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Military Shrinks Not Shrinking

Posted by **MARK THOMPSON** Wednesday, March 2, 2011 at 12:08 pm

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Mental Health Staffing			
Specialty	2007	2008	2009*
DoD (Military Facilities**)	4,129	4,373 <small>(Net +244 from '07)</small>	6,061 <small>(Net +1,688 from '07)</small>
DoD (TRICARE***) Network Providers	39,587	45,215 <small>(Net +5,628 from '07)</small>	49,807 <small>(Net +10,220 from '07)</small>
Net Increase since 2007:			
DoD (Military Facilities)		+ 1,932	
DoD (TRICARE)		+10,220	
Total		+12,152	

* As of 30 Jun 2009
** Military, Civilian, and Contractor FTEs in MTFs
*** Represents expansion of mental health providers in TRICARE network including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, licensed mental health counselors, and psychiatric nurse practitioners (community based providers)

The Pentagon has told Congress that "due to increased screening referrals and help-seeking in the face of sustained operations," the number of mental-health professionals working for the military jumped from 43,716 in 2007 to 55,868 in 2009 -- a 28 percent increase.

Among those working full time for the military, the total mushroomed from 4,129 to 6,061, a 47 percent boost. Private, part-time mental-health workers grew from 39,587 to 49,807, a 26 percent increase.

Part of the hike is due to the growth of family members' mental-health visits, which have been climbing by 15 percent annually. The report also notes that the Army plans on boosting its active-duty mental-health corps from 1,277 in 2010 to 1,794 in 2017, a 40 percent rise.

Not sure how much we can trust these numbers, though. The 13-page report containing them has some strange sentences:

-- "The Services report that they currently have the provider types they do not need any new mental health specialties."

-- "This rendered exploration of feasibility without any practical reason for further consideration."

-- "Since 2006, however, there has been on a continuous increase in provider numbers to help meet increased patient demand."

When I visited Fort Campbell, Kentucky, last year, soldiers there complained about the

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