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## Program to educate civilian doctors on military

By [Patricia Kime](#) - Staff writer

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The Defense Department and the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare are rolling out a certification program to help civilian mental health care professionals and primary care providers better serve military veterans and their families.

The "Serving Our Veterans" behavioral health program is a 14-part, 20-hour online course that instructs doctors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other practitioners on the military's unique treatment needs, its culture and experiences.

The curriculum is a response to calls from DoD and Veterans Affairs Department leaders for a broader understanding among U.S. health care workers of the unique demands of military service. More than 2 million Americans have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and an additional 39,000 are expected to return from Iraq by the end of this year.

"Our members — community health and addiction service organizations — are on the frontlines of the veterans' battlefield back home. This curriculum will prepare health providers to support veterans and their families in local communities who are dealing with the aftermath of combat and deployment," said Jeannie Campbell, a retired Navy chief master petty officer and the council's executive vice president.

Since the start of the Afghanistan war in 2001, roughly 220,000 service members have received a traumatic brain injury (77 percent of which were concussions, considered mild TBI), and an estimated 20 percent suffer effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Other commonly diagnosed mental health conditions include major depression, alcohol dependence and bipolar disorder, according to the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center.

The Serving Our Veterans curriculum, built by the council and DoD's Center for Deployment Psychology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, will include information on military culture and background as well as service-related injuries and disorders.

The council will introduce the program during a one-hour webinar at 2 p.m. on Nov. 10.

Council executives say the program will benefit all health care providers, especially those in regions not served by VA or military medical facilities.

"This is especially important for National Guard and reservists ... who make up nearly 40 percent of those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. These veterans will rely on civilian healthcare providers to be informed about their unique needs," according to a council statement.

More information is on the council's [website](#).

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