

The background of the image is a stylized American flag, featuring a blue field with white stars on the left and red and white stripes on the right. The flag is slightly tilted and has a soft, wavy texture.

Vet Center

“Keeping the Promise”

A faded background image showing several soldiers in military uniforms and helmets, some holding rifles, in what appears to be a combat or training environment.

Contents

- **Brief Vet Center History**
- **Readjustment Issues Facing Veterans**
- **Signs that a Veteran may be Struggling with Readjustment**
- **How to Approach a Struggling Veteran**
- **Services Vet Centers can Provide**
- **Resources**

Vet Center History

The Vet Center Program was established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. Vet Centers are community based and part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In April 1991, in response to the Persian Gulf War, Congress extended the eligibility to veterans who served during other periods of armed hostilities after the Vietnam era. Those other periods are identified as Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, and Kosovo/Bosnia. In October 1996, Congress extended the eligibility to include WWII and Korean Combat Veterans. The goal of the Vet Center program is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible veterans in order to help them make a satisfying post-war readjustment to civilian life. On April 1, 2003 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs extended eligibility for Vet Center services to veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and on June 25, 2003 Vet Center eligibility was extended to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and subsequent operations within the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The family members of all veterans listed above are eligible for Vet Center services as well. On August 5, 2003 VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi authorized Vet Centers to furnish bereavement counseling services to surviving parents, spouses, children and siblings of service members who die of any cause while on active duty, to include federally activated Reserve and National Guard personnel.

We understand, and most of all, we care.

(DVA , 2010, para. 2)

Readjustment Issues

- **Issues with Self**
 - **Urge/Need to apply “survival skills” to situations in every day life.**
 - **Trouble sleeping / staying asleep**
 - **Anger**
 - **Substance abuse**
 - **Depression**
 - **Anxiety**
 - **Survivor’s Guilt**

Readjustment Issues

- **Issues with Friends / Family**
 - **Family and/or friends unable to understand war-zone experience**
 - **Placing too much responsibility on veteran too soon**
 - **Pressure about seeking help in reference to veteran's "abnormal" behaviors**
 - **Both parties not responding well to personal changes that may have occurred while veteran was deployed.**
 - **Renegotiation of family roles**

Readjustment Issues

- **Issues with General Population**
 - **Distrust / Suspicion**
 - **Controlling the urge to profile certain groups.**
 - **Feeling as if “No one understands!”**
 - **Being asked “stupid” questions; i.e.:**
 - **Did you shoot anyone?**
 - **Having to listen to complaints about irrelevant issues**

Readjustment Issues

- **Issues with Employers/Educators**
 - **Difficulties dealing with authority figures**
 - **Difficulties in the Working/Learning environment**
 - **Sights, smells, duties, co-workers/peers, etc.**
 - **Acting on the urge to function at a “deployment pace” ; eventually leading to a burnout/breakdown**

Struggling with Readjustment

- **Signs to look for:**
 - **Lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed; distracted**
 - **Easily agitated and/or frustrated**
 - **Sudden changes in mood or behavior**
 - **Lack of concern about personal appearance**
 - **Tends to separate him/herself from peers (physically and emotionally)**

Approaching the Veteran

- **What to do:**
 - **Show/Tell the veteran you care about how he/she is feeling.**
 - **Discuss potential/existing issues through the use of open-ended questions.**
 - **Example: “It seemed as if there was something distracting you today. What can I do to help?”**
 - **Encourage the veteran to seek help.**

Approaching the Veteran

- **What NOT to do:**

- If the veteran is showing you signs of distress, don't ignore the issue.
- Avoid the use of accusatory statements/close-ended questions.
 - Example: “You’ve been very distracted lately. What’s wrong with you?”
- **Do not pressure the veteran to seek help; help will only be beneficial if the veteran is open to receiving it.**

Vet Center Services

- **Services we offer:**
 - **Individual Counseling**
 - **Group Counseling**
 - **Marriage/Family Counseling**
 - **Sexual Harassment/Trauma Counseling**
 - **Bereavement Counseling**
 - **Alcohol/Drug Assessment and Referral**
 - **Benefits Referral**
 - **Job Referral**
 - **Employment Counseling and Guidance**
 - **Referral to Community Agencies**
 - **Information regarding local and national veterans organizations and projects**

Resources

- www.vetcenter.va.gov
- www.afterdeployment.org
- **Montgomery County
Vet Center**
- **(215) 823-5245**