



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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News Release

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VA Announces Recruitment Effort to Hire Mental Health Professionals

SEATTLE, Wash. – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has developed an aggressive national mental health hiring initiative to improve recruitment and hiring, marketing, education and training programs, and retention efforts for mental health professionals.

To speed the national hiring process, VA developed the Mental Health Hiring Initiative, a multi-faceted, sustained National marketing and outreach campaign that includes targeted recruitment of mental health providers willing to take positions throughout the country, including in rural and highly rural markets, to serve all VA medical Centers and community clinics.

VA has an existing workforce of 20,590 mental health staff that includes nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Currently, the VA Puget Sound Health Care System has 320 mental health clinicians and support staff working locally supporting Puget Sound area Veterans. VA Puget Sound has divisions in Seattle and Tacoma, with seven Community Based Outpatient Clinics located throughout Western Washington.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki noted that “as the tide of war recedes, we have the opportunity and the responsibility to anticipate the needs of returning Veterans.”

The team at VA Puget Sound is already actively treating Veterans through individualized care, readjustment counseling, and immediate crisis services. VA Puget Sound staff has contributed to mental health excellence by providing mental health services to more than 21,000 Veterans last year by utilizing treatment programs that include a full range of inpatient and outpatient mental health services, including specialized outpatient programs to treat PTSD. VA Puget Sound mental health staff are recognized nationally for making significant research contributions in developing new treatments for PTSD, increasing the understanding of the neurological and behavioral consequences of traumatic brain injury, and increasing the effectiveness of treatments for substance abuse.

The initiative will help VA to meet existing and future demands of mental health care services in an integrated collaborative team environment and continue to position VA as an exemplary workplace for mental health care professionals.

“Mental health services must be closely aligned with Veterans’ needs and fully integrated with health care facility operations,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel. “Improving access to mental health services will help support the current and future Veterans who depend on VA for these vital services.”

To locate the nearest VA facility or Vet Center for enrollment and to get scheduled for care, Veterans can visit VA’s website at www.va.gov. Immediate help is

available at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net or by calling the Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255
(push 1) or texting 838255.

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