

Characteristics of Effective Treatment Responses

Effective responses to the needs of veterans with post-employment stress effects include a consistent approach that:

- Integrates trauma-informed SUD and mental health care
- Maintains and supports a strength-based, recovery-based, consumer-centered, culturally competent, veteran-competent, and safe approach toward treatment
- Begins with knowledge of the military culture and Service Members' experience
- Respects each veteran's right to set goals and choose treatment approaches
- Makes full accommodation for the range of injuries and disabilities, including learning assistance for people whose head injuries have caused cognitive challenges

Staff have mastered the key areas of knowledge and understanding necessary to help veterans return to balance, including:

- The nature of human resiliency and vulnerability to stress, trauma, and substance use disorders
- The neurobiology and physiology of stress, trauma, embodied stress, return to balance, and management of post-deployment stress effects and substance use disorders
- The many levels of human experience that are affected by trauma and involved in the return to balance, and the range of biological, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social processes that an individual veteran may need to address
- The difference between acute stress disorder, transient post-deployment stress symptoms, acute PTSD, and chronic PTSD, and the many relationships between these effects and SUDs
- The relationship between trauma and the range of disorders of extreme stress sometimes diagnosed as personality disorders, and the relationships between these effects and substance use disorders
- The effects of TBI learning, emotions, and substance use, and their implications for treatment
- The stages of trauma recovery and appropriate measures at each stage
- The purpose, protocols, and appropriate audiences for the treatment approaches they use
- Their own reasons for wanting to do this work, and any "agendas" they might have
- Self-care measures for those who work with traumatized consumers

Individualized, strength-based, consumer-driven, trauma-informed, and evidence-based assessment and treatment/recovery planning:

- Assesses and builds on the individual's strengths and resources
- Uses respectful assessment tools that match veterans' experience and needs
- Matches safe, appropriate evidence-based and promising practices to the individual veteran's goals, challenges, needs, and circumstances
- Allows the individual veteran to choose among appropriate treatment approaches
- Refers veterans readily to other providers, when needed services are not available on site
- Acknowledges and coordinates multidisciplinary treatment and case management for the range of injuries, disorders, and challenges that an individual might have
- Includes the family in the treatment process and provides services (and linkage to services) for family members, including children

The provider's recovery support focus:

- Builds on the SAMHSA-supported national efforts toward recovery-based services
- Assertively links Service Members, veterans, and families with ongoing national, community-based, and veteran/family-specific support structures

Excerpted from *Finding Balance After the War Zone: Considerations in the Treatment of Post-Deployment Stress* (Woll, in press), developed by Pamela Woll, MA, CADP for the Great Lakes Addiction Technology Transfer Center, Human Priorities, and partners.