

CareForTheTroops.org

The Invisible Wounds of War

"To care for those who have borne the battle, and their spouses, children, and families."

Executive Summary

Abbreviations and Acronyms Used:

PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
EMDR	Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
GAMFT	Georgia Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
MFTs	Marriage and Family Therapists
DoD	Department of Defense
VA	Veterans Administration
501c3	Refers to a Non-Profit Organization not subject to taxation

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Mission:

- Work to improve the ability of the civilian mental health infrastructure in the State of Georgia, then nationally, to work with military family members
- Facilitate connecting military families to providers of spiritual and psychological services familiar with the military culture and trauma
- Focus on addressing combat stress recovery as well as other spiritual and mental health related problems impacting the marriages and families of military veterans
- Educate and train clinicians, congregation and community leaders, extended family, and civilian groups about the military culture and trauma associated with military deployments in order to better assess and treat mental health symptoms, and provide more effective referrals and care
- Provide opportunities for additional trauma treatment training to clinicians
- Operate in an interfaith, non-political manner, focusing on the humanitarian interest that benefits the veterans and their extended family members

Executive Summary:

We have formed our organization in recognition of the differences today's military member and extended family members are experiencing in contrast to their counterparts who served during earlier periods of conflict. Some examples of these differences are:

- A higher number of deployed soldiers are from Reserve and National Guard units
- Today's active military serve war-zone tours that have been shorter, more frequent, and in greater numbers.
- They have multiple "departures and re-entries" out of and into their family systems.
- It is conservative to say that half or more of the men and women returning from combat have some form of mental or spiritual distress with a high incidence of PTSD and/or the physical and mental effects of TBI.
- DOD and VA facilities are working very hard, but are stretched to the maximum.
- The heavy dependence on National Guard and Reserve Units means many returning military combatants and their families live far away from medical and psychological support facilities, making access difficult and often impractical.
- The Tricare insurance rates and rules have exacerbated the situation by reducing the number of private sector mental health professionals willing to see military members and families because rates are low and the paperwork involved complicated and voluminous.

Presidential Commission Reports, such as the Senator Robert Dole / Secretary Donna Shalala report in April 2007, have recommended that solutions to these circumstances need to be addressed by leadership from the private sector to complement improvements being made to the public sector systems. *CareForTheTroops* is organizing and implementing one of those private sector responses.

Our Mission will focus on helping with the psychological and spiritual aspects of this conundrum.

Already we have made a number of decisions and accomplished a number of steps:

- We have been approved by the IRS as a 501c3 organization.
- Our Board representation now consists of two faith networks, and two experienced non-profit organizations. Additional faith networks are being sought after.
- We have identified a cadre of skilled clergy familiar with and sympathetic to the armed forces

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- We have partnered with two networks of licensed clinicians; one trained in the EMDR and another licensed in the Marriage and Family Therapy profession. These networks are spread across Georgia and already skilled in addressing trauma, PTSD, and family mental health issues.
- Long term, we will increase the size of this clinician cadre to meet expected rising demand.
- We have provided for the capability to refer and utilize other existing social service organizations when a non-psychological need is identified.
- Significant efforts will be exerted to collect, distribute information, and educate clinicians, congregation and community leaders, people in social service agencies who have contact with military family members, and of course, military families themselves.
- It will take many forms, presentations and meetings, but the primary focus will be use of the internet, social networking formats and Church Congregations.
- Volunteers from Church congregations will play a key role in collecting and distributing information that will help Providers better understand military circumstances, symptoms to look for, treatment descriptions, Provider contact information, and sources for help.

What makes our approach unique is that we are addressing both the supply of clinicians to provide care and demand for mental health care help in the State that is needed not only by military families, but also by congregation and community leaders. Our education offerings will increase the number of mental health providers familiar with the Military Culture and capable of addressing family mental health and PTSD symptoms. Related education offerings about the Military Culture to community leaders and extended family members throughout the state will improve the quality and quantity of the referrals made to the mental health providers. We are addressing the complete ecosystem associated with improving mental health care for the returning military and their families.

Our goal is to become a resource center for citizens in the State of Georgia as they address the spiritual and psychological needs of the military who have served their Country during this period of war. We expect our efforts to improve the care received by the military, benefiting its members, their extended families, their communities, and future generations of Georgians.

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The Georgia Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (GAMFT)
The EMDR Network of Clinicians in Georgia
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