deputy director of operations at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence.

French, a clinical psychologist, outlined military TBI history in a webinar hosted by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. Historically, medical advances often occur in times of war or conflict, when the military finds cutting-edge ways to save lives.


Army Col. (Dr.) Geoffrey Grammer, director of Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, presented Dr. Louis French with the Deborah L. Warden Lectureship Award last month for his outstanding contributions to the care and treatment of those with brain injuries.

French, a clinical psychologist, serves as the deputy director of operations at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence Directorate at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. He is principal investigator on seven major studies on traumatic brain injury (TBI) and neuropsychology and author of more than 50 peer-reviewed journal articles.

**VA Research: Telemedicine for PTSD no less effective than in-person therapy** [http://reut.rs/2hLczAE](http://reut.rs/2hLczAE)

(Reuters Health) - Veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who have difficulties making it to in-person therapy sessions may be able to get treatment that’s just as good by videoconference.

Researchers compared home-delivered prolonged exposure therapy - which helps patients confront memories and situations that trigger their symptoms - to the same treatment given in U.S. Veterans Affairs clinics, and found no difference in effectiveness.
“The best treatment for PTSD, with the most empirical support, can be delivered at no loss of effectiveness, directly into a veteran’s home, rather than having the veteran come into clinic,” lead study author Ron Acierno told Reuters Health by email.

“We can now save the travel time and bring the treatment right to them” if a veteran lives too far away to attend 12 to 15 weekly sessions, can’t take off work or feels stigmatized coming into the clinic, said Acierno, a psychologist and researcher with the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina.

For the study, published in Behaviour Research and Therapy, Acierno and colleagues recruited 132 veterans who had been diagnosed with PTSD, 127 of them men.


WASHINGTON, DC (CBS46) - Senators David Perdue and Gary Peters just introduced a new act that will possibly guarantee our veterans treatment.

The No Heroes Left Untreated Act was recently introduced and if passed, the bill will create a pilot program for innovative medical care for veterans.

"Our Veterans sacrificed everything to defend our freedoms and it is our responsibility to make sure they get the care they were promised," said Senator Perdue.

"If successful, this pilot program could set a new treatment standard for veterans dealing with traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder. It is our duty to support our veterans and improve their health care options, and I look forward to doing all I can to advance this pilot program."

Two medical centers within the VA network will have the pilot program available and will enroll up to 50 veterans in Magnetic Guided Resonance Therapy for a one-year period.

. . . "Magnetic e-Resonance Therapy technology has significant potential to successfully treat these conditions, and establish a pilot program with the Department of Veterans Affairs will allow our veterans to benefit from this new medical advancement.

Some organizations such as the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, Blue Star Families, and Vietnam Veterans of America expressed their interest in the No Heroes Left Untreated Act.

Over 400 veterans have reported a marked improvement in symptoms associated with PTSD, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, chronic pain, and opiate addiction.


Intimate-partner violence (IPV) is a critical public health concern, impacting approximately a third of women over the age of 15 worldwide. And as many as 75 percent of sampled women who have experienced intimate-partner violence have suffered multiple partner-related traumatic brain injuries (TBIs). This can have serious negative consequences—among them, deficits in memory, learning and cognitive flexibility—that can impair a woman’s daily functioning. Unfortunately, these TBIs too often go unrecognized by the women themselves and by their caregivers.

Eve Valera, director of the Cerebellar Psychiatric Research Laboratory at the MGH Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging and an assistant professor in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, wants to increase awareness of and knowledge about TBIs related to intimate-partner violence, and thus help provide appropriate care and treatment and ultimately improve health outcomes for the women. But to do this, she said, "we need to understand the neural mechanisms underlying TBIs sustained by women survivors of IPV, as well as to
understand how these TBIs and their underlying neural mechanisms relate to cognitive functioning.”

In a recent study Valera and Aaron Kucyi, then a postdoctoral fellow in the Center, set out to do just that. Using resting-state functional MRI in a group of 20 participants recruited largely from women’s shelters, they examined the relationship between the severity of TBIs suffered and the strength of functional connectivity in the relevant regions of the brain, and then linked this connectivity with measures of memory and learning. They reported their findings in the journal *Brain Imaging and Behavior* in October.

**CDC Research: What are the Signs and Symptoms of Concussion?** [http://bit.ly/2hLtV0h](http://bit.ly/2hLtV0h)

Most people with a concussion have a good recovery from symptoms experienced at the time of the injury. But for some people, symptoms can last for days, weeks, or longer.

In general, recovery may be slower among older adults, young children, and teens.

Those who have had a concussion in the past are also at risk of having another one and may find that it takes longer to recover if they have another concussion.

Symptoms of concussion usually fall into four categories: . . .

**From Afar, an Extra Set of Eyes to Spot Concussions in the N.H.L.** [http://nyti.ms/2hVnSpT](http://nyti.ms/2hVnSpT)

With his team tied with the Minnesota Wild at 1-1 in the second period on Dec. 4, Edmonton Oilers Coach Todd McLellan received an unexpected visit from the referee T. J. Luxmore that left him shaking his head.

Luxmore had received notice that Connor McDavid, the Oilers’ 19-year-old captain and the N.H.L.’s leading point scorer, was required to leave the game and be examined by a team physician.

The call to examine McDavid did not come from a trainer or off-ice official or from anyone inside the arena. It came from a concussion spotter watching the game 2,400 miles away in New York.

. . . In previous years, teams reserved the right to use their own spotters. The in-arena concussion spotters employed by the N.H.L. as off-ice officials were introduced last season. But this year the league installed the central spotters to monitor each game.

Stationed in the same New York war room as the N.H.L.’s Department of Player Safety, a group of one to four spotters — depending on the number of games that day — is responsible for seeking any players exhibiting concussion symptoms.

Working in conjunction with in-arena spotters, the New York-based central spotters, who are certified athletic trainers with training in the visible signs of concussions, communicate with team medical staff if a player requires an evaluation as outlined by the protocol.

“Our goal every year is to evaluate the system we have in place and, to the extent it can be improved, to make the changes necessary to improve it,” N.H.L. Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said in an email. “The changes we have made to our program and protocol from year to year, and there have been changes made every year, are a reflection of that process and philosophy.”

The central spotters have added a wrinkle to game management. Coaches can be told at a moment’s notice and without warning that a player must be removed without knowing when he will return.
Research: Traumatic Head Injuries Should Be Treated By Cooling The Patients
http://bit.ly/2hVo5ti
New research from Royal Holloway published today in Critical Care Medicine shows that lowering the body temperature of people who have suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as soon as possible after the trauma may significantly improve chances of survival in adults.

Therapeutic Hypothermia (TH) involves reducing the body temperature of a person to protect neurons from being killed off or damaged. Neurons are part of the central nervous system and carry signals to and from the brain.

Protecting neurons

Researchers from Royal Holloway, Ashford and St Peters Hospital, and Imperial College London looked at how successful Therapeutic Hypothermia is and found that adults subjected to medically induced hypothermia are significantly less likely to die or suffer serious cognitive impairment due to damaged neurons.

Wounded Warrior Project Helps Couples Heal During Rehabilitative Mental Health Journey https://yhoo.it/2hWWasZ

... To help a group of these military couples receive a new healing perspective, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) recently hosted Project Odyssey®, a multi-day mental health workshop.

The rehabilitative and therapeutic adventure – designed to help warriors cope with their invisible wounds – gave the couples a chance to connect with nature, each other, and WWP staff members, who informed them of various free programs and services to assist in their recovery processes.

Through the generosity of donors, these programs and resources are offered to injured veterans and their families free of charge.

MST: NAVY IS TRYING TO DEAL WITH ITS SEXUAL ASSAULT PROBLEM BY GIVING SAILORS A REPORTING APP http://bit.ly/2hLBMLp

In a bid to curb on-duty sexual assault between servicemen and women, the naval warfare branch of the U.S. armed forces is placing its bets on a smartphone app.

The U.S. Navy is investing $150,000 into a 6-month pilot project to test an app called LiveSafe, which was initially created to prevent on-campus gun violence. The project began roughly 30 days ago.

Co-founder Kristina Anderson, who was gravely injured during the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings that killed 32, thought the deadly attack could’ve been averted through crowdsourced intelligence. Working with developers, she created a platform where people could submit reports of suspicious activity four years ago.

Nearly 10 million people now use LiveSafe, the company says, reporting tips about theft, assault and more on college and corporate campuses across the U.S. Users can send in text, photographs, or video—anonously, or with their name and contact info, if they choose (the platform also doesn’t store any of that data).


This is a program evaluation of the Warrior Renew treatment protocol delivered in an outpatient therapy group for survivors of military sexual trauma (MST) at a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center.
The group was delivered via a manualized protocol with 12 weekly topics. It includes coping skills for affect management (e.g., triggers and anxiety) and addresses unique aspects of MST including anger/resentments because of injustice and lack of closure, betrayal, and self-blame.

It also addresses interpersonal factors such as relationship patterns and healthy interpersonal skills.

This evaluation was conducted as part of routine clinical care in a naturalistic setting. Forty-three female veterans started and 34 completed treatment (21% dropout rate). Of the 34 graduates, 32 opted to complete pre- and posttreatment assessments.

Findings revealed significant decreases in symptoms of anxiety, depression, posttraumatic negative thinking, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) all with large effect sizes.

In addition, 75% of the sample had a reliable clinical change at the 95% confidence interval.

These results are promising and further investigation is warranted to examine Warrior Renew to address the unique issues related to MST. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)


. . . Soldier On is a private nonprofit organization focused on ending homelessness among veterans. The group has been offering services to all veterans — including women — since 1994. But in more recent years, they have emphasized programming that caters specifically to the needs of female veterans.

For those veterans, the 16-bedroom house provides a place to heal from wounds inflicted not just by the nation’s enemies but, too often, by fellow soldiers. Surrounded by a caring staff and female veterans carrying similar scars, Wilson and others begin to find their way.

Additional resources from my blog

- [RESURRECTING LIVES FOUNDATION](http://bit.ly/1R9toOV)
- [EVENTS FOR VETERANS & VETERAN SERVICE PROVIDERS](http://bit.ly/1Gg1nOi)

**ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE NEWS IS POSTED IN THE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SECTION BELOW**

**COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**


Last week’s U.S. Senate-approved spending bill contained a provision that seeks to block student veterans from using their GI Bill benefits on career programs that won’t help them land a job.

The [Career Ready Student Veterans Act](http://bit.ly/2Hl:vXs), which was attached to the continuing resolution to fund the government through April 28, would prohibit institutions from receiving GI Bill benefits if their programs don’t meet the requirements needed for required licensing exams or certification in order to enter the chosen career field.

The **Veterans Treatment Courts: 2015 Survey Results** publication is available to view and download as a PDF. An Executive Summary of these results is also available to view and download as a PDF.

As part of the services provided by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) Adult Drug Court Technical Assistance Project, Justice Programs Office, a center at American University's School of Public Affairs (JPO at AU) conducted a survey to provide a snapshot of the range of policies, practices, and services in operating VTC programs.

JPO at AU hopes this information will provide the foundation for further data refinement and development, and the continued improvement of these important programs.

Kerwin Henderson, Program Associate at JPO at AU, discusses what Veterans Treatment Courts are, why JPO decided to conduct a survey, and what the main results from the survey are in a [video found on JPO's YouTube Channel](http://youtube.com).

**Operational and Planned Veterans Treatment Courts**

A list of all operational Veterans Treatment Courts is available to view and download as a PDF.

A list of all planned Veterans Treatment Courts is available to view and download as a PDF. *Those marked with an asterisk are unverified. If you are able to verify a program or believe that we are missing a program that is not listed, please email the Justice Programs Office at American University with this information at justice@american.edu.*


SAN DIEGO -- The Junior Seau Foundation pledged $250,000 Wednesday to support brain injury research and education at UC San Diego.

The gift was made in memory of NFL Hall of Famer and longtime San Diego Charger Junior Seau, who committed suicide in 2012 and was subsequently diagnosed with chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a neurodegenerative disease associated with repeated blows to the head.

The funds will be used to establish the Junior Seau Endowed Faculty Fellowship in Traumatic Brain Injury, as well as the Junior Seau Lectureship Series to inform the community and K-12 students about the causes and risks associated with traumatic brain injury, according to the university.

"As one of the world's premier institutions for brain research, UC San Diego shares the Junior Seau Foundation's strong commitment to studying the brain in an effort to find better ways of treating and preventing neurodegenerative diseases caused by traumatic brain injury," UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla said.

"We are so grateful to the foundation for its generosity in supporting scientific research and education in this area."

Boosting the impact of the Seau Foundation's gift, the donation will be matched dollar for dollar as part of the UC San Diego Chancellor's Endowed Chair and Faculty Fellowship Challenge, as well as by the university's Division of Biological Sciences and the Kavli Institute for Brain and Mind, bringing total funding to $1 million.

Depression ruins lives, destroys families and kills nearly a million people a year worldwide. Some say the problem is too intractable to address. Not so, say UCLA scientists, who have launched a historic effort to tackle and treat the world’s largest health problem.

. . . In October, UCLA announced the launch of the Depression Grand Challenge (DGC), by far the largest and most ambitious effort ever undertaken to understand and treat this devastating disease.

The DGC unites more than 100 UCLA faculty in 25 departments, from neuroscience and medicine to computer science and psychology. The DGC is led by Freimer, and its high-powered executive committee includes Craske; S. Lawrence Zipursky, distinguished professor of biological chemistry, director of the Neuroscience Theme in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and chair of UCLA Neuroscience, a committee that coordinates neuroscience research initiatives across the campus; and Jonathan Flint, a renowned depression researcher and psychiatric geneticist who has left Oxford University to join UCLA.

Chesapeake Barber College: Owner of Chesapeake Barber College Pleads Guilty to $4.5 Million GI Bill Fraud http://bit.ly/2hLChVQ

According to the statement of facts filed with the plea agreement, Grobes owns the College of Beauty and Barber Culture (CBBC), located in Chesapeake.

CBBC was purportedly a barber and cosmetology school approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide education and training to military veterans, including veterans who received tuition assistance under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Grobes represented to the VA that CBBC provided full-time schooling to hundreds of veteran students beginning in October 2011.

In reality, the school was a sham. Most veterans enrolled in CBBC courses received few, if any, hours of instruction from CBBC employees, and there were no tests, exams, or practical exercises given.

Rather, students were directed to simply sign in and out of the school each day so that Grobes could report to the VA that they were enrolled and attending.

In exchange, CBBC received Post-9/11 GI Bill tuition payments for each veteran from the VA.

Based on Grobes’ provision of false information to the VA concerning the number of hours of instruction and the manner and quality of the instruction provided to veteran students, CBBC received over $4.5 million in Post-9/11 GI Bill tuition payments between October 2011 and September 2016.

Grobes owns CBBC along with her husband, William Grobes, who pleaded guilty on November 30, to charges of conspiring to commit wire fraud and money laundering.

Grobes was charged by criminal information on December 2, and faces a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison when sentenced on March 10, 2017.

The maximum statutory sentence is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes, as the sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the court based on the advisory Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Delaware Technical Community College: Delaware Tech graduates give back to benefit veteran students - Dan Tidwell and Dave Tidwell establish $20,000 endowed scholarship
After completing their service with the U.S. Marines in the late '60s and returning to Delaware, twin brothers Dan Tidwell and Dave Tidwell used their GI Bill benefits to begin their college education at Delaware Technical Community College's Jack F. Owens Campus. Now they are paying tribute to other student veterans with a $20,000 donation to the college to establish the Tidwell Family Scholarship Endowment.

The scholarship endowment will support the greatest needs of student veterans who, upon completing their service, turn to education to prepare for new careers. The scholarship will be awarded to student veterans enrolled in degree, diploma or certificate programs at the Owens Campus in Georgetown beginning in the spring 2017 semester.


Intimate-partner violence (IPV) is a critical public health concern, impacting approximately a third of women over the age of 15 worldwide. And as many as 75 percent of sampled women who have experienced intimate-partner violence have suffered multiple partner-related traumatic brain injuries (TBIs). This can have serious negative consequences—among them, deficits in memory, learning and cognitive flexibility—that can impair a woman's daily functioning. Unfortunately, these TBIs too often go unrecognized by the women themselves and by their caregivers.

Eve Valera, director of the Cerebellar Psychiatric Research Laboratory at the MGH Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging and an assistant professor in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, wants to increase awareness of and knowledge about TBIs related to intimate-partner violence, and thus help provide appropriate care and treatment and ultimately improve health outcomes for the women. But to do this, she said, "we need to understand the neural mechanisms underlying TBIs sustained by women survivors of IPV, as well as to understand how these TBIs and their underlying neural mechanisms relate to cognitive functioning."

In a recent study Valera and Aaron Kucyi, then a postdoctoral fellow in the Center, set out to do just that. Using resting-state functional MRI in a group of 20 participants recruited largely from women's shelters, they examined the relationship between the severity of TBIs suffered and the strength of functional connectivity in the relevant regions of the brain, and then linked this connectivity with measures of memory and learning. They reported their findings in the journal Brain Imaging and Behavior in October.

Remarkably, given the intense focus on traumatic brain injury in recent years, this was the first study to explore such questions in this population. This is important, because the type and sequelae of TBIs that the women sustain—especially over time—may be unique, and they can even play a role in the women's struggles to leave a relationship.

When asked why no researchers had previously reported on TBI in women who have experienced intimate-partner violence, Valera pointed to the unique challenges in working with this population. Women may not be able to safely participate because they might still be in stressful or vulnerable situations, for example. At the same time, she noted the relatively “invisible” nature of the injuries, especially in these cases. Even as the dangers of TBI in athletes and military personnel are making headlines, the potential for such injuries as a result of intimate-partner violence goes largely unrecognized. This is a population that is often misunderstood and overlooked, she said. Worse still, we often see “victim blaming” in cases of intimate-partner violence, and this could play a role in diminishing the perceived importance of the research.

Our research group has been working on developing the next-generation wearable technology – integrating electronic tattoos on human skin for healthcare monitoring. This novel platform allows us to explore new sensors and actuators that are better than the commercially available ones.

We have developed sensors that can measure temperature, pressure, hydration, electrophysiology, etc. However, no one ever think about capturing sound from the body until our team developed this new technology. In fact, body sounds can be important indicator in healthcare monitoring or even disease diagnostic.

Our study shows that a thin, light-weight skin-mounted sensor is capable of picking up internal body sounds (cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, voice, etc.) via vibration propagating from the source through tissues to the skin. Not only the mechanical signal (i.e. vibration), our sensor platform could also capture electrical signals (i.e. electrophysiology) from the skin.

We demonstrate applications in cardiovascular diagnostic, thrombosis detection of ventricular assisted devices, and classification of human voice for machine controls. These and other possibilities suggest broad-ranging uses for soft, skin-integrated digital technologies that can capture human body acoustics.


Student Veteran Resource Center unveiled at State University College of Technology at Delhi last week will offer support and space for studying and socialization, according to officials.

The center, located inside the college’s Farnsworth Hall, was funded by a $10,000 grant from The Home Depot Foundation and The Student Veterans of America, officials said. The space was celebrated by students and staff during a ribbon-cutting Tuesday.

. . . The two-room center has a refrigerator, microwave, a table and chairs, couches, a television, computers and a printer, according to Matt LaLonde, coordinator of veteran affairs at SUNY Delhi.

The college’s Student Veteran Association applied for the Home Depot grant last year, LaLonde said. The center is particularly special because it was built by some of the college’s construction majors, according to Brinkerhoff.


JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - Veterans in our area are at the University of North Florida for employment opportunities at a job fair.

Hiring Our Heroes is striving to help put hundreds of veterans to work. The group is helping put on a job fair at the Albert W. University Center at UNF and giving veterans the resources they need for life after the military.

Organizers told Action News Jax that there are 57 different employers offering jobs to veterans. There is a wide range of different employment opportunities, including opportunities with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

The Jacksonville area is home to more veterans than any other area in the state.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in Florida for veterans is 5.4 percent, which is higher than the state average of 4.8 percent. That number includes everyone in the work force.

Sleep disturbance is one of the most common issues individuals with PTSD face. Specifically, insomnia and nightmares plague the vast majority of those struggling with the disorder.

Although it is assumed to be high, relatively little is known about the actual prevalence of sleep disturbances in veterans with PTSD. Any clinician who treats veterans with PTSD will likely tell you that most, if not all, of their patients suffer from sleep problems to some degree.

Relatively, it is assumed that sleep disturbances improve with evidence-based PTSD treatments. However, to what degree is unclear.

In an effort to gain better clarity on these issues, researchers from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and colleagues from several other prestigious academic institutions, asked these questions to over 100 active-duty service members. Their findings were published in the November issue of *Psychological Trauma* and were shocking.

Not surprisingly, insomnia was the most frequently reported PTSD symptom prior to treatment. A whopping 92 percent acknowledged some degree of difficulty falling or staying asleep. Although not as high as insomnia, 69 percent of the same group reported suffering from nightmares.

The surprising, and somewhat disheartening news, is that approximately three-fourths of service members still reported insomnia as a problem after PTSD treatment. And around half still struggled with nightmares.

University of Texas Research: Brain Abnormalities Linked To Head Impacts After Just One Season Of High School Football (Forbes) [http://bit.ly/2hB05LT](http://bit.ly/2hB05LT)

Based on a new study to be presented today at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), specialized MRI scans performed on high school football players--after just one season--revealed changes in brain tissue which correlated with exposure to head impacts.

"It's important to understand the potential changes occurring in the brain related to youth contact sports," said Elizabeth Moody Davenport, Ph.D., a postdoctoral researcher at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas, who led this analysis.

"We know that some professional football players suffer from a serious condition called chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE. We are attempting to find out when and how that process starts, so that we can keep sports a healthy activity for millions of children and adolescents."

The study evaluated 24 players from a North Carolina high school football team who wore a helmet equipped with the [Head Impact Telemetry System](http://bit.ly/2hB05LT) (HITS) during all practices and games. The specially designed helmets were internally equipped with six specialized sensors known as accelerometers that measure the magnitude, location and direction of a hit. A computer then analyzed uploaded data from the helmets.

"We saw changes in these young players' brains on both structural and functional imaging after a single season of football," said Davenport.


Veterans attending the University of Tulsa will soon have a place to hang out, study and get any help they might need.
Crews are putting the finishing touches on the TU Student Veterans Center. The student veterans say it's so much more than just a building; it's a place that will make them feel safe and included.

. . . This fall, the TU Student Veterans Association got the news they'd won a grant from Home Depot to upgrade their Veterans Resource Center - $9,000 for brand-new appliances and materials like paint and flooring.

They've been working non-stop for the past two months with free help from Team Depot. "A lot of projects we do are for older veterans, and this is one of the first ones we've done with younger veterans in mind, so it's kind of special," said Team Depot captain, Brian Hardesty.

GENERAL NEWS

PsychArmor Training helps military caregivers - FREE Military Caregivers & Family Courses (Dole Foundation Tweet) [http://bit.ly/2hLuMOm](http://bit.ly/2hLuMOm)

At PsychArmor, we recognize that it is not just the service member who serves our country, it is also their families.

That is why we partnered with leading organizations, such as the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to create a series of free, self-paced courses.

Gain support in your role as a military family member or caregiver. Gain exposure to the latest resources and programs. Learn from nationally-recognized subject matter experts.

Start learning today. All Caregiver & Family courses are FREE thanks to our generous sponsor USAA.


The annual military lifestyle survey says financial issues and strains on family life remain the major concerns of service members.

Financial issues remain the top priority for military members and their families, but high operational tempo, increased time away from home and the impact on families have grown into key concerns — highlighting the changing nature of the U.S. military and the fight it faces, according to a survey released Wednesday.

The Blue Star Families Annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey involved 8,390 active duty service members, family members and veterans. It found that while military pay, benefits and retirement continue to rank as the top stressors, family stability, time away from home and the impact on children have newly emerged as key issues.

The findings demonstrate far more than a shift of individual concerns, said Kathy Roth-Douquet, CEO and founder of Blue Star Families. The group is named after the custom of military families hanging a service flag in a window with a blue star for each member who was serving.

The findings of the survey reflect an unsustainable demand on service members who are being called to serve in protracted, low level conflicts around the globe and on the modern military families suffering under an outdated military structure that doesn’t account for their needs, she said.

“It’s a very taxing structure on a very small force that’s married and needs two incomes and can’t do it,” Roth-Douquet said.

The Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health (JMVFH) is the official, peer-reviewed, scholarly journal of the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR).

The Journal aims to maximize the mental, physical and social health and well-being of military personnel, Veterans and their families by publishing world class research to a broad international and multidisciplinary readership of researchers, health practitioners, administrators, and policy makers.

- Do DSM-5 changes to PTSD symptom cluster criteria alter the frequency of probable PTSD when screening treatment-seeking Canadian Forces members and Veterans?
- How military life affects us all: the mental health of military children
- Much more . . .

NIH Research: Veterans endure higher pain severity than nonveterans

American veterans experience higher prevalence of pain and more severe pain than nonveterans, with young and middle-aged veterans suffering the most, according to a new analysis of the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) by the lead epidemiologist at the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) at the National Institutes of Health.

This survey provides the first national estimate of severe pain associated with painful health conditions in veterans and nonveterans and underscores the importance of sustaining efforts to monitor and manage pain among veterans.

SAMHSA: Update: Help Change the Direction of Mental Health (New PSA’s)
http://bit.ly/2hBefg4

Mental health does not discriminate, whether an adolescent, teen, or young adult. Our youth are involved within communities where they initiate growth, lead and contribute. However, in many cases, some youth face additional challenges which can take a toll on their well-being. Emotional pain can be hard to spot—and even harder to talk about.

Today’s youth can sometimes feel fear of embarrassment for seeking or receiving behavioral health treatment services. Our adolescents, teens, and young adults may be struggling and not recognize the signs, or they may not feel comfortable asking for help.

But the fact is, one in five people in the U.S. has a mental health condition—this affects us all. There is no health without mental health, so it’s important that we learn the five signs of emotional distress and how to help. An estimated 1.2 million youths aged 12 to 17 in 2015 who had a major depressive episode received treatment for depression.

Recognizing and treating emotional distress among youth is critically important not only to our nation’s health, but also to our nation’s youth and future generation. Together, we can change the conversation on mental health in America and help our youth get the treatment and support they need to succeed at home, at school, and in the community.

SAMHSA, along with its partner Give an Hour, is proud to release a new collection of public service announcements (PSAs) for the Campaign to Change Direction. These PSAs aim to change the culture of mental health in America by raising awareness about the signs of emotional distress and addressing common barriers to understanding these conditions.

SAMHSA has released an online, interactive, shared decisionmaking tool for people with, or seeking recovery from, opioid use disorder. The Decisions in Recovery web-based tool and its accompanying handbook are designed to help people learn about treatment options for opioid use disorder so they can work with their health care providers in deciding what might work best for them.

Decisions in Recovery is primarily designed for individuals with, or seeking recovery from, opioid use disorder and their service providers. It can also be used by health officials, policymakers, and other members of the community involved in the problem of opioid use disorder.

New SAMHDA Data Available http://bit.ly/2hLn9T

These new files include the following data sets:

- **2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Public-Use Files**: A major source of statistical information on the use of illicit drugs, alcohol, and tobacco and on mental health issues among members of the U.S. civilian, noninstitutionalized population aged 12 or older.

- **2012 National Mental Health Services Survey (N-MHSS)**: Data on mental health treatment facilities in the United States and its jurisdictions.

- **2013 and 2014 Treatment Episode Data Sets for Admissions (TEDS-A)**: Information on the demographic and substance abuse characteristics of individuals aged 12 or older admitted to treatment for abuse of alcohol and/or drugs in facilities that reported to individual state administrative data systems.

- **2012 and 2013 Treatment Episode Data Sets for Discharges (TEDS-D)**: Information on treatment completion, length of stay in treatment, and demographic and substance abuse characteristics of individuals discharged from alcohol or drug treatment in facilities that reported to individual state administrative data systems.

- **2014 National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (NSSATS)**: Data on the location, characteristics, and use of alcohol and drug abuse treatment facilities and services throughout the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. jurisdictions.


A doctor’s work isn’t all done in examination rooms. Many specialists spend lots of time alone with the lights out, examining photographs that reveal their patients’ internal workings.

That might soon change. A paper by Google published in the Journal of the American Medical Association details an algorithm that can detect when someone has developed blindness as a result of diabetes, trained and tested by board-certified ophthalmologists. It shows algorithms can, at least in the case of this particular affliction, make a diagnosis with an accuracy on-par with medical professionals.

A key difference between this research and previous papers on medical imaging by large tech companies is its publication and defense by a respected medical journal like JAMA. Concurrent with Google’s paper, JAMA also published an article translating the finding for medical professionals and urging the community that this is a good thing—algorithms can let doctors spend more time with patients, rather than reading scans.


... The story fit the grim emerging genre of the opioid epidemic: addicted caregivers who imperil their young children, their very public failings instantly held up for excoriation on social media.
Tamara and Jacob had abruptly been added to a national tableau, fused in the popular imagination with the Ohio couple slowly turning blue in their SUV while a 4-year-old watched from his car seat; the Milwaukee pair revived with Narcan in front of the woman's 2-year-old son; the woman who overdosed in the toy aisle of a Lawrence dollar store, while her toddler wailed and pulled at her arm.

Much less visible are the lives behind the headlines, especially of those who are trying to help the broken get whole again, and to bring life and hope to the children.

Additional resources from my blog
- ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS http://bit.ly/1Gg21LH
- EVENTS FOR VETERANS & VETERANS SERVICE PROVIDERS http://bit.ly/1Gq1nOj
- NEWSLETTERS & BLOG FOR VETERANS http://bit.ly/1GQzKjf

"VETERANS IN JUSTICE"
LinkedIn Professional Group (VIJ)

Please join us on LinkedIn or Facebook for networking and discussions on the issues regarding veterans in the criminal justice system. This group's mission is to connect professionals and advocates who work with and for justice-involved veterans and to share ideas and practices for assisting those veterans -- from the conditions that lead to justice involvement, through initial police contact, arrest, criminal case processing, conviction, sentencing, incarceration, and release. Access our group at http://linkd.in/1947vfS Facebook: www.facebook.com/veteransinjustice

Join The National Discussion - 1,336 Professionals in VIJ Group

Active Topics
- Tips for discussing one's conviction record in a way that makes a positive impression on employers
- NYC Highlights AmericaServes
- Interview with Hector Barajas
- Interview with Penny Coleman
- Interview with Jimmie Lee Coulthard
- VA Not Responding to Suicide Calls from Vets
- More . . .

LINKEDIN GROUPS

Military and Veteran Benefit Forum
Veteran Mentor Network http://linkd.in/1fOlg0t 28,933 members
Institute for Veteran Cultural Studies http://linkd.in/1cz3q41
NAMI http://linkd.in/1cz3Gg7
BI-IFEA (Brain injury-Ideas for Education & Advocacy) http://linkd.in/1cz4e5V
Military-Civilian: Hot Jobs and Careers for Veterans and Their Families http://linkd.in/1c59DkM
VETERANS IN JUSTICE GROUP http://linkd.in/12APdMS
Cuyahoga County Ohio Veterans and Supporters (Bryan A. McGown "Gunny") http://linkd.in/Zxwx1f
Veteran Employment Representatives http://linkd.in/ZxxwUcc
MILITARY MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS POST DEPLOYMENT FOR PROVIDERS, COMBAT VETERANS & THEIR FAMILIES http://bit.ly/1RVPLF1
Midwest Military Outreach, Inc. http://linkd.in/1eiMTkJ
Military Veteran Job Fairs & Hiring Conferences http://linkd.in/Zxx4jS
Wounded Warrior Resources http://linkd.in/17TMN0J
The Value of a Veteran http://linkd.in/15yD7H4
MILITARY MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS POST DEPLOYMENT FOR PROVIDERS, COMBAT VETERANS & THEIR FAMILIES http://linkd.in/1fQOL4A

(Please email us other groups that you find and think would be informative and useful for our audience)
VETERANS IN THE COURTS INITIATIVE BLOG
estrattonconsulting.wordpress.com

To focus this newsletter on veterans-related criminal justice and mental illness issues and to shorten it to a more manageable size, we have moved our tables & lists of reference materials and other longer term information to retired Justice Stratton’s blog. Please follow the links below for that information.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Editor's Note: Thank you to all of the individuals and organizations that provide articles for these news clips every week. I would especially like to thank and urge you to follow:

- **USMC 1stLt Andrew T. Bolla**, PIO at the USMC Wounded Warrior Regiment, publisher of WWR In the News, DoD Morning News of Note
- **Lily Casura**, journalist, author and founder of Healing Combat Trauma - the award-winning, first website to address the issue of combat veterans and PTSD (established February 2006)
- **U.S. Army Colonel (Ret.) Wayne Gatewood**, of Quality Support Inc. Wayne disseminates a daily Veterans News e-mail to an international audience
- **Dr. Ingrid Herrera-Yee**, Project Manager, Military Spouse Mental Health Pipeline, National Military Family Association. Dr. Herrera-Yee is currently a Board Member for the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), Military Spouses of Strength, Military Mental Health Project and the National Guard Suicide and Resiliency Council among others. She has also been a special contributor to NBC News, Military Times, Air Force Times, Military Spouse Magazine and BuzzFeed. She spends her free time mentoring spouses through eMentor and Joining Forces. Dr. Herrera-Yee received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and was a Clinical Fellow at Harvard University.
- **U.S. Army Colonel (Ret.) James Hutton**, Director of Media Relations at the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **Justice for Vets**, Justice For Vets is a professional services division of the National Association of Drug Court professionals, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Alexandria, VA. Justice for Vets believes that no veteran or military service member should suffer from gaps in service, or the judicial system when they return to their communities. As the stewards of the Veterans Treatment Court movement
- **Judge Ginger Lerner-Wren**, Pioneer, America’s first mental health court dedicated to the decriminalization of people with mental illness
- **Mary Ellen Salzano**, founder facilitator of the CA Statewide Collaborative for our Military and Families
- **Patrick W. Welch, PhD**, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret), Veterans Advocate & Educator, Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court - Senior Mentor

HOW TO JOIN OUR NEWSLETTER

There are three ways to join my newsletter:

- Join my Veterans In The Courts Initiative Google Group at http://bit.ly/1DZ3esD or,
- Subscribe to my Veterans In The Courts Initiative Blog for immediate news and for my weekly newsletter at http://bit.ly/1DP1TCi or,
- Please contact my editor Pete Miller at cruzzen@gmail.com and request to be added.

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