

SERVING TOGETHER:

TROOPS, VETERANS AND FAMILY CARE PROJECT

This is an initiative of Mental Health Association of Montgomery County (MHA), in collaboration with Easter Seals of the Greater Washington - Baltimore Region and other valued community partners.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1. Why do we need this project?** Service members involved in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan face longer and more numerous deployments than in previous conflicts. Multiple deployments compound health, mental health, financial and other challenges, resulting in some of these startling national trends:
 - ◆ As of June 2010, the jobless rate for veterans who served at any time since September 2001 was 11.5%, higher than the national rate. This number is expected to grow as more service members return from Iraq and Afghanistan.
 - ◆ From 2005 to 2009, 1,100 service members committed suicide, an average of 1 suicide every 36 hours.
 - ◆ Service members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, including female veterans with their children, are becoming homeless at a faster rate than was seen with Vietnam era veterans.
 - ◆ Of the nearly 23 million veterans in the U.S., just over 8 million are enrolled in the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system.
 - ◆ Recent studies suggest that 50% of caregivers provide care to a wounded warrior 40 hours a week or more, jeopardizing their own employment and insurance coverage. Only certain categories of caregivers are covered under military or veteran benefits.
- 2. Doesn't the government provide assistance for troops, veterans and their families?** Yes they do, but they cannot do it all. This project seeks to support service members and their families before, during and after the deployment cycle, as well as when they leave the military and reintegrate back into the community. Recent reports suggest that since September 11, 2001, over 9,000 nonprofits have been created to address military issues. Serving Together seeks to coordinate our local county efforts and align them with resources at the state, regional and national level to better serve military families.
- 3. Who will Serving Together help?** Serving Together focuses on active-duty service members, those serving with the National Guard and Reserve, the estimated 500 wounded warriors receiving care at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) in Bethesda, and their families. Additionally, service members transitioning out of the military and reintegrating back into civilian life and veterans already separated from the military who are living in this community will also be served by this initiative. The project will launch in Montgomery County where there are an estimated 50,000 veterans, 4,000 of whom serve or have served in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more than 50% of whom are drawn from the National Guard and Reserves. Many of these men and women face significant and complex challenges relating to reintegration into the community, such as the need for housing, health care, counseling and employment services.
- 4. Is this project only for troops and veterans in Montgomery County Maryland? What if I live in other parts of Maryland, Washington DC or Virginia?** Our main focus for the first years of this initiative will be on Montgomery County. The regional and national resources identified will be available online and to other communities. Programs, procedures and policies developed and implemented locally will also be shared with other communities in the region.



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FAQ's Continued:

5. **If I'm a member of the military or a veteran with questions about my health/mental health, housing, employment or other social services who do I call?** In the short term, troops, veterans and family members in need of information about services and resources can call the Military Helpline at (301) 738-7176. In the event of an emergency and/or after hours the Montgomery County Hotline can be reached at (301) 424-2255. Long-term, the project seeks to create a website and host a peer-navigation team. Details will be shared once finalized.
6. **How many people will you ultimately serve through this project?** The project expects that more than 200 people will work directly with the peer navigator and that thousands of people will use the online resources. In addition, over 400 local community nonprofits and other stakeholders will have increased their understanding of the unique needs of service members and their families and become part of the newly coordinated system. Lastly, at least 250 mental health providers will be trained to address the unique needs of the military and a minimum of 200 military family members will be trained to identify early signs of mental health related red flags and know how to help.
7. **How will the opening of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) in Bethesda affect this project?** WRNMMC is the country's premier military facility for treatment of traumatic brain injury, rehabilitation and post traumatic stress disorder. The project will serve patients, families and staff at the "new" Walter Reed. The federal Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) has brought not only this new facility to Montgomery County, but it has also opened renewed dialog about how our county can be a welcoming community for all military members and their families.
8. **How is this project funded?** Serving Together is made possible by a four-year \$500,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – the nation's largest funder dedicated to improving health and health care for all Americans. Local foundations, donors and businesses are matching these funds, including Clark Charitable Foundation, Inc., the Community Foundation for Montgomery County, the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, , Consumer Health Foundation, Healthcare Initiative Foundation, HSC Foundation, the Mead Family, Montgomery County, and the Sanford and Doris Slavin Foundation.
9. **Do you provide financial support?** The project currently does not provide financial assistance to people, however it will make referrals to appropriate community/military serving organizations that provide support and/or entitlements.
10. **Other than the Mental Health Association of Montgomery County, what other organizations are involved?** The project has partnered with Easter Seals Greater Washington-Baltimore Region to implement the initiative and a broad set of community stakeholders representing the military and public sector as well as business, education, faith, and nonprofit communities. Special thanks to our early partners: Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Maryland National Guard Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Walter Reed Soldier and Family Assistance Center, Family Services, Inc., Yellow Ribbon Fund, Montgomery College, Interfaith Works, Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless, Bethesda Cares, Primary Care Coalition and Nonprofit Montgomery.
11. **How can I get involved in Serving Together?** If you are an employer, community service provider, educator or have an interest in volunteering, please call Jessica McNurlen at (301) 424-0656, ext. 556 or email at jmcnurlen@mhamc.org. If you would like to financially support the project, please call Stefanie Moreno at (301) 424-0656, ext. 508.