



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 22, 2009

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COUNTY LAUNCHES WEBSITE TO HELP VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES *Multilingual Site Provides Access to Counseling, Housing and Jobs*

The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) today launched a new website aimed at helping veterans, service members, and their families access mental health counseling, emergency housing, and employment assistance.

“The Network of Care for Veterans and Service Members website is an essential bridge to mental health services and other programs available at the local, state and federal level,” said San Diego County Supervisor Bill Horn.

Nick Macchione, HHS Director; Alfredo Aguirre, Director, HHS’s Mental Health Services; Tom Splitgerber, County Veterans Service Officer and some veterans and their families also participated in the website launch, which took place at the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center in Balboa Park.

The website www.sandiego.networkofcare.org is a state-of-the-art resource that serves as a one-stop-shop for veterans, National Guard, reservists, active duty personnel, and their families to learn about services and organizations that can help them. Information on the website is offered in 11 languages.

“It is extremely important for veterans and service members to know that this resource is available, especially now that many of them are returning home from deployments,” Horn added.

About 1.5 million veterans from all over the country are expected to return home in the next two years. A recent study conducted by the Rand Corporation revealed that approximately 300,000 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans report suffering from major depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Yet only about half of those individuals sought help for their mental disorder.

“The transition from soldier to civilian can prove challenging,” said Macchione. “The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency is making efforts to ease that transition, especially when it comes to accessing services such as mental health resources.”

Given the high number of service members returning from war, HHS is developing new mental health preventive services to provide early intervention. The efforts will target various population groups including veterans, their families and their dependents. New services will be funded from the Mental Health Services Act, approved by voters in 2004.

“Unfortunately, we live in a culture that stigmatizes mental illnesses and disorders,” said Aguirre. “The fear of rejection and discrimination is one of the main barriers that prevents people with a mental illness from accessing needed mental health services.”

At the new website, veterans and their families will find housing resources and counselors that provide career advice and job assistance. The site is also a place where they can communicate with peers, share their experiences and get connected.

People suffering from a mental illness can access services by calling the County’s 24-hour, multi-lingual Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339.

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