

Readjustment Counseling Service

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Vet Centers

Vet Centers (Readjustment Counseling) were established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era Vets were still experiencing readjust problems.

It is because of Vietnam Veterans that Vet Centers exist today. These Veterans refused to be forgotten, refused to be stigmatized and insisted on a program where they were at the center of their care. We remain grateful to them for ensuring generations of men and women can turn to the support and community care of a Vet Center.

**All Vietnam Veterans are greeted
“Welcome Home”**

Vet Center Eligibility

Any Veteran and current service member including members of the National Guard and Reserve components are eligible if any of the below apply:

- Have served on active military duty in any combat theater or area of hostility
- Experienced a military sexual trauma (regardless of gender or service era)
- Provided mortuary services or direct emergent medical care to treat the casualties of war while serving on active military duty
- Performed as a member of an unmanned aerial vehicle crew that provided direct support to operations in a combat theater or area of hostility

Vet Center Eligibility

- Served on active military duty in response to a national emergency or major disaster declared by the president, or under orders of the governor or chief executive of a state in response to a disaster or civil disorder in that state
- Are a current or former member of the Coast Guard who participated in a drug interdiction operation, regardless of the location
- Are a current member of the Reserve Components assigned to a military command in a drilling status, including active Reserves, who has a behavioral health condition or psychological trauma related to military service that adversely effects quality of life or adjustment to civilian life.
- Any Veteran or service member pursuing a course of education using covered educational assistance benefits is eligible if they have a readjustment counseling need that is related to the individual's military service and hinders the individual's adjustment to either their civilian life, ongoing military service, or educational settings.



**Vet Centers fall under the umbrella of the
Veterans Administration**

**Both the approach and the services of the
Vet Centers are different than those provided by the VA**

Vet Centers are Unique

- **Confidentiality** (Records System, ROI)
- Veterans do not have to be enrolled at the VA to receive Vet Center Services
- The environment is as welcoming and non-clinical as possible. Most Vet Centers are in small offices and buildings, a far cry from the sprawling campus of hospitals and clinics. Artwork and photographs from Veterans are present to give the space a more informal and welcoming feeling.
- Vet Centers are staffed by mental health professionals who have specialized training to deal with the unique challenges associated with combat Veterans, like post traumatic stress disorder and MST
- Offer services for families of war Veterans, related to the Veterans readjustment issues.
- Bereavement Counseling
- Vet Centers are also strongly encouraged to hire combat Veterans

Socialization and Community

[Vet Center Services - YouTube](#)

Socialization and Community

Vet Centers are Veteran based

Socialization and Community

Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration at the Austin Vet Center



Our own Patrick Smith, himself a Vietnam Veteran delivered the key note speech honoring the Vietnam Veterans and welcoming them home.



Over 75 Vietnam Veterans were honored with 50 year commemorative pins

Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration March 29, 2023



Our crew with a tank
created by a Vietnam group



Local High School JROTC Marine Color Guard



The Austin
Vet Center
BBQ to
celebrate
Vietnam
Veterans
Day



Quilts of Valor Presentation Austin Vet Center

The Austin Vet Center has partnered with the Quilts of Valor Foundation. The Mission of the Quilts of Valor Foundation is to cover Service Members and Veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor. Vietnam Veterans were honored and gifted with quilts

Veterans being honored for their sacrifice and service to our country





Annual Winter Indian POWWOW – Llano, TX

Austin Vet Center Outreach Program Specialist, had the opportunity to participate in the Texas Indian Heritage Associations Annual Winter POWWOW. His participation was in support of the diversity and celebration of our Native American Veterans population and their families.

Community Based Care

- There are 300 Vet Centers located in U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam and America Samoa.
- 80 plus Mobile Vet Centers (MVCs)
- 1000 Community Access Points (CAPS)
- Austin Vet Center partners with several community organizations through MOUs to mutually share space to provide continuity of care
- Austin has CAPS sites in Georgetown, Cedar Park, Bastrop and San Marcos
- TVC has staff in our clinic to assist Veterans with disability claims

Our Services

Vet Centers offer counseling, outreach and referral services to eligible Service Members, Veterans and their families

- Individual and group counseling for Service Members
- Couples and family counseling for military related issues
- Bereavement (grief) counseling for families who experienced an active duty death
- Military Sexual Trauma counseling

Trauma Treatment

Specialize
War and Combat Trauma
Military Sexual Trauma

Clinicians are trained and utilize treatment such as:

- PE
- CPT
- CBT
- PE
- ACT
- Mindfulness

Military Trauma

Mental Health Effects of Serving in Afghanistan and Iraq

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are the longest combat operations since Vietnam. Many stressors face these Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) troops. One early study looked at the mental health of these Service members. The study asked Soldiers and Marines about war-zone experiences and about their symptoms of distress. Soldiers and Marines in Iraq reported more combat stressors than Soldiers in Afghanistan. This table describes the kinds of stressors faced in each combat theater in 2003:

Combat Stressors		Seeing dead bodies	Being shot at	Being attacked/ambushed	Receiving rocket or mortar fire	Know someone killed/seriously injured
Iraq	Army	95%	93%	89%	86%	86%
Iraq	Marines	94%	97%	95%	92%	87%
Afghanistan	Army	39%	66%	58%	84%	43%

National Center for PTSD

Military Trauma

Physical, Emotional and Behavioral Reactions Impacting Daily Life

- Feeling distant or detached
- Concentration problems
- Feeling jumpy and getting startled easily at sudden noises
- Feeling on guard and alert all the time
- Having problems at work or school
- Avoiding people, places and things
- Health issues including gastrointestinal issues and migraines
- Trouble sleeping/dreams/nightmares
- Irritability and anger
- Withdrawing from family, friends and pleasurable activities
- Isolation
- Drug and alcohol use
- Trust and relationship issues
- Self harming behaviors
- Thoughts of suicide and suicidal behavior

MST

MST has occurred during every service era and both men and women experience MST.

About 1 in 3 women and 1 in 50 men have reported experiencing MST when screened for VA services

Sexual trauma is often underreported

Last year, almost 200,000 Veterans who experienced MST accessed health care through the VA.

Reactions/Impact on Daily Life

- Re-experiencing and strong emotional reactions to reminders
- Hypervigilance
- Sleep Disturbances
- Difficulties with memory, concentration and memory
- Drug and alcohol use
- Difficulties with trust and intimacy in relationships
- Difficulty with boundaries
- Self-blame and self-doubt
- Emotional dysregulation
- Interpersonal difficulties
- Problems with sexuality and identity
- Body image/ eating disorders
- Risk taking behaviors
- Thoughts of suicide or suicidal behaviors

Suicide Prevention Assessment and Intervention

High Risk Population-

- Combat Trauma
- MST
- PTSD
- Moral Injury
- Loss

Assessment is ongoing and can change

Suicide Prevention Assessment and Intervention

Psychosocial Stressors

- Financial Problems (e.g., unemployment)
- Homelessness
- Legal Problems (DUI, incarceration, civil vs. criminal)
- Relationship Issues (death, divorce)
- Health issues (e.g., TBI, HIV/AIDS, insomnia, chronic pain)
- Preexisting Risk Factors (e.g., history of trauma, family history of suicide attempt)
- Psychological Conditions (e.g., mood or affective d/o, personality d/o, substance use d/o, psychosis)
- Social/Systemic Problems (e.g., conflicted relationships, issue accessing care, change in level of care)

Suicide Prevention Assessment and Intervention

- Thoughts, plans, intentions, past suicide attempts and past hospitalizations.
- Assess access to lethal means (assume they have weapons, ask are weapons secure)
- Assess for acute and chronic risk level
- Tools: MIRECC Therapeutic Risk Management- Risk Stratification Tool
- [ACUTE Therapeutic Risk Management – Risk Stratification Table \(va.gov\)](#)

Suicide Prevention Assessment and Intervention

Protective Factors

- Linked and engaged in healthcare and mental health services
- Interpersonal relationships
- Personal belief systems
- Social supports
- Veterans Crisis Line
- Identify stakeholders (family, friends, children)



Questions