



TIM KEESLING, DIRECTOR, VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON OPIOIDS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

APRIL 17, 2018

TVC VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

In accordance with HB 19 (83rd Legislature, 2013), the Texas Veterans Commission and the Health and Human Services Commission coordinate to administer the Mental Health Program for Veterans. Within the Texas Veterans Commission, this program is known as the Veterans Mental Health Program (VMHP). VMHP's mission is to train and provide technical assistance to Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) peers, licensed mental health providers and mental health organizations, community- and faith-based organizations, and state agencies on the impacts of military-related trauma and the individuals who have been military trauma-affected (MTA).

The VMHP concentrates its efforts on providing training and technical assistance to:

- Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) based Military Veteran Peer Network (MVPN Peer Service Coordinators and their trained Peers
- Licensed mental health professionals
- Community and Faith-based organizations
- Women veterans and rural veterans; and
- The criminal justice system agencies and organizations engaged with justice involved veterans

The training and technical assistance the VMHP provides includes:

- Certification, recertification, continuing education, and advance peer trainings for MVPN Peer Service Coordinators and their volunteer Peers
- Military Cultural Competency training for licensed mental health professionals
- Military Cultural Competency training for community and faith-based organizations
- Outreach activities to assist women veterans and rural veterans access mental health services
- Coordination of services for justice involved veterans; and
- A communication and learning platform for MVPN Peers and licensed mental health professionals

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/index.html>

² Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/index.html>

³ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/sud/VADoDSUDCPGRevised22216.pdf>

⁴ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/spot121-homeless-veterans-2014.pdf>

⁵ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=3997>

⁶ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.data.va.gov/story/departments-veterans-affairs-opioid-prescribing-data>

VMHP BY THE NUMBERS (FY 2017):

- **55** training and **140** visits to **37** local Military Veteran Peer Networks (MVPN)
- **3,836** service members, veterans and families educated on military -related trauma
- **4728** referrals for community-based services, including mental health referrals
- **667** new peers registered and **3,536** total peers registered to the VMHP platform
- **119** licensed mental health providers trained by VMHP
- **66** new mental health professionals and **156** total registered providers on the VMHP platform
- **11** trainings and **9** technical assistance visits for community-based collaborations
- **236** community or faith-based organizations reached out to VMHP for information on how to better serve Veterans
- **200** referrals to TexVet for listing in its registry.
- **330** law enforcement trained on how to de-escalate trauma-affected veterans
- **39** new veteran admissions into the Veteran Treatment Dorm
- **80** parole officers and **30** reentry personnel in military related traumas and cultural competency

NATIONAL OPIOID AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER (SUD) STATISTICS:

- In 2016, more than 42,000 people died from opioid use¹
- Prescription opioid use accounts for 40% of all opioid-related overdose deaths²
- The Veterans Administration finds co-occurring Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is common among veterans suffering the effects of PTSD³
 - Approximately 55-75% of new VA patients from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who have been diagnosed with SUD also have a diagnosis of PTSD³
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports 21% of veterans suffering SUD are homeless⁴
- The VA is the first hospital system in the nation to release its opioid prescription rates⁵
 - In 2012, the Veterans Administration launched its Opioid Safety Initiative, resulting in an overall 41 percent reduction in opioid prescription rates
 - Since 2012, 99% of all VA facilities reduced their opioid prescription rates
 - Opioid prescription rate reductions among VA facilities in Texas from 2012 to 2017⁶:
 - El Paso VA Clinic – 66%
 - Amarillo VA Hospital – 37%
 - Big Spring VA Hospital – 52%
 - Dallas VA Hospital – 41%
 - Temple VA Hospital – 55%
 - Houston VA Hospital – 54%
 - San Antonio VA Hospital – 52%
 - Harlingen VA Clinic – 42%

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/index.html>

² Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/index.html>

³ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/sud/VADoDSUDCPGRevised22216.pdf>

⁴ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/spot121-homeless-veterans-2014.pdf>

⁵ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=3997>

⁶ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.data.va.gov/story/departments-veterans-affairs-opioid-prescribing-data>