

FACT SHEET

PTSD & END-OF-LIFE CARE FOR MAINE VETERANS

The Maine Hospice-Veteran Partnership, in affiliation with the Maine Hospice Council, provides educational opportunities for hospice staff to increase their understanding of PTSD.

What should a hospice team understand about a veteran admitted to hospice?

All human beings share some common experiences as death approaches. However, veterans may have even more complex needs, especially combat soldiers and Prisoners of War who have faced the grim realities of death in a very dramatic way. Veterans may also be coping with unresolved grief or survivor guilt having witnessed traumatic deaths and injuries that may color how they come to terms with their own death. The following questions may help understand a veteran's unique needs:

- 1) Did you see combat?
- 2) Is there anything about your military service that still bothers you?

Nearly one of every four deaths in Maine is that of a veteran. Many veterans are not covered by VA benefits but rather under Medicare, MaineCare or other health plans. If it is not known whether an individual is a veteran, ask "Are you a veteran?" during the assessment visit. Then continue with the above two questions.

What should a hospice team understand about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

A hospice may consider using these resources when caring for a hospice patient with PTSD symptoms:

- Several screening tools can be used to help assess PTSD (see link below for one example). Please note that such tools may not be useful in the case of veterans who are confused or unable to report on their own emotional state.
- The National Center for PTSD has a website with many resources regarding assessment, patient and family education, and treatment: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov>
- According to a VA clinician with expertise in treating PTSD, veterans who receive a terminal diagnosis often want to:
 - Make sure their story has been heard.
 - Put the traumatic events into some sort of perspective in their lives.
 - Deal with the effects that PTSD has had on their lives, such as mending relationships, giving and accepting closeness and affection, and getting affairs in order.
- Veterans who are enrolled in the VA Health Care System may be referred to their primary care provider for assessment and possible referral for PTSD mental health services. Eligible but un-enrolled veterans who remain ambulatory and are interested in outpatient mental health services may enroll at any VA Medical Center and request needed services. Veterans may also access supportive services at community Vet Centers (see contact numbers below).
- Hospice providers may contact VA PTSD clinics, or community Vet Centers, for information and consultation. Such consultation may be particularly helpful in the case of veterans who are homebound or otherwise too ill to access outpatient services.

The Primary Care PTSD Screen (PC-PTSD):

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/screens/pc-ptsd.asp>

PTSD Services, Contact Numbers

- For enrolled veterans:

Togus VAMC Main Line: (207) 623-8411

PTSD Clinical Treatment Team Leader:

- Jerold Hambright, PhD Ext. 5135

Team Members:

- Joe Andrews, PTSD RN, Ext. 5510
- Joshua Caron, PhD, Clinical Neuropsychologist, Ext. 5405

OIF/OEF/OND* (Returning Veterans) Program Manager:

- Joleen Lilley, Ext. 3078

OIF/OEF/OND Social Work Case Manager

- Nathan Platt, Ext. 5344

**OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom; OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom; OND – Operation New Dawn. The VA publishes regular reports on OIF/OEF/OND Returning Veterans here:*

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/epidemiology/reports/oefoifond/>

- If not enrolled:

Bangor Vet Center
352 Harlow Street
Bangor, ME
(207) 947-3391

Portland Vet Center
475 Stevens Avenue
Portland, ME
(207) 780-3584

Lewiston Vet Center
29 Westminster Street
Lewiston, ME
(207) 783-0068

Caribou Vet Center
456 York Street
Caribou, ME
(207) 496-3900

Sanford Vet Center
628 Main Street
Springvale, ME
(207) 490-1513

Note: Maine Vet Centers provide readjustment Counseling to combat veterans as well as provide Military Sexual Trauma counseling and bereavement counseling services.

Resources

Maine State Veterans Homes: for information

<http://www.maineveteranshomes.org>

Augusta (207)-622-2454

Bangor (207)-942-2333

Caribou (207) 498-6074

Machias (207) 255-0162

Scarborough (207) 883-7184

South Paris (207) 743-6300

National Hospice & Palliative Care for sample outreach materials including certificate templates for honoring Veterans

<http://www.wehonorveterans.org>

National Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Center for information

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov>

State of Maine Veteran Service Offices: Staff is able to provide information and assistance with benefits available through state, federal and local municipalities. A list of field service offices is available at

www.maine.gov/dvem/bvs/

VA Benefits

VA Hotline, Health Benefits: 800-827-1000

VA Maine Hospice & Palliative Care

Palliative Care Coordinator: Deb O'Neill, RN (207) 623-8411 x5663

Palliative Care Social Worker: Lisa Munzing, LCSW, (207) 623-8411 x5592

Palliative Care Medical Director: Jim Schneid, MD, (207) 623-8411 x5572
