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NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

President Issues New Executive Order on Veterans, Suicide and Access to Treatment

In direct response to the growing awareness of the link between alcohol, drugs and mental health issues and soldier and veteran suicides, President Barack Obama recently signed Executive Order designed to omprove access to mental health services for veterans, service members, and military families.

The Executive Order directs a number of key federal agencies to expand their efforts related to suicide prevention and improve access to alcohol, drug and mental health treatment for military veterans, active service members, and their families.

Here are a couple of major key provisions of the order:

Enhanced Partnerships Between the Department of Veterans Affairs and Community Providers:

Within 180 days of the date of this order, in those service areas where the Department of Veterans Affairs has faced challenges in hiring and placing mental health service providers and continues to have unfilled vacancies or long wait times, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Health and Human Services shall establish pilot projects whereby the Department of Veterans Affairs contracts or develops formal arrangements with community based providers, such as community mental health clinics, community health centers, substance abuse treatment facilities, and rural health clinics, to test the effectiveness of community partnerships in helping to meet the mental health needs of veterans in a timely way. Pilot sites shall ensure that consumers of community-based services continue to be integrated into the health care systems of the Department of Veterans Affairs. No fewer than 15 pilot projects shall be established.

Establishes Interagency Task Force on Military and Veterans Mental Health (Task Force):

The Task Force will be co chaired by the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Health and Human Services (HHS). The membership of the Committee is to include the following:

i. the Department of Education;
ii. the Office of Management and Budget;

iii. the Domestic Policy Council;
iv. the National Security Staff;
v. the Office of Science and Technology Policy;
vi. the Office of National Drug Control Policy; and
vii. such other executive departments, agencies, or offices as the Co-Chairs may designate

The Order also notes that no later than 180 days after the date of the order, the Task Force must submit recommendations to the President on strategies to improve mental health and substance abuse treatment services for veterans, service members, and their families.

To read the complete announcement, click here.