



National Intrepid Center of Excellence

8901 WISCONSIN AVENUE, BLDG 51, BETHESDA, MD 20889
www.nicoe.capmed.mil email: nicoe@med.navy.mil

The National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) is a DoD institute dedicated to providing cutting-edge evaluation, treatment planning, research and education for service members and their families dealing with the complex interactions of combat and mission related mild traumatic brain injury and psychological health conditions.

COMMITMENT

A gift from the American people by way of the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, the NICoE is a tribute to America's military heroes and a place to heal the invisible wounds of war.

INNOVATION

Utilizing a unique blend of high-tech and high-touch care, the NICoE provides an interdisciplinary, holistic, patient and family-centered assessment. This evaluation is designed to uncover the issues that interfere with a service member's return to duty, and that interrupt inter-personal relationships with family and friends. Our detailed treatment planning allows us to lay the groundwork for physical, psychological and spiritual recovery.

VISION

Our vision is to be an instrument of hope, healing, discovery and learning.

- **HOPE:** Our comprehensive evaluation targets physiological and psychological processes that enable us to develop and provide education and treatment solutions to service members. We are beginning a trajectory of recovery, instilling hope in each service member that healing is possible.
- **DISCOVERY:** We aim to recognize currently unknown patterns of physiological and psychological processes to develop proven treatment solutions for service members and their families.
- **HEALING:** We provide each service member with the education and tools to allow them to achieve a trajectory of self-efficacy, directing their own healing and achieving their life goals.
- **LEARNING:** We seek to be the national scientific and research information hub for service members, families, providers, researchers, staff and our academic partners.



BACKGROUND

The IFHF led the fundraising effort for the NICoE, securing \$65 million in private donations from the American people and overseeing the construction and equipment of the facility. The 72,000 square foot, two-story facility is located on the campus of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. It was officially transferred to the DoD in a dedication ceremony on June 24, 2010. The NICoE was later transferred from TRICARE Management Activity's Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) to the Department of the Navy under the National Naval Medical Center in August of 2010, which became the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in September of 2011.

PURPOSE

The NICoE was created as a center of excellence to focus the collected wisdom and knowledge of our military, federal, academic and private industry partners to define the pattern of the disease state, identify definitive diagnostic criteria, advance novel treatments and share that knowledge with each other. Ultimately, together we can return our wounded, ill and injured service members back to productive lives.

TREATMENT

The NICoE's primary patient population is comprised of active duty service members with combat and mission related TBI and PH conditions who are not responding to current therapy. After being referred by their provider, patients come to the NICoE with their families for four weeks, during which time they stay in a NICoE-dedicated Fisher House on the Bethesda campus. Upon their departure, service members return to their referring military treatment facility and duty station with a personalized treatment plan and the skills to take control of their healing.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY FOR PATIENT CARE

The NICoE features advanced technology which is utilized to aid new discoveries related to the complex pathophysiological state created by TBI and PH conditions. The NICoE's Computer Assisted Rehabilitation Environment, or CAREN, is one of only eight such machines in the world, and features a 180-degree projection screen and customized virtual environments. Additionally, the NICoE utilizes some of the most advanced imaging technologies in the world, including a Positron Emission Tomography-Computed Tomography (PET-CT), 3T Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Magnetoencephalography (MEG). These images can then be combined and viewed in the Digital Imaging Visualization Environment (DIVE), a movie-theater styled room enabling providers to view brain scans and images utilizing 3D technology.

AMENITIES

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

- Patient rooms dedicated to art and music therapy, sleep studies and recreation therapy
- Family-focused spaces such as a lounge, a playground, a café, a business center and an activity center
- Conference rooms, classrooms and an auditorium
- An atrium known as Central Park, which serves as a peaceful, naturalistic center with plants, natural sounds and challenging walking surfaces

THE FUTURE

The NICoE aims to be a leader in advancing traumatic brain injury and psychological health treatment, research and education. With its dedicated staff, the NICoE seeks to be an instrument of hope, healing, discovery, and learning for service members recovering from TBI and PH conditions.





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PATIENT PROFILE

NICoE patients are active duty service members with a mild-to-moderate TBI complicated by other impairing PH conditions, who are not responding to current therapy and who have been prevented from returning to full duty. The profile of service members seen at the NICoE includes:

- *Active duty desiring to remain mission-capable; National Guard/Reservists on active duty*
- *Mild-to-moderate TBI and psychological health issues*
- *Persistence of symptoms*
- *No active/untreated substance abuse disorder*
- *Capable of participating in an intensive outpatient level of care, including:*
 - *The ability to perform all Activities of Daily Living skills*
 - *Independently obtain or provide for their own food and transportation*
 - *Conduct their own financial affairs*
 - *Not a danger to self or others*
 - *Not in need of services requiring a level of nursing care or medical monitoring higher than what can safely be provided in an outpatient setting*

The NICoE features an interdisciplinary team including a neurologist, psychiatrist, internist (team leader), neuropsychologist, family therapist, speech language pathologist, nutritionist, audiologist, physical and occupational therapist and chaplain.

NICoE EVALUATIONS

- *Physical and neurological evaluations*
- *Psychiatric and psychological health evaluations*
- *Vestibular, audiology and speech evaluations*
- *Electrophysiologic testing*
- *Sleep evaluation*
- *Neuroimaging evaluation (can include MRI, PET-CT, MEG)*
- *Physical rehabilitation*
- *Family evaluation*
- *Integrative medicine (complimentary and alternative medicine)*
- *Nutrition evaluation*
- *Art therapy evaluation*
- *Spirituality consultation*
- *Pharmacy and substance use assessments*
- *Virtual reality assessments*

The NICoE's clinical mission is to offer interdisciplinary diagnostic and treatment planning for patients with complex TBI and PH issues, including those who are not responding to current therapy. The NICoE provides both patients and families with a holistic clinical care environment, while producing a comprehensive, individualized treatment plan. The NICoE works with the primary care provider, case managers, and the command to ensure collaborative recovery efforts, and to measure short-term and long-term outcomes of therapeutic interventions.

The NICoE provides an intensive four-week evaluation of physical, neurological, spiritual and psychosocial health.



HOPE ★ HEALING ★ DISCOVERY ★ LEARNING



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

About the NICoE

- 1. What does the NICoE stand for?**

The NICoE [*N-EYE-co*] stands for the National Intrepid Center of Excellence.
- 2. What is the NICoE?**

The National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) is a DoD institute dedicated to providing cutting-edge evaluation, treatment planning, research and education for service members and their families dealing with the complex interactions of mild traumatic brain injury and psychological health conditions.
- 3. Where is the NICoE located?**

The 72,000 square-foot facility is located on the campus of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. The NICoE's location offers convenient access to accommodations provided for service members and their families at a Fisher House dedicated specifically to NICoE patients. In addition, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, the National Institutes of Health and Washington, DC's local public transportation system, the Metro, are also in close proximity.
- 4. What is the NICoE mission?**

The mission of the NICoE is to be a leader in advancing TBI and PH treatment, research and education.
- 5. What is the NICoE vision?**

Our vision is to be an instrument of hope, healing, discovery and learning.
- 6. Is the NICoE part of the Department of Defense?**

Yes, like all military treatment facilities, the NICoE operates under the purview of Department of Defense.
- 7. Who does the NICoE serve?**

The NICoE serves active duty service members with mild traumatic brain injury and psychological health conditions.



8. **How is the NICoE program different from other PH/TBI programs offered by MTFs?**
The NICoE utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to care, featuring a comprehensive team of medical professionals offering intensive diagnosis and treatment planning. Because of our unique clinical care model, providers are able to focus on both service members and their families. The NICoE is also home to the latest medical technology, allowing immediate access to technology required to diagnose and assess TBI and PH conditions. Serving as the hub of a public-private network of military and civilian local, regional, state, federal and global resources, the NICoE develops treatment plans, clinician and service member education programs, long-term follow-up and continuity management in one central location.
9. **Who funded the building and equipment for the NICoE?**
A gift from the American people by way of the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, the NICoE is a tribute to America's military heroes and a place to heal the invisible wounds of war.
10. **What is the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund?**
The Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund was established in 2000 to provide financial support for the dependents of United States service members who perished while on active duty. This continued an effort begun in 1982 by Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher, founders of the Intrepid Museum Foundation and the Fisher House Foundation.

Treatment at the NICoE

11. **What services does the NICoE offer?**
The NICoE's primary patient population is comprised of active duty service members with TBI and PH conditions who are not responding to current therapy. After being referred by their provider, patients come to the NICoE with their families for four weeks, during which time they stay in a NICoE-dedicated Fisher House on the Bethesda campus. Upon their departure, service members return to their referring military treatment facility and duty station with a personalized treatment plan and the skills to take control of their healing.

The NICoE is also a hub of education for TBI and PH conditions. Education is provided for service members, family members, providers and researchers at the NICoE and throughout the world by way of shared research and treatment protocols, onsite conferences and video and teleconference meetings and events.
12. **How does a service member get selected for evaluation at the NICoE?**
Service members are typically referred to the NICoE program by their primary care manager(s). A medical intake referral team will review each referral and confer with providers as necessary to determine the service member's suitability for the NICoE program.
13. **Can a service member self-refer?**
Service members interested in receiving care at the NICoE are encouraged to contact their primary care manager to initiate the referral process.
14. **What is the first step to referring a service member?**
The health care provider should send an email to: nicoe@med.navy.mil and request a copy of the referral form. Upon submission of the completed form, the NICoE's referral team will review the referral request for suitability.
15. **How long is a typical stay at the NICoE?**
Patients undergo evaluation and diagnosis for a four-week period at the NICoE.

16. **Can the service member select the dates they will be at the NICoE?**
Selecting the dates service members and their families will be at the NICoE requires coordinating the schedules of the NICoE's clinicians, the service member and the service member's command.
17. **Are service members required to participate in a research study while they are at the NICoE?**
The NICoE, in addition to its clinical care component, is a research institute dedicated to learning more about the complex interactions of TBI and PH conditions. As such, service members receiving care at the NICoE are invited to participate in current and ongoing research protocols throughout their stay. Many service members are interested in helping advance the science and improve the treatment options available to future generations. Participation is never mandatory. Occasionally, service members receiving care at WRNMMC also participate in research protocols at the NICoE, even if not involved in the outpatient program.
18. **What happens if follow-up treatment recommendations require resources or health care providers that are not available in the service member's home area or are located more than 100 miles from the service member's home?**
The NICoE clinical team makes their best effort to address specific needs and access to care issues when building each service member's treatment plan. Each plan is created in collaboration with the service member's primary care providers, who are aware of local treatment options.
19. **Does the NICoE admit service members from OCONUS (Alaska, Hawaii, Germany, Japan, etc.)?**
Yes. The NICoE receives referrals from military treatment facilities all over the world.
20. **Do service members and their families have an on-site patient advocate who they can contact with specific questions about their care, either before arriving or after departing?**
Members of the Concierge Services Team (Continuity Managers and Family Advocates) are the primary advocates for service members and their families. Beyond this, all typical lines of redress available to active duty service members are in place.

Additional Information and Resources

21. **What is the NICoE's operating schedule?**
The NICoE is an outpatient facility that sees patients Monday-Friday, from 0700-1700. As a federal facility, it follows all posted guidelines for holidays.
22. **Who can organizations contact regarding partnership opportunities?**
Send an email to the NICoE Strategic Communications and Outreach team at: nicoe@med.navy.mil.
23. **Who can the media contact for additional information?**
Send an email to the NICoE Public Affairs Officer at: nicoepao@med.navy.mil.
24. **Where can I find additional information on PH/TBI?**
Contact the DCoE Outreach Center toll free at 866-966-1020 or by emailing: resources@dcoeoutreach.org.