

# Redesign the Experience of Seeking and Adhering to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Treatment



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Patient Care Services, VHA*

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## Redesign the Experience of Seeking and Adhering to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Treatment

- Many Veterans have experienced at least one potentially traumatic event at some point in their lives, including disaster, war, or a life-threatening assault or accident, and some may develop PTSD.
- VA provides extensive service and complete evidence-based treatment for Veterans with PTSD.
- There are challenges associated with motivating people with a PTSD diagnosis to seek care and keeping those who do seek care in treatment.
  - Due to the symptoms and stigma associated with PTSD, many patients are reluctant to participate in mental health treatment even when they are diagnosed or identified as being at risk of PTSD.



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## Redesign the Experience of Seeking and Adhering to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Treatment

- VA seeks innovative methods of improving the likelihood that Veterans with PTSD will seek and complete evidence-based treatment.
- Of particular interest are proposals that include comprehensive solutions that redesign the experience for Veterans in need of treatment.
- Proposals may address as much of the process as appropriate, including such phases as initial Veteran consideration of treatment, the treatment process itself, and follow up care.



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## Examples of Concepts That May Be Considered

- Initial education about PTSD and treatment options, so the patient can learn more about PTSD, ask questions, and understand what treatment will entail.
  - Information about different ways the patient can seek assistance, including web-based, spiritual, and local mental health services.
  - Non-therapy activities that may increase positive interactions with and trust in the system of care.
  - Self-management techniques and technologies to help the Veteran find new ways to handle symptoms.
  - Promoting the concept that treatment works and addressing specific concerns, while gently helping the Veteran understand that avoidance of treatment will not result in improvement and could result in decline.
  - Involving the patient's spouse or partner, if appropriate and permitted by the patient, to help clarify for the patient the impact of PTSD on others in his or her life and to provide support when the Veteran does seek treatment.
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## Successful Innovations

- Proposals will offer interventions to improve the experience Veterans encounter when considering, seeking, and completing PTSD treatment and therapies, focusing on:
  - A combination of the examples outlined above that are likely to achieve the intended result, or
  - Other new approaches.
- Successful innovations inform Veterans of the benefits of treatments and the risks of not seeking treatment for PTSD and enhance the process of successfully entering and completing treatment, without increasing negative stigma associated with this condition.



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## Evaluation Required

- Monitoring of patient progress and the evidence-based tracking of outcomes is critical to ensuring that Veterans receive the best care possible and fully overcome PTSD.
  - VA is specifically interested in proposals that include methods of monitoring and tracking of outcomes.
  - Such monitoring can be unique to the specific proposal, but should include at least the following:
    - Impact on likelihood of entering and completing a course of evidence-based psychotherapy for PTSD
    - Impact on PTSD symptoms per se
    - Impact on other indicators of emotional resilience and well-being, e.g., self-efficacy, problem solving, personal stress management strategies
    - Impact on other quality of life indicators, e.g. success in the work place or educational settings, in relationships, or community roles.
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## Conclusions

- VA seeks innovative methods of improving the likelihood that Veterans with PTSD will seek and complete evidence-based treatment.
- Many approaches will be considered which address the overall processes of delivering such care or some component, such as willingness to enter treatment.
- All innovations must contain evaluation components that directly address the goals of this project.

