

An Open Invitation from Veterans to Veterans: Help for PTSD

The Veteran Advisory Council (VAC) on Mental Health at the Salt Lake City VA Medical Center would like to encourage any Veteran experiencing nightmares, flashbacks, hyper-vigilance, or other symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to seek services at your nearest VA health care facility.

Many Veterans continue to suffer from PTSD needlessly. Some Veterans have looked for relief in the past, but have not found the help they needed; others continue to try to simply "Live with it." Help is available at your nearest VA facility. If you've participated in PTSD programs in the past without success, consider trying it again. Some things have changed at the VA. New and better evidence based therapies (EBT) which go beyond the "Coping skills" of a few years back have been developed. There are new medications that can help relieve many of the symptoms of PTSD. You, your family, and your friends need not suffer from the affects of PTSD; life can get better.

So how does one get involved in treatment? Several options are available depending on the Veteran's location. Services are available throughout Salt Lake "Catchment area" in addition to the Salt Lake VA Medical Center. Services are also available at Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) located in Pocatello, Idaho; Elko, Nevada; Ogden, Vernal, Price, Orem, and St. George, Utah. There are also stationary and mobile Vet Centers that provide counseling services. The VA's Tele-Health system reaches deep into our rural areas providing specialized one-on-one services where it is needed.

Our recommendation for those who can get to the VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Salt Lake City, is to attend a PTSD intake/assessment session. An open intake is held every Tuesday at 11:00 AM in Building #16 (the new Outpatient Mental Health facility). Ask a clerk for directions as you enter the building. The intake activity is held in the Deer Creek classroom on the main floor.

At the PTSD intake, you will complete several questionnaires and then be individually interview by a PTSD clinician. The clinician will provide treatment recommendations at the conclusion of the interview. Please allow 2-3 hours for the intake clinic, depending on the number of veterans attending. Please bring a copy of your DD214, if it is available.

Veterans experiencing any type of mental health crisis can receive help at the Building #16 Outpatient Mental Health location during regular business hours. Just walk-in and ask for help, or go to the VA Emergency Department in Building #1 anytime.

Peer Counselors are located in an office near the clerk's desk in Building #16. Peer Counselors (Veterans who have experienced their own recovery) are available to discuss various paths to recovery and provide resources often needed by Veterans experiencing mental health issues. Feel free to give them a visit, or they can be contacted by calling (801)582-1565 extension 2784.

Who are we? The Veterans Advisory Council (VAC) is a freestanding, all volunteer organization. VA Central Office encourages each VA medical center- mental health department, to promote the development of a consumer council such as our VAC. The VAC is invited to participate in the Mental Health Executive Council and present information or ask questions on behalf of Veterans.

Walt Moore is the Chairman of the VAC Council; he can be contacted at the Mental Health Peer Support office in Building #16 (801) 582-1565 ext 2784. Dr. Bob Banz serves as staff liaison to the VAC; he can be contacted at (801) 582-1565 ext 2729.