



DoD/VA Integrated Mental Health Strategy (IMHS)



Strategic Action Summaries

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Table of Contents

- 1.0 Introduction2**
 - 1.1 IMHS Overview2
 - 1.2 Document Overview.....2
- 2.0 Strategic Goal #1 - Expanding access to behavioral health care in DoD and VA3**
 - Strategic Action #1 - Joint review of MH Screening Policies & Procedures3
 - Strategic Action #2 - Primary Care3
 - Strategic Action #3 - Vet Center expansion to OEF/OIF Active Duty.....3
 - Strategic Action #4 - RCS Mobile Vet Center expansion to SMs and Veterans in rural areas.....3
 - Strategic Action #5 - Sharing MH Staff3
 - Strategic Action #6 - Telemental Health4
 - Strategic Action #7 - Rural Area Providers4
 - Strategic Action #8 - Mental Health Gap4
- 3.0 Strategic Goal #2 - Ensuring quality and continuity of care across the Departments for Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families5**
 - Strategic Action #9 - Develop System to Deliver Evidence-Based Psychotherapies.....5
 - Strategic Action #10 - Quality Measures5
 - Strategic Action #11 - Impact on Caregivers5
 - Strategic Action #12 - Patient Outcomes5
 - Strategic Action #13 - inTransition Program5
 - Strategic Action #14 - Clinical information sharing6
- 4.0 Strategic Goal #3 - Advancing care through community partnership, education, and successful public communication.....7**
 - Strategic Action #17 - Family Members’ Role.....7
 - Strategic Action #18 - Community Partnership7
 - Strategic Action #19 - Mental Health Messaging7
 - Strategic Action #20 - Self Help Strategies.....7
 - Strategic Action #21 - Access to Web Technologies7
 - Strategic Action #25 - Military Culture Training.....8
- 5.0 Strategic Goal #4 - Promoting resilience and building better behavioral health care systems for tomorrow.....9**
 - Strategic Action #15 - Suicide Risk and Prevention.....9
 - Strategic Action #16 - Family Resilience Programs.....9
 - Strategic Action #22 - Justice Outreach Programs9
 - Strategic Action #23 - Chaplains’ Role9
 - Strategic Action #24 - Resilience Programs9
 - Strategic Action #26 - Mental Health Research into Innovative Programs9
 - Strategic Action #27 - Review of Pilots.....10
 - Strategic Action #28 - Gender Differences10

1.0 Introduction

1.1 IMHS Overview

In order to address the growing population of Servicemembers (SM) and Veterans with Mental Health needs, the DoD and VA are developing a DoD/VA Integrated Mental Health Strategy (IMHS). Mental health care provides unique challenges for the two organizations with separate missions in that they serve the same population, but at different times in their lives and careers. As such, the IMHS will center around a coordinated public health model to improve the access, quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of mental health services for all Active Duty Servicemembers, National Guard and Reserve Component members, Veterans, and their families.

The IMHS will include the following four strategic goals that will be used to guide DoD and VA collaborative efforts:

1. Expanding access to behavioral health care in DoD and VA
2. Ensuring quality and continuity of care across the Departments for SMs, Veterans, and their families
3. Advancing care through community partnership, education, and successful public communication
4. Promoting resilience and building better behavioral health care systems for tomorrow

Each of the goals provide defined end states and will be achieved within three years, following the development and implementation of 28 Strategic Actions. The strategic goals will be supported by operating plans and performance metrics.

1.2 Document Overview

The subsequent tables within this document summarize each of the Strategic Actions by strategic goal. Each table includes a brief description of the Strategic Action.

2.0 Strategic Goal #1 - Expanding access to behavioral health care in DoD and VA

The following section summarizes the Strategic Actions for strategic goal #1. Each of the Strategic Actions associated with this goal are designed to expand access to behavioral health care in both of the Departments. These Strategic Actions encompass joint review of mental health screening policies and procedures, integration of mental health services into primary care, expansion of Vet Center to Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Active Duty, and Readjustment Counseling Services (RCS) Mobile Vet Center expansion to Servicemembers and Veterans in rural areas.

Strategic Action #1 - Joint review of MH Screening Policies & Procedures

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| Strategic Action Description | Coordinate the joint review of mental health screening policies and procedures, including but not limited to, the Post Deployment Health Assessment, Post Deployment Health Reassessment, and the annual Periodic Health Assessment, with a view to enhancing successful transition between the DoD and VA. |
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Strategic Action #2 - Primary Care

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| Strategic Action Description | Advance the integration of mental health services into primary care (MHPC), with coordinated plans and trainings across the two Departments. |
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Strategic Action #3 - Vet Center expansion to OEF/OIF Active Duty

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| Strategic Action Description | Expand eligibility to include members of the armed forces who served in OEF/OIF (Includes Members of the National Guard and Reserve who are on Active Duty) for readjustment counseling and other services through Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS; Vet Center Program) as outlined in Section 401 of Public Law 111-163, The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010. |
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Strategic Action #4 - RCS Mobile Vet Center expansion to SMs and Veterans in rural areas

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| Strategic Action Description | Evaluate the possibility of expanding VA's Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) Mobile Vet Center program to enhance access for Active Duty Servicemembers, National Guard and Reserve members, and families, as well as Veterans in rural areas who are geographically distant from existing programs. |
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Strategic Action #5 - Sharing MH Staff

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| Strategic Action Description | Explore and develop effective and efficient mechanisms for sharing mental health care personnel between the Departments to meet urgent needs. |
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Strategic Action #6 - Telemental Health

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| Strategic Action Description | Develop technical, business, and clinical processes for implementing joint DoD and VA telemental health services. |
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Strategic Action #7 - Rural Area Providers

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| Strategic Action Description | Evaluate options to support eligible beneficiaries by identifying providers in rural areas who are knowledgeable about military experiences and culture, and proficient in treating mental health conditions common to Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families. |
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Strategic Action #8 - Mental Health Gap

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| Strategic Action Description | Evaluate current mental health care staffing; design strategic initiatives to overcome any gaps. |
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3.0 Strategic Goal #2 - Ensuring quality and continuity of care across the Departments for Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families

The following section summarizes the Strategic Actions for strategic goal #2. Each of the Strategic Actions associated with this goal are designed to ensure quality and continuity of care across the Departments for Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families. These Strategic Actions encompass developing a system to develop and deliver evidence-based psychotherapies, quality measures, the impact on caregivers, patient outcomes, the inTransition program, and clinical information sharing.

Strategic Action #9 - Develop System to Deliver Evidence-Based Psychotherapies

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| Strategic Action Description | Coordinate and standardize, where appropriate, DoD and VA training in evidence-based psychotherapies. DoD and VA will share information and materials on evidence-based programs, while recognizing and supporting the range of evidence-based programs/psychotherapies in each Department. Training opportunities, shared training materials, templates for documentation, a dedicated provider resource website and outcome measures for evidence-based therapies within each Department are supported. |
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Strategic Action #10 - Quality Measures

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| Strategic Action Description | Recommend quality measures for mental health services based on DoD-VA Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) and related evidence-based practices. |
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Strategic Action #11 - Impact on Caregivers

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| Strategic Action Description | Evaluate the mental health impact of being able to designate a caregiver for assistance with severe wounds, illnesses, and injuries, considering issues facing both the recipient and provider of care, mechanisms for identifying caregivers, the structure of caregiver benefits, and other supports. |
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Strategic Action #12 - Patient Outcomes

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| Strategic Action Description | Coordinate mechanisms for evaluation of patient outcomes from mental health care services, and the use of outcome data for clinical decision support, quality improvement, program evaluation, and comparative effectiveness studies. |
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Strategic Action #13 - inTransition Program

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| Strategic Action Description | Enhance continuity of care for Servicemembers who are relocating within or across Departments and who are receiving ongoing mental health care by implementing the inTransition program. |
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Strategic Action #14 - Clinical information sharing

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| Strategic Action Description | Evaluate and recommend policies or procedures related to sharing information about mental health care between DoD and VA. |
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4.0 Strategic Goal #3 - Advancing care through community partnership, education, and successful public communication

The following section summarizes the Strategic Actions for strategic goal #3. Each of the Strategic Actions associated with this goal are designed to advance care through community partnership, education, and successful public communication. These Strategic Actions encompass the role of family members, community partnerships, coordinating mental health communications plans, self help strategies, access to web technology, and military culture training.

Strategic Action #17 - Family Members' Role

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| Strategic Action Description | Explore methods to help family members identify mental health needs of Servicemembers and Veterans by providing education and coaching. |
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Strategic Action #18 - Community Partnership

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| Strategic Action Description | Identify and propose mechanisms for reviewing the activities of relevant outside organizations and developing collaborations or partnerships. Potential partners may include community organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGO), professional societies, and provider groups that provide services of potential value to returning Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families. |
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Strategic Action #19 - Mental Health Messaging

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| Strategic Action Description | Coordinate DoD and VA communications plans to improve public mental health messaging related to the promotion of mental health and seeking mental health care to achieve consistency of message and reduce duplication of effort. Improve, expand and/or implement population focused anti-stigma public education campaigns to reduce the stigma of seeking care for psychological health conditions. |
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Strategic Action #20 - Self Help Strategies

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| Strategic Action Description | Develop and identify approaches to promote utilization of self-help strategies for mental health concerns through web services, print material and seminars. Evaluate the value of adding coaching to support the process of self-help and to facilitate engagement in mental health services for those who do not respond to self-help strategies. |
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Strategic Action #21 - Access to Web Technologies

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| Strategic Action Description | Coordinate communications and marketing plans in VA and DoD to facilitate access for Veterans, Servicemembers, and families to existing DoD and VA web-mediated resources. Evaluate the extension of joint DoD and VA programs using new technologies including web resources and social networking to provide resources for Servicemembers, Veterans, and families. |
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Strategic Action #25 - Military Culture Training

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| Strategic Action Description | Identify and promote mechanisms for education and training. The target audiences should include providers and others within the Departments; local, regional, and national agencies and organizations; and Servicemembers, Veterans and families. The education and training should focus on military culture; signs and symptoms of deployment-related mental health conditions; effective methods for the treatment and prevention of mental health conditions; and the availability of Services; as appropriate for each target audience. |
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5.0 Strategic Goal #4 - Promoting resilience and building better behavioral health care systems for tomorrow

The following section summarizes the Strategic Actions for strategic goal #4. Each of the Strategic Actions associated with this goal are designed to promote resilience and building better behavioral health care systems for tomorrow. These Strategic Actions encompass suicide risk and prevention, family resilience programs, justice outreach programs, the role of chaplains, resilience programs, mental health research into innovative programs, the review of pilot programs, and gender differences.

Strategic Action #15 - Suicide Risk and Prevention

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| Strategic Action Description | Explore methods to disseminate knowledge of suicide risk and prevention practices through the analysis of selected data, through a review of similarly focused DoD and VA prevention programs, and through coordinated training and collaboration with entities outside DoD and VA. |
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Strategic Action #16 - Family Resilience Programs

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| Strategic Action Description | Identify, recommend and promote effective family resilience programs in each Service and in the VA. The recommended family resilience programs may be implemented as components of existing Servicemember and Veteran resilience programs, or as separate, stand-alone programs. |
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Strategic Action #22 - Justice Outreach Programs

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| Strategic Action Description | Explore the benefits of and propose a pilot project to provide a DoD service modeled on the Veterans Affairs' mental health justice-outreach program. |
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Strategic Action #23 – Chaplains' Role

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| Strategic Action Description | Include input and expertise from DoD Chaplains in defining the role of VA Chaplain Services and community clergy in mental health care at VA medical centers and clinics. |
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Strategic Action #24 - Resilience Programs

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| Strategic Action Description | Include consultation and lessons learned from DoD resilience programs in developing and implementing evidence-based strategies to prevent mental illnesses within the VA. |
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Strategic Action #26 - Mental Health Research into Innovative Programs

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| Strategic Action Description | Promote the translation of mental-health related research into innovative actions, programs, and policies for returning Servicemembers, Veterans, and families. |
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Strategic Action #27 - Review of Pilot Programs

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| Strategic Action Description | Support a review of pilot and demonstration projects, innovative local and regional programs and other mechanisms of potential innovation; including use of complementary and alternative medicine. Identify and disseminate promising practices. |
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Strategic Action #28 - Gender Differences

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| Strategic Action Description | Use information from research and the evaluation of clinical and administrative data to explore gender differences in the delivery and effectiveness of mental health services. Use findings to improve the accessibility and quality of care, develop strategies for overcoming identified health care disparities and barriers to care, and to identify the need for further research. |
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