

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS): Conversations for Caring

Topic: *Serving Those Who Served: Caring for Veterans*

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10 Caring Points

1. The experience of military combat can contribute to a distinct mindset that is sometimes called “battlemind.”
2. Factors related to the development of this mindset include:
 - a. The deeply structured life of military service
 - b. The exposure to the real and unpredictable violence of war
 - c. The need to be distrustful toward almost all with whom one comes in contact
 - d. The need to do things ordinarily unacceptable in civilian society.
3. The development of this mindset is critical to completing military mission and insuring survival in terribly dangerous situations. However, it can also mark all aspects of the soldier’s life – emotions, relationships, and her/his view of the world. Although the individual soldier may not be aware of these changes.
4. While critical to effective performance in theaters of combat, this mindset can be deeply problematic for veterans seeking to reintegrate into civilian life and culture. “Battlemind” cannot necessarily be turned off like a switch. Therefore, the returning veteran can bring the mindset home to family, friends, and loved ones who see the same person, but do not understand the changes that have taken place. In this way, reintegration can be deeply challenging for the veteran as well as those closest to her/him.
5. After active combat experience, the veteran may need time to “reconcile her/his humanity.”
6. A veteran may need to access a variety of support services that assist her/him with the use of free time, the management of strong emotions such as anger, the need for security, a tendency toward isolation, employment reintegration, and communication. Issues of addiction – gambling and substance use – are also areas in which support may be needed.
7. The threat of suicide is also a very real concern related active service, and this threat is not decreasing. In 2010, 301 active-duty, reserve and National Guard soldiers committed suicide, compared to 242 in 2009.
8. The stigma connected with accessing mental health services can complicate the use of mental health services by active duty soldiers. Increasingly, active duty military personnel are seeking physical and mental health services from civilian professionals.
9. Faith communities can offer a uniquely supportive and caring space within which veterans and their families can move through the period of reintegration. However, faith communities need not do this work alone.
10. There are a wide range of services provided at all levels of government for veterans and their families. Attached is a limited resource list of some key regional resources.

*These 10 Caring Points are intended to be a summary of best practices.
For citations, references, and additional information,
please contact Dan Collier at 781-586-8620 or dcollier@glss.net*

Regional Veterans Resources

Massachusetts Department of Veteran's Affairs

Provides information on state and federal benefits, including details about where and how to apply. In addition to resources for veterans and their dependents, the website contains information for members of the Guard and Reserve who have been called-up to active duty. Learn about benefits and services such as tuition waivers at state colleges and universities, public assistance for indigent veterans, The Women Veterans' Network, Special Population Outreach, and SAVE Team advocates who offer confidential Peer support for veterans and families who experience barriers in obtaining benefits.

- www.mass.gov/?pageID=veteranshomepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Eveterans

Local Veterans' Services Officers

A Veterans' Service Officer works out of City or Town Hall as a resource about an array of federal, state, and local benefits to which veterans and dependents may be entitled. His or her job is to help veterans in the community learn about, apply for, and in some cases, receive benefits. Every VSO is a veteran. The following website offers a list by town of the states Veteran's Services Officers:

- www.mass.gov/?pageID=veteransutilities&L=1&sid=Eveterans&U=veteransagents_A

The Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital (*Bedford VA Hospital*)

Provides ambulatory care, mental health service, palliative & hospice care, geriatrics & extended care, and primary care services. In addition to the main medical center, community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) are located in Gloucester and Lynn.

- www.bedford.va.gov/index.asp (*Main Hospital*)
- www.bedford.va.gov/bedopc_glo.asp (*Gloucester Outpatient Clinic*)
- www.bedford.va.gov/bedopc_lynn.asp (*Lynn Outpatient Clinic*)

VA Boston Healthcare System

Provides ambulatory care, mental health service, palliative & hospice care, geriatrics & extended care, and primary care services on main campuses located in Jamaica Plain (*located in Boston's Longwood Medical Community*), West Roxbury, and Brockton as well as six outpatient clinics.

- <http://www.boston.va.gov/>

Some elder-utilized VA Boston Healthcare System services include:

- Geriatric Assessment & Evaluation: Offers clinical assessment and evaluation by a geriatrician.
- Home Based Primary Care: Provides comprehensive, interdisciplinary, primary care in the homes of veterans with complex medical, social, and behavioral conditions, for whom clinic-based care is not effective.
- Medical Foster Care: Houses veterans who can no longer live independently with caregivers in private homes that are inspected and overseen by the VA. Program caregivers provide 24-hour supervision as well as needed personal assistance.

Additional Resource: The Veterans Crisis Line:

A toll-free, confidential resource that connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**.

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