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Long Waits for Troubled Vets Have Disastrous Effects



Friday, July 22, 2011

Military veterans suffering from serious mental health problems were left on waiting lists last year instead of receiving immediate assistance through the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), resulting in multiple suicide attempts.

The news surfaced at a congressional hearing looking into the results of the VA's inspector general [report](#) on mental health operations in Georgia. There, veterans spent weeks on waiting lists as the VA was slow getting them into mental health clinics. The results were some ex-soldiers sought emergency care or became hospitalized, and some tried to kill themselves.

"The VA system makes you want to give up and try something else," Retired Army Specialist Daniel Williams told the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

The VA's troubles come at a time when demand for mental health services is soaring, with more than 200,000 veterans of the [Iraq](#) and [Afghanistan](#) wars suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Twenty-six percent of all returning troops have mental conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder and depression, according to a [study](#) by the Rand Corporation, "and the frequency of diagnoses in this category is increasing."

-Noel Brinkerhoff

[Veterans Have Long Wait Times for Mental Health Services, Studies Find](#) (by Althea Fung, National Journal)

[Healthcare Inspection: Electronic Waiting List Management for Mental Health Clinics Atlanta VA Medical Center](#) (Department of Veterans Affairs, Inspector General)

[Veterans Wait Too Long for Mental Health Services, Reports Say](#) (by Steve Vogel, Washington Post)

[Mental Health Costs for Combat Veterans ... \\$1 Billion a Year](#) (by Noel Brinkerhoff and David Wallechinsky, AllGov)



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