



As a leading mental health program provider and funder in the veteran service community, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) strongly supports a wide-ranging approach to mental health and wellness anchored in evidence-based treatment and research. Fostering good mental health and preventing suicide is top priority throughout all WWP programs — including our advocacy efforts. In the 116th Congress, WWP was proud to assist efforts to pass more than 40 new mental health provisions into law to augment services at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and its community partners. But we can still do more.

NEEDS FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ARE ONLY INCREASING

About 1 in 5 WWP warriors

reported that they have, at some point, experienced difficulty or delays in getting or continuing professional care for a mental health problem.*

Nearly 7 in 10 WWP warriors

have utilized telehealth in the past 12 months. Of them, 81.4% reported being satisfied with the services they received.*

Of WWP warriors who reported being out of the labor force, **mental health issues** related to a service-connected disability were the top cited reason (27.0%).*

Since 2000, Service members have sustained more than 400,000 traumatic brain injuries (TBIs),[†] and recent research indicates that **1 in 4 who have been hospitalized for TBI[‡]** will develop a long term disability.

Screening positive for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression has been associated with being **almost 20% more likely to also screen positive for hazardous alcohol use or a potential substance use disorder.[¶]**

All are risk factors for suicide.

*2021 Annual Warrior Survey (AWS), [†]Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [‡]Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, [¶]2020 RAND Health Care Report



WWP'S EFFORTS TO SUPPORT VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

WWP partners with four academic medical centers to form Warrior Care Network. This program is part of WWP's support for a continuum of policies for all aspects of mental and brain health, to include increased adoption of evidence-based, patient-centered treatment for mental health disorders, TBI, and substance use disorders.

WWP promotes awareness and dialogue about suicide prevention through events that aim to permit greater mental health care practice across state lines via virtual and telehealth platforms.

WWP's Alumni Program and WWP-sponsored Peer Support Groups help combat veteran isolation. These programs foster a sense of community and allow for veterans to help each other overcome personal challenges, ultimately providing them with a sense of purpose and belonging.

TAKE ACTION

WWP ENCOURAGES CONGRESS TO:

- 1 Implement and fund the **SSG Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program** (P.L. 116-171, Sect. 201) to strengthen local community capacity to conduct outreach to veterans and families, provide them with suicide prevention services, and connect them to resources within the community and VA to prevent veteran suicide.
- 2 Pass **S. 3293, the Post-9/11 Veterans' Mental Health Care Improvement Act**, to address the mental health challenges posed by co-occurring substance use disorders, poor sleep, difficulty accessing residential care, and military transition stress. The legislation would also make critical investments in VA's mental health workforce and brain health research.
- 3 Pass **H.R. 6411, the Support The Resiliency of Our Nation's Great (STRONG) Veterans Act**, to empower state and local governments and veteran peers to create stronger environments for seeking and finding mental health care and other support. This legislation would also help ensure that the Veterans Crisis Line reaches peak potential as the nation transitions to the new 9-8-8 suicide prevention lifeline.