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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2013

VA Starts Campaign to Raise PTSD Awareness

WASHINGTON – In observance of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) awareness month, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD invites the public to participate in its “Take the Step” campaign.

“Every day of the year, we should focus on assisting those who have served our Nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “In June, during PTSD awareness month, we take special care to help Veterans with PTSD. VA is a leader in providing state-of-the-art, high-quality mental health care that improves and saves Veterans’ lives. PTSD treatment can help and there is hope for recovery for Veterans who need mental health services.”

Throughout the month, online at [www.PTSD.va.gov](http://www.PTSD.va.gov), the campaign has highlighted different topics so visitors can “Take the Step” to: know more about PTSD; challenge their beliefs; explore the treatment options available; and reach out to make a difference.

VA provides effective PTSD treatment for Veterans and conducts extensive research on PTSD, including prevention of stress disorders. Veterans are encouraged to use VA’s PTSD resources so they are able to recognize symptoms and seek help if the need arises. VA also encourages Veterans to share what they learn with someone they know to build awareness and support systems.

Following exposure to trauma, most people experience stress reactions but many do not develop PTSD. Mental health experts are not sure why some people develop PTSD and others do not. However, if stress reactions do not improve over time and they disrupt everyday life, VA encourages Veterans to seek help to determine if PTSD may be a factor.

“Many barriers keep people with PTSD from seeking the help they need,” said Dr. Matthew Friedman, Executive Director of VA’s National Center for PTSD. “Knowledge and awareness, however, are key to overcoming these barriers. For those living with PTSD, knowing there are treatments that work, for example, can lead them to seek needed care. Greater public awareness of PTSD can help reduce the stigma of this mental health problem and overcome negative stereotypes that may keep many people from pursuing treatment.”

PTSD Awareness Month Highlights:

- The purpose of PTSD Awareness Month is to raise public awareness of PTSD and its effective treatments so that everyone can help people affected by PTSD.
- Throughout June explore weekly features at [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov).
- “Ten Steps to Raise PTSD Awareness” provides links to materials that foster greater

understanding of trauma, PTSD and treatment. It offers practical suggestions for the public to raise PTSD awareness in their own community.

- For continued involvement, please [sign up for the PTSD Monthly Update](#). Stay up on new information about PTSD and trauma year round.

[On June 3](#), VA announced it had hired a total of 1,607 mental health clinical providers to meet the goal of 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in the President's Aug. 31, 2012, Executive Order. Additionally, VA had hired 2,005 mental health clinical providers to fill existing vacancies, as well as 318 new peer specialists towards the specific goal of 800 peer specialists by Dec. 31, 2013 as outlined in the Executive Order.

Throughout the summer, VA will hold mental health summits at each of its 152 medical centers across the nation to establish and enhance positive working relationships with their community partners. The summits will help encourage community engagement in order to better address and understand the broad mental health care needs of veterans and their families.

For more information about PTSD, professionals and the public can go to The National Center for PTSD Web site at [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov). The site offers resources such as:

- [PTSD Coach mobile app](#), this award-winning app provides symptom-management strategies and it's always with you when you need it.
- [Continuing education](#) opportunities for providers, including PTSD 101 courses, on the best practices in PTSD treatment (CEs/CMEs offered).
- [AboutFace](#): An online video gallery of Veterans talking about PTSD and how treatment can turn your life around.

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