



Association of VA Psychologist Leaders

Essential Healthcare for Veterans: Psychologists Improve Lives

POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER: “TO CARE FOR HIM WHO SHALL HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE”

The treatment of war-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a major priority of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The care of veterans suffering psychological wounds in military service to America is unsurpassed in importance. It is at the heart of the VA’s mandate: “to care for him who shall have borne the battle”.

- In FY2001 there were more than 155,000 veterans service-connected for PTSD, not to mention the thousands who were not service-connected.
- Sixty percent of veterans service-connected for PTSD used VA mental health services in FY2001.
- In contrast, about ten percent of veterans service-connected for other psychiatric disorders used VA mental health services in 2001.

Psychologists have been leaders in the VA’s commitment to serve those with PTSD:

- Ψ In the *assessment* of PTSD, VA psychologists have been prominent in developing some of the most widely respected and used diagnostic instruments in the field. The use of such instruments has had a tremendous impact on the care of veterans and others and has been a vital ingredient in Compensation and Pension evaluations.
- Ψ In the *treatment* of PTSD, VA psychologists currently exercise leadership roles in more than half of the 147 specialized PTSD treatment programs within the VA.
- Ψ In PTSD *research*, VA psychologists have made major contributions to the enormously growing body of knowledge of PTSD. The importance of such research is, of course, only underscored in the events of 9/11.
- Ψ VA psychologists have been active participants in the leadership efforts of the VA’s National Center for PTSD.

Psychologists are trained in therapeutic, assessment, and research techniques that are beneficial for veterans suffering from PTSD. Psychologists have been at the forefront of many PTSD-related services in the VA and it will be critical to continue maximizing psychologists’ roles in this area.