



National Intrepid Center of Excellence

Background

National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) is a facility dedicated to advancing the clinical care, diagnosis, research and education of service members experiencing combat related traumatic brain injury (TBI) and psychological health conditions. **Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund** led the fundraising effort for the center, securing \$65 million in private donations from the American people and overseeing the construction and equipping of the facility. NICoE was officially transferred to the Defense Department in a dedication ceremony attended by more than 1,000 people on June 24, 2010. NICoE was then transferred from TRI-CARE Management Activity's **Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury** (DCoE) to the Department of the Navy for further alignment under the National Naval Medical Center, effective August 10, 2010.

NICoE is a 72,000 square foot, two-story facility located on the Navy campus in Bethesda, Md. It is adjacent to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, with close access to the Uniformed Services University, National Institutes of Health and, within the National Capitol Region, the Veterans Health Administration.

Purpose

NICoE provides state-of-the-art comprehensive evaluation of service members with complex cases of posttraumatic stress and/or TBIs or other complex psychological health conditions. This includes

advanced diagnostics, initial treatment plans, family education and reintegration support. Further, NICoE tests new protocols and provides comprehensive training and education to patients, providers and families while maintaining ongoing telehealth follow-up care across the country and throughout the world. The center also conducts extensive research, serves as an educational resource and explores new therapy methods. In addition to serving as a center of excellence for holistic evaluation and treatment planning, NICoE also will guide the development of new best practices for military medicine. The center is led by a skilled interdisciplinary team that harnesses the latest advances in science, therapy, telehealth, education, research and technology, while providing compassionate, family-centered care for service members and their loved ones throughout the recovery process.

“Through this center, we now have a place to deliver the care our wounded warriors deserve and in a way we can all be proud of.”

— Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn, III

Treatment

NICoE focuses its treatment plans on active-duty service members with TBI and psychological health conditions who have been unresponsive to current treatments. After being referred to NICoE by their current physician, patients come to the center with their families for two weeks where they stay in a dedicated Fisher House on the Bethesda campus. Once here, an experienced team of interdisciplinary specialists meets with the service member and family members to begin the process of assessment and treatment planning. After a review of medical records and test results, followed by a full assessment and receipt of initial care and the treatment plan, service members return to their duty station and their referring military treatment facility. The center's ultimate goal is to help those eligible service members return to active duty, and NICoE follows up with all patients and providers after their stay.

Advanced Technology for Warrior Care

NICoE features cutting-edge technology, such as CAREN (Computer Assisted Rehabilitation Environment), to treat service members experiencing TBI and/or psychological health conditions. One of only five such machines in the world, CAREN is a computer-assisted rehabilitation system with a motion platform, embedded treadmill and virtual environments for evaluating and rehabilitating a patient's vision, reaction time, gait and multitasking ability. The center also has some of the most advanced imaging technologies in the world, including a Positron emission tomography (PET), computed tomography (CT), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Magnetoencephalography (MEG), enabling providers to view brain scans and images that have previously been unavailable. NICoE features the following onsite treatment facilities and services:

- Occupational therapy gym
- Gait lab
- Outdoor rehabilitation space
- Vocational rehabilitation space
- Virtual reality suite with vehicle and firearms simulators
- Speech, hearing and sight rehabilitation

- Comprehensive physical and occupational therapy — including auto driving rehabilitation
- Advanced training equipment for strength, agility, balance and aerobic conditioning

Amenities

NICoE features the following amenities for service members and their families:

- Patient rooms for music therapy, sleep studies and recreation therapy
- A family lounge, café, business center and activity center
- Conference rooms and auditorium
- An atrium called “Central Park,” which serves as a peaceful, naturalistic center with plants, simulated sounds and different surfaces for service members to experience while walking (i.e., artificial turf, carpet and stones)

Fisher House Foundation, the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund's sister organization, built a new 20-room Fisher House next to NICoE that is specially designed to meet service member and family needs related to TBI and psychological health. This effort will continue promoting NICoE's healing environment of hope, inspiration and community.

The Future

NICoE seeks to be a national leader in advancing world-class psychological health and TBI treatment, research and education in a supportive, healing environment. With its dedicated staff, the center seeks to provide new hope for service members recovering from TBI and psychological health conditions.

NICoE is “an outstanding gift for our warriors from the American people.”

—NICoE Deputy Director Thomas DeGraba, MD