



Returning War Veterans: Challenges in Continuing Mental Health Care After Military and Civilian Trauma

Forum to Examine Solutions

Presented by Erich Lindemann Community Mental Health Education Center Initiative of The Massachusetts *School of Professional Psychology*

BOSTON, May 26 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- "The mental health system in the U.S. needs to anticipate the needs of 1.5 million soldiers and marines and their families who have experienced the trauma of war. Estimates are as high as 33% that these troops are likely to have significant issues of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, and 20% will return with traumatic brain injuries. Our collective responsibility extends also to their partners and children who have been indirect 'veterans' of these wars," states Dr. Nicholas A. Covino, President of the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology.

To address these issues, mental health professionals and those responsible for care of returning veterans will offer their extensive expertise at a free public forum.

- WHAT: Returning War Veterans: Challenges in Continuing Mental Health After Military and Civilian Trauma
- WHEN: Friday, June 5, 2009, 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- WHERE: Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP), 221 Rivermoor Street, West Roxbury, MA

Speaker Tom Kelly, Secretary, Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services, will discuss how his department is attempting to meet the needs of returning veterans.

A recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor who completed 30 years of service in the U.S. Navy in rank of Captain, Secretary Kelly is responsible for providing quality support services to more than 400,000 veterans in Massachusetts and their families. His functions include: ensuring quality of services and accountability in the performance of veteran homeless shelters as well as outreach programs focusing on education, training and employment across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Speaker Barbara Leadholm, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, addresses factors putting veterans at great risk including homelessness, unemployment and frequently the risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. Citing the national success of newly emerging models in veteran-focused jail diversion, specialized veterans' mental health courts and drug courts, Leadholm will speak about similar programs and others underway in Massachusetts to ensure that veterans are afforded services, treatment and opportunities for recovery.

Speaker Dr. Jaine Darwin is Co-Chairman of the Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists (SOFAR) whose focus includes raising awareness in veterans' families of issues facing the soldier. "When a soldier deploys, the whole family is involved; when a soldier returns, he/she is not only returning to a family, but is leaving the family of soldiers with whom they fought. This is one of many conflicts," says Darwin.

At the forum, Darwin will speak on "extending the safety net: how community mental health practitioners can support veterans and families."

Representing the Veterans Administration Boston Healthcare System, Drs. Gary Kaplan and Erin Scott Daly will discuss the wide range of mental health resources available to returning veterans including inpatient, residential and outpatient care. "The current cohort of returning veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan present a challenge to the existing VA mental health system due to the recent nature of their traumatic exposure including the demographic characteristics of younger soldiers and a larger proportion of female veterans. But we are working very hard to prevent chronicity and disability like we have seen with Vietnam efforts," stated Kaplan and Daly.

While speakers will focus on returning war veterans, issues also touch upon civilian trauma -- hurricanes, economic depression, etc. -- and raises the questions of whether our mental health system and society are willing and able to provide this care.

Dr. David Satin, Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, and Chairman of the Erich

Lindemann Memorial Lecture Committee at MSPP, will moderate. The forum is the 32nd annual program dedicated to the legacy of the late Dr. Erich Lindemann in honoring his commitment to community mental health, public health and social policy issues.

Forum reservations are requested to insure adequate seating: telephone 617-327-6777, ext. 282 or visit <http://www.mspp.edu/>

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