

108TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4798

To improve post-traumatic stress disorder treatment for veterans of service
in Afghanistan and Iraq and the war on terror.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 9, 2004

Mr. FORD introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To improve post-traumatic stress disorder treatment for veterans of service in Afghanistan and Iraq and the war on terror.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Enhancement of Vet-

5 erans Mental Health Services Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) A study published in the New England
2 Journal of Medicine reported that about one in six
3 soldiers of the Iraq war displays symptoms of post-
4 traumatic stress disorder.

5 (2) Clinical experts are anticipating an increase
6 in the number of post-traumatic stress disorder
7 cases in light of the increasing duration of military
8 deployment.

9 (3) 86 of 163 Department of Veterans Affairs
10 Medical Centers have post-traumatic stress disorder
11 treatment programs.

12 (4) Section 1706 of title 38, United States
13 Code, requires that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
14 ensure, in accordance with that section, that the De-
15 partment of Veterans Affairs maintains its capacity
16 to provide for the specialized treatment and rehabili-
17 tative needs of disabled veterans within distinct pro-
18 grams or facilities of the Department.

19 **SEC. 3. POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER TREATMENT**
20 **FOR VETERANS OF SERVICE IN AFGHANI-**
21 **STAN AND IRAQ AND THE WAR ON TERROR.**

22 (a) ENHANCED CAPACITY FOR DEPARTMENT OF
23 VETERANS AFFAIRS.—

24 (1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

25 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-

1 retary of Veterans Affairs for “Medical Care” the
2 amount of \$100,000,000 for the employment of ad-
3 ditional psychiatrists and other mental health serv-
4 ices specialists at Department of Veterans Affairs
5 medical centers and outpatient facilities specializing
6 in the diagnosis and treatment of post-traumatic
7 stress disorder.

8 (2) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—Funds made
9 available pursuant to the authorization of appropria-
10 tions in paragraph (1) shall, to the extent funds are
11 available for such purpose, be used to employ at
12 least one psychiatrist and a complementary clinical
13 team at each medical center of the Department of
14 Veterans Affairs in order to conduct a specialized
15 program for the diagnosis and treatment of post-
16 traumatic stress disorder and to employ additional
17 mental health services specialists at the medical cen-
18 ter.

19 (b) OUTREACH AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL.—

20 (1) PROGRAM.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
21 fairs shall, within the authorities of the Secretary
22 under title 38, United States Code, carry out a pro-
23 gram to provide outreach at the community level to
24 veterans who participated in Operation Iraqi Free-
25 dom or Operation Enduring Freedom who are or

1 may be suffering from post-traumatic stress dis-
2 order.

3 (2) PROGRAM SITES.—The program shall be
4 carried out on a nation-wide basis through facilities
5 of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

6 (3) PROGRAM CONTENT.—The program shall
7 provide for individualized case management to be
8 conducted on a one-on-one basis, counseling, edu-
9 cation, and group therapy to help participants cope
10 with post-traumatic stress disorder. The program—

11 (A) shall emphasize early identification of
12 veterans who may be experiencing symptoms of
13 post-traumatic stress disorder; and

14 (B) shall include group-oriented, peer-to-
15 peer settings for treatment.

16 (4) PROGRAM MODEL.—The Secretary shall es-
17 tablish and carry out the program under this sub-
18 section using as a model the program for the treat-
19 ment of post-traumatic stress disorder conducted at
20 the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center
21 in Memphis, Tennessee.

22 **SEC. 4. ARMED FORCES REVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH PRO-**
23 **GRAMS.**

24 (a) REVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS.—The
25 Secretary of each military department shall conduct a

1 comprehensive review of the mental health care programs
2 of the Armed Forces under the jurisdiction of that Sec-
3 retary in order to determine ways to improve the efficacy
4 of such care, including a review of joint Department of
5 Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs clinical
6 guidelines to ensure a seamless delivery of care during
7 transitions from active duty or reserve status to civilian
8 life.

9 (b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary of De-
10 fense shall submit to Congress a report setting forth the
11 results of such review not later than 90 days after the
12 date of the enactment of this Act.

13 **SEC. 5. TRANSITION TO VETERANS HEALTH CARE.**

14 The Secretary of each military department shall take
15 special care in providing for as seamless a transition as
16 possible from Department of Defense health care services
17 to Department of Veterans Affairs health care services in
18 the case of members of the Armed Forces who are being
19 discharged or separated from active duty and who have
20 been identified by the Secretary as having been exposed
21 to combat or otherwise as being at particular risk for post-
22 traumatic stress disorder.

23 **SEC. 6. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS.**

24 The Secretary of each military department and the
25 Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall assess privacy and pa-

1 tient confidentiality standards and practices of their re-
2 spective departments to ensure that those standards and
3 practices are adequate to protect the privacy of patients,
4 particularly in the case of patients seeking treatment for
5 post-traumatic stress disorder. Each of those Secretaries
6 shall also assess and identify other factors that may deter
7 members of the Armed Forces and veterans from seeking
8 treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.

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