

## AT THE FOREFRONT



As the war in Afghanistan comes to an end, the U.S. Army and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are working on solutions to preserve the mental health of the Soldiers who are returning home. After 12 years of conflict, it's not just service members who will face behavioral health challenges—their family members might encounter them as well. In response to this concern, Army Medicine has embedded behavioral health into military patient centers and medical facilities. The behavioral health services offered through the centers will also cover sleep, nutrition and even brain health.

## A NEW FOCUS

In collaboration with the Department of Defense (DOD), the VA is working to provide transition assistance for veterans. According to John Medve, executive director of the VA/DOD Collaboration Service, the department has also been focusing on ensuring a solid foundation for families as they transition with their veterans. "One of the areas we've been working very hard on is to make sure there is alignment between DOD programs and VA programs, so we can seamlessly move people across," Medve said. "We have federal recovery coordinators who work to ensure families understand all the dynamics they need as they transition."

## PRESERVING THE MENTAL RESILIENCE OF SOLDIERS

In September 2013, researchers began analyzing data from a five-year study regarding the rising rate of military suicides. The Army's "Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers," or Army STARRS, was the largest study of suicide risk and resilience ever conducted among military personnel. Components of Army STARRS include:

- **Historical Administrative Data Study:**  
This component involved more than 1 billion historical health and administrative records from 1.6 million Soldiers. Researchers analyzed the Total Army Injury and Health Outcomes Database that included Soldiers who served between 2004 and 2009 for this study.
- **All Army Study (AAS):**  
This component assessed data from almost 35,000 active duty Soldiers, mobilized Army Reserve members and National Guard troops. The AAS portion of the study began in January 2011 and researchers completed the worldwide data collection in 2013.

## MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH IS IMPROVING SOLDIERS' RESILIENCE.

- **New Soldier Study:**  
Researchers invited Soldiers to complete surveys for the study at the beginning of their basic training. More than 57,000 of the Soldiers volunteered and completed surveys during reception week or initial-entry training. Almost 35,000 also donated blood samples to the study.
- **Soldier Health Outcomes Study (SHOS):**  
This study examined two groups. SHOS-A examined Soldiers who were hospitalized in Army medical facilities because they attempted suicide. It compared them against a control group of Soldiers with similar experiences. SHOS-B interviewed family members and supervisors of Soldiers who committed suicide. Researchers examined 400 cases for this study.

Army STARRS is helping to identify factors that protect Soldiers from, or put Soldiers at risk for, suicide and suicidal behavior. Behavioral health professionals on the U.S. Army health care team will use the study's results to develop strategies that build mental resilience and decrease the frequency of suicides.

## CONSISTENT COMMITMENT

As part of the U.S. Army's health care team, behavioral health professionals know that they are serving as a valuable resource, while also gaining critical skills that will help them advance in their own careers. Army Medicine is leading the way in health care—and looking for medical professionals who are committed to strengthening the health of our country. As part of our team, you can explore areas that interest you the most, while providing crucial support and care for the nation's Soldiers and their families.

TO REQUEST  
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