NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
May 4-5, 2022
Indianapolis, Indiana

Resolution No. 17: Continuum of Care and Mental Health Supports
Origin: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission

WHEREAS, The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act of 1996 mandated for enhanced or specialized mental health services to veterans; and

WHEREAS, By 2007, the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) started implementing a Primary Care – Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI) co-location model to enhance access and streamline effective treatments for certain mental health and substance use disorders (SUD); and

WHEREAS, The Traumatic Brain Injury Act of 2008 required the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institute of Health (NIH), Department of Defense (DoD), and VA to collaborate in better understanding the prevalence, diagnostic screening, and treatment of military traumatic brain injuries (TBI); and

WHEREAS, VA-Boston University's Concussion Legacy Foundation (CLF) has linked TBI exposures to increased risk of developing dementia, depression, and mood disturbances; and

WHEREAS, NIH research suggests that overall, 14 percent to 16 percent of U.S. servicemembers deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression, and that veteran overall suicide rates have increased by 30 percent between 1999 and 2016; and

WHEREAS, By 2021, VA has trained over 16,500 clinicians in one or more evidenced-based psychotherapies programs yet the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) found that 50 percent of VA facilities designated with psychiatric services are consistently and severely understaffed making mental health providers the most frequently cited occupation shortage; and

WHEREAS, A recent U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that VA struggles to field certain SUD programs in rural settings due to lack of proper staffing; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 4-5, 2022, That The American Legion urges Congress to expand the budget of the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) to increase mental health research, outreach, and treatment programs for earlier onset screening and transitional care for separating servicemembers; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA conduct a consistent follow-on continuum of care in any setting for any veteran suffering from mental health illnesses; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense and VA better coordinate and collaborate their mental health outreach programs to address the stigma in seeking mental health care; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA work to increase the recruitment and retention initiatives and incentive programs to address the critical mental health vacancies to better support at-risk veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress mandates oversight and accountability for VA's mental health services and programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA coordinates with community care providers to ensure adequate mental health coverage in underserved areas.