



The White Oak Collaborative

RE: Mental Health Access for the Military- & Veteran-Connected Community

"We, the undersigned organizations committed to supporting service members, Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors, urge swift action to address the mental health care crisis faced by the military- and Veteran-connected community.

In 2019, 15% of active-duty service members reported experiencing suicidal thoughts during their military affiliation. Nearly a quarter of active-duty spouses, Veterans, and Veterans spouses had received an anxiety diagnosis in the past five years.

In the two years since this data was collected, the compounding challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, withdrawal of U.S. personnel from Afghanistan, and resettlement of our Afghan allies have pushed this mental health crisis from urgent to dire. Concurrent to the nationwide scarcity of mental health care options, these acute hardships have also led to an unprecedented shortfall of providers.

We implore the White House, Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, Congress, local and state officials, and other policymakers to look for creative approaches to immediately expand access to mental health resources, programming, and support services in the short term. Timely access to these resources must be a top priority; care should never be delayed by referral processes or funding. Military and Veteran families must also be reassured that their children can seek mental health care without concern that it will impact their ability to serve in uniform one day.

At the same time, our leaders must seek long-term solutions to meet the demand for mental health care throughout the military- and Veteran-connected community. These long-term solutions should include greater collaboration with the private sector, addressing broadband inequity, and, where possible, extending provider licensure across state lines so those who need mental health resources can access them through telehealth.

Without urgent action, this mental health crisis will continue to devastate the military- and Veteran-connected community and impact readiness, resilience, and retention well into the next generation."



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Signed:

Barry Robinson Center
Blue Star Families
Cohen Veterans Network
Dixon Center for Military and Veterans Services
Easterseals
Easterseals DC MD VA
Elizabeth Dole Foundation
Freedom Learning Group
Headstrong
Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University
IAVA
Military Officers Association of America
Military Child Education Coalition
Military Officers Association of America
Military Spouse Advocacy Network
Partners in PROMISE
PsychArmor Institute
PsychHub
RallyPoint
Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving
Secure Families Initiative
Semper Fi & America's Fund
Student Veterans of America
Travis Manion Foundation
Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation