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May 1st, 2008

## Military encourages troops to seek mental health assistance

Posted: 12:59 PM ET

(CNN) — Military officials Thursday encouraged U.S. troops to seek help for combat-related mental health issues, saying that under a new policy, it will not preclude their receiving security clearance.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates, speaking to reporters at Fort Bliss, Texas, announced the policy a day after a survey showed that American soldiers fear that seeking mental health assistance might harm their military careers. Before his announcement, Gates visited a Fort Bliss center that treats soldiers who return from war with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Under the new Department of Defense policy, troops and civilian employees will not be required to reveal previous mental health treatment when seeking security clearance unless the treatment was court-ordered or involved violence, Gates said.

"Our people deserve the best mental health care we can provide without fear of hurting their career in the long run," said Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a DOD statement.

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