



## Mental health needs of returning soldiers of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)

### Current Situation

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO):

- Approximately **40%** of the OIF/OEF soldiers are National Guard and Reservists
- **Between September 2001 and October 2007, nearly 620,000** National Guard and Reserve **service members have been activated** in support of the Global War on Terrorism.
- When services abroad are complete, Reservists and members of the National Guard return to their families and home communities, rather than an active military base. These reunited families often face many readjustment issues, in addition to any mental health problems that may be related to the absent spouse or PTSD related problems.

### Veterans Mental Health

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According to a study by the Rand Corporation in April 2008:

- **Nearly 20%, or 300,000 service members**, who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan **report symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or major depression.**
- **Only 54%** of those 300,000 service members with PTSD or major depression **sought help over the last year.**
- The major reason cited for not seeking mental health treatment was **fear of it causing damage to their career**

Despite the wonderful care these veterans may receive from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, these facilities are not located in every area of the state and may not offer mental health treatment, making it difficult for some veterans and their families to access treatment.

## What is Being Done

### Legislation

- Legislation sponsored by Senators Pete Domenici (R-NM), and Barack Obama (D-IL), [S. 38, The Veterans Mental Health Outreach and Access Act of 2007](#). If this legislation passes, it will increase opportunities for Community Mental Health Centers to partner with the VA to provide mental health services to returning soldiers.
- During the 2007 Legislative Session, Senator John Morse and Representative Joe Rice successfully passed [SB07-146](#). This legislation created a three-year pilot project to provide mental health services to the family members of soldiers.

### Community Mental Health Centers

- Families and soldiers are already seeking treatment from Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) around the state, but these Centers do not have the necessary funding to meet this demand.

## Colorado Civilians for Veterans Fund

- Provides free, confidential mental health and substance abuse treatment to OIF / OEF veterans and their families.
- Program is an innovative and collaborative effort bringing together Colorado's Community Mental Health Centers, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and private donors
- Currently offering services in three rural areas of Colorado with significant military populations:
  - 1) San Luis Valley
  - 2) Gunnison/Montrose region
  - 3) Southeastern areas covering the Arkansas Valley
- Civilians for Veterans Fund is working to establish itself in its current regions and, with additional funding, expand to realize its goals of providing quality and easily accessible mental health and substance abuse services to Colorado's returning soldiers and their families.
- **INVOLVE** yourself and actively promote the *Civilians for Veterans Fund*
  - See attached Colorado Behavioral Health Update for more details.

*For more information, contact Doyle Forrestal, Director of Public Policy for the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council at [dforrestal@cbhc.org](mailto:dforrestal@cbhc.org)*

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