



## **American Psychological Association Military & Veterans Policy Priorities**

The American Psychological Association (APA) is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States, with nearly 130,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students as members. Our mission is to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.

**APA's Military & Veterans Policy (MVP) team works to support military personnel and veterans, their families, and their communities, as well as the psychologists who conduct research with and provide direct services to these populations.**

### **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**

#### ***Research***

- **The VA Medical and Prosthetic Research program leads directly to improved care for veterans. Funding this intramural program is vital to ensure that VA scientists, including psychologists, ask questions specific to the challenges facing veterans and translate their cutting-edge discoveries into clinical care. The VA should:**
- Provide at least \$616 million for this program in FY 2016 to support current research on chronic conditions of aging veterans, and for emerging research on conditions prevalent among younger veterans, including so-called "signature injuries" such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI); and
- Fund up to five major construction projects in VA research to address deficiencies identified in the independent VA research facilities review provided to Congress in 2012.

#### ***Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Veterans***

**APA supports veterans in seeking and receiving high-quality, effective, and timely mental and behavioral healthcare from the VA and from non-VA providers. APA is particularly focused on garnering Administration and Congressional support for issues related to:**

- Improving veterans' access to mental and behavioral healthcare;
- Preventing suicide in veteran populations;
- Establishing veterans mental health courts throughout the country;
- Meeting the needs of veterans on college campuses; and
- Supporting local law enforcement in understanding and working with veterans.
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#### ***Training and Professional Issues for VA Psychologists***

- **The VA continues to develop and train psychologists in cutting-edge, evidence-based treatments. VA must also:**
- Grant prescribing authority (already in place at DoD for many years) to appropriately trained and certified VA psychologists; and
- Ease current, overly-rigid travel restrictions on VA researchers and clinicians.

## **APA's Policy Priorities at Department of Defense (DoD)**

Psychologists play vital roles within DoD as providers of clinical services to military personnel and their families, and as scientific researchers investigating mission-targeted issues ranging from airplane cockpit design to counter-terrorism. More than ever before, psychologists today bring unique and critical expertise to meeting the needs of our military and its personnel.

### **Research**

- **APA urges strong DoD support for psychological research in its intramural and extramural scientific portfolios.** The majority of behavioral, cognitive and social science within DoD is funded through the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences and Army Research Laboratory; the Office of Naval Research; and the Air Force Research Laboratory, with additional, smaller human systems research programs funded through the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). The military service laboratories fund human-related research in the broad categories of personnel, training and leader development; warfighter protection, sustainment and physical performance; and system interfaces and cognitive processing. DoD-funded psychological researchers also make critical contributions to force health and wellness, and to mission initiatives underlying efforts to understand extremist ideologies and combat counter-insurgencies.

### ***Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve***

- **APA supports military personnel in seeking and receiving high-quality, effective mental and behavioral healthcare throughout their careers – from enlistment/commissioning through pre-deployment, deployment, and transition to veteran status. Particular concerns include:**
  - Appropriate mental health screening and follow-up from DoD (APA supports the *Medical Evaluation Parity for Service Members (MEPS) Act* initially included in the FY15 NDAA);
  - Suicide prevention in military populations; and
  - Provision of TRICARE benefits related to service member and family mental and behavioral healthcare.

### ***Training and Professional Issues for DoD Psychologists***

- **APA is committed to training and supporting military and civilian psychologists to meet the mental and behavioral health needs of military personnel and their families. In 2006, APA (with a team of military psychologists) developed and obtained federal funding for the creation of the Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP), which offers education and training options for psychologists across the country, both live and via the internet. CDP is now a DoD program and a key component in ongoing training for psychologists working with military populations within DoD and out in communities. APA also calls for:**
  - Easing the current, overly-rigid travel restrictions for DoD researchers and clinicians, which stifle the vital sharing of scientific and clinical knowledge; and
  - Creating a master's degree program in psychopharmacology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences to provide "in-house" training for DoD psychologists.

For more information, please contact:  
Dr. Heather O'Beirne Kelly, APA Military & Veterans Policy Team  
[hkelly@apa.org](mailto:hkelly@apa.org) or 202.336.5932