

***Military Veteran's Guide to Help with Brain Injury***

***August 1, 2008***

***The Brain Injury Association of Texas***



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Dear Service Personnel:

The Brain Injury Association of Texas wishes to first and foremost thank you for your services to our country. The Association is providing this *Military Veteran's Guide to Help with Brain Injury* as a free service so that Veteran's and their families may more easily recognize the symptoms of brain injury and then navigate the many resources available both with the federal government, the VA and state of Texas.

A RAND Study projects that 19% of all returning personnel from Iraq and Afghanistan will have a traumatic brain injury. These injuries can be caused not only from direct blows to the head and face, but also from non-penetrating blast waves passing through the brain. Mild, moderate and severe injuries affect mood, thoughts and behavior that can severely impair a person's ability to relate to others, hold down a job or just live independently.

Symptoms of brain injury cases may include:

*Loss of simple movement of various body parts*  
*Loss of flexibility in thinking*  
*Inability to focus on task*  
*Changes in personality*  
*Difficulty with problem solving*  
*Inability to focus visual attention*  
*Difficulties with eye and hand coordination*  
*Short term memory loss.*  
*Interference with long term memory*  
*Increased and decreased interest in sexual behavior*  
*Increased aggressive behavior*  
*Dizziness and nausea*  
*Sleeping difficulties*  
*And many others*

But there are many resources that veterans can access in the following pages. You can also call the BIATX directly and speak with us about what is available: **Family Helpline - 1-800-392-0040**

Sincerely,  
Eric Makowski  
BIATX President - 2008

## First Steps for Injured Vets

1. If you suspect you may have had a brain injury due to a combat injury or even simply from being too close to a concussive blast, your first step should be to obtain a complete neuropsychological evaluation through a military or civilian neuropsychologist. Following the completion of the evaluation, the neuropsychologist will make specific recommendations for treatment which may include inpatient post acute rehabilitation, day programming, outpatient therapies and specific exercises and activities to implement at home and work. You may request an evaluation through the following organizations:

- Contact the **Wounded Warrior (AW2) Program** (formerly the Army Disabled Soldiers Support System (DS3)).

Telephone: 1-800- 237-1336

- Contact the **Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services (DARS)** in your area.

Website: <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/drs/index.shtml>

Telephone: 1-800-628-5115

2. Get in touch with local support groups or contact the Brain Injury Association of Texas for a list of support groups. Support groups can be an invaluable resource for information on a wide variety of topics, including treatment facilities and specific programs that may be available in your area. Contact the Brain Injury Association of Texas at (800) 392-0040 or [www.biatx.org](http://www.biatx.org)
3. Keep a daily journal of your mental and physical changes. Keep a list of questions for the doctor or others on the treatment team. Keep track of treatments, medications and results.
4. Establish a support system of family and friends. Organize family and friends to visit the patient, support the family, and help with tasks needed to prepare for the future.
5. Call 2-1-1 for information about community resources and non-emergency health related services. 2-1-1 is the telephone number for free information and referrals to health and human service and community organizations (public, private and nonprofit human service providers). Specialists are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week with multilingual capabilities, as well as accessible services for persons with disabilities. 2-1-1 is not accessible through all cell phone providers.
6. Apply for SSI / Medicaid immediately. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a program of the Social Security Administration that provides monthly payments to people who are, among other qualifiers, disabled and have limited income and/or resources. If eligible for SSI, the patient usually can get Medicaid, health insurance which is tied into the SSI benefits package. Apply at your local Social Security office or:

Website: <http://www.ssa.gov/disability/>

Telephone: 1 - (800) 772-1213

7. Apply for SSDI / Medicare immediately. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) provides monthly payments for workers and eligible members of their family if an illness or injury is expected to keep the worker from working for a year or longer. Medicare is a health insurance program tied into SSDI. A new beneficiary must wait 24 months after SSDI benefits begin to receive Medicare coverage, in addition to the 5-month waiting period after the disability onset. Enrollment in the Medicare program is automatic for SSDI recipients - no application process is necessary. No monthly premium is charged for hospital insurance to persons receiving SSDI benefits.
8. Call TexCare Partnership: if you are under the age of 19. This program provides health insurance to eligible children through Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Apply by calling or by visiting the website to download an application.

Website: [www.texcarepartnership.com](http://www.texcarepartnership.com)

Telephone: 1- (800) 647-6558

9. Apply for Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services (CRS) or Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) through DARS. This program provides payment for inpatient comprehensive medical rehabilitation; outpatient services such as occupational, physical, speech and cognitive therapies; and post acute TBI services to help with injury-related cognitive difficulties. Eligibility is determined by the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).

Website: [www.dars.state.tx.us](http://www.dars.state.tx.us)

Telephone: 1- (800) 628-5115

10. Apply for Primary Home Care (PHC): This program provides home care services, which can include attendant care and homemaking services. It is available to eligible clients whose health problems cause them to be functionally limited in performing activities of daily living. For information, call the Texas Health and Human Services Commission Office of Ombudsman at (888) 834-7406 to obtain the phone number for the Primary Home Care program in your area or visit [www.hhsc.state.tx.us](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us) go to "Services Search" then to "Search for State Programs" and type PHC in the "Keyword Search" bar.
11. Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) Program: any age if qualifying condition or disability occurs before the age of 22. This program provides home- and community-based services such as respite care, nursing services, habilitation, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, psychological services, specialized therapies, adaptive aids/supplies, home modifications, and independent case management.

Website: [www.hhsc.state.tx.us](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us) and go to "Services Search" then to "Search for State Programs" and type CLASS in the "Keyword Search" bar.

Telephone: 1- (877) 438-5658

12. Community Based Alternative Program (CBA): if the patient is age 21 or over. This program provides an array of home- and community-based services to aged and disabled adults as cost-effective alternatives to nursing facility care. Services include personal assistance, adaptive aids, medical supplies, adult foster care, assisted living/residential care, nursing, home-delivered meals, rehabilitative therapies, respite care, emergency response, and minor home modifications.

Website: [www.hhsc.state.tx.us](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us) and go to “Services Search” then to “Search for State Programs” and type Community Based Alternative in the “Keyword Search” bar

Telephone: 1- (877) 438-5658

13. Contact the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center

Website: <http://www.dvbic.org>

Telephone: 1- (800) 870-9244

14. Visit the Texas Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council Website .

Website: [www.dshs.state.tx.us/braininjury](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/braininjury)

## Other Resources for Injured Veterans & Military Servicemembers

Government Resources – Department of the Army

The **Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA)** and **Post-Deployment Health Re-Assessment (PDHRA)** are routine procedures, but they provide important information that assists military healthcare providers in identifying and providing present and future medical care that may be needed, and they include screening for Traumatic Brain Injury.

Website: <http://www.behavioralhealth.army.mil/post-deploy/index.html>

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The **PTSD/mTBI Chain Teaching Program** The official training period occurred between July and October 2007, but the standardized script and supporting audio-visual products describing signs and symptoms of these conditions are available through this website. There is also a companion video oriented towards family members.

Website: <http://www.behavioralhealth.army.mil/faqs/faqschainteaching.html>

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Telephone: 1-800-342-9647

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The **Warrior in Transition Program** These Units and Centers are located either at or close to a Medical Treatment Facility. A map (provided at the link below) shows Regional Medical Commands, where one can find local medical centers, community hospitals and health centers; most have WTUs. Website:

<http://www.necc.navy.mil/programs/wtp.htm>

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The **Wounded Warrior (AW2) Program** (formerly the Army Disabled Soldiers Support System (DS3)).

<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>

Telephone: 1-800- 237-1336

Government Resources – Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC)

Since 1992, DVBIC has served active duty military, their dependents and veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) through state-of-the-art medical care, innovative clinical research initiatives and educational programs. DVBIC is the only organization committed to the effort to prevent, treat, and provide education on TBI for US military members currently on active duty, National Guard and reservists recently injured in the line of duty, their dependents, and retired military personnel. We work together to provide services and supports to help an individual with TBI return to duty, work and community. Headquartered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC.

Texas Lead Site is located in San Antonio, Texas – Wilford Hall Medical Center /Brooke Army Medical Center –Lackland Air Force Base/ Fort Sam Houston

[http://www.dvbic.org/pdfs/WHMC\\_DVBIC\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.dvbic.org/pdfs/WHMC_DVBIC_Statement.pdf)

Two Satellite Clinics are in Fort Bragg, NC, and Camp Pendleton, CA.

Website: <http://www.dvbic.org/> Email: [info@dvbic.org](mailto:info@dvbic.org) Toll Free Telephone: 1-800-870-9244

DC area: 202-782-6345

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The **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)** –The VA purpose is to provide benefits and assistance to veterans and their dependents. The comprehensive website includes information

and links to a wide variety of resources.

VA Website: <http://www.va.gov> Email: <http://tinyurl.com/y5xgrv> Telephone: 1-800-827-1000

Two major organizations within this agency are the **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)** and the **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)**.

The VHA also conducts research and education, and provides emergency medical preparedness. VHA Website: <http://www1.va.gov/health/index.asp>

**VBA** Some of the benefits and services provided by VBA to veterans and their dependents include compensation and pension, education, loan guaranty, and insurance.

VBA Website: <http://www.vba.va.gov/>

All three of the above websites allows one to locate a VA facility anywhere in the United States by clicking the “Find a Facility” tab on the webpage, then by searching by zip code, State, or facility name.

In addition, the 2007 Edition of VA's *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents* booklet is now available. Veterans of the United States armed forces, and their dependents, may be eligible for a broad range of programs and services provided by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This booklet contains a summary of these benefits effective January 1, 2007. This 170-page publication can be either read online, downloaded as a complete document, or separate sections can be downloaded (the part without the VA facility listings, or the part containing the VA facility listings only.)

There is also a Spanish version here as well. [Both English and Spanish versions can also be found in TBICS.]

Website: [http://www1.va.gov/OPA/vadocs/current\\_benefits.asp](http://www1.va.gov/OPA/vadocs/current_benefits.asp)

**TEXAS VA** Austin Telephone – 512- 463-6564 Email: [info@tvc.state.tx.us](mailto:info@tvc.state.tx.us)

Web: [www.tvc.state.tx.us](http://www.tvc.state.tx.us)

**TexVet.com** helps link Texas veterans and other members of the military, along with their loved ones, with information about the services for which they are eligible.

<http://www.texvet.com/branches/index.html?page=6>

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### Government Resources – VA Polytrauma System of Care

Polytrauma care is for veterans and returning service members with injuries to more than one physical region or organ system, one of which may be life threatening, and which results in physical, cognitive, psychological, or psychosocial impairments and functional disability. Some examples of Polytrauma include:

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

. Hearing Loss

. Visual Impairment

Among the information available at the website is: Admission Criteria; Family Support; Definitions; and Frequently Asked Questions.

Website: <http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/>

These facilities are located across the country to keep families and patients close to one another.

This link will help you find the facility closest to you:

[http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/facility\\_locations.asp?isFlash=1#facilities](http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/facility_locations.asp?isFlash=1#facilities)

The two sites in Texas are – Houston <http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/facilities/Houston.asp> & Dallas <http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/facilities/Dallas.asp>

### Other Government Resources

**Air Force Palace HART** (Helping Airmen Recover Together) program follows Air Force wounded in action until they return to active duty, or are medically retired. It then provides follow up assistance for 5-7 years post injury. The Air Force works to retain injured service

members on active duty, if at all possible; however, if unable to return an Airman to active duty, work to get them civilian employment within the Air Force.

Email: [severelyinjured@militaryonesource.com](mailto:severelyinjured@militaryonesource.com) Telephone: 1-888-774-1361

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**Deployment Health Clinical Center (DHCC)** – Information about Traumatic Brain Injury is provided on its own web page (<http://www.pdhealth.mil/TBI.asp>).

More detailed information can be found in the form of: Fact Sheets; Clinical Guidance; Education and Training; Research; and Related Links. Website:

<http://www.pdhealth.mil/veterans/default.asp>

Email: <http://www.pdhealth.mil/contact.asp> Telephone: 866-559-1627

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The **Force Health Protection & Readiness (FHP&R)** office is responsible for all DoD deployment medicine policies, programs, and activities. Their Outreach Materials include *Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Fact Sheets*, available in 3 different formats. Website: <http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/>

Email: <http://fhp.osd.mil/contactUs.jsp> Telephone: 1-800-497-6261

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**Marine for Life Injured Support Program (M4L)** Information on Traumatic Brain Injury (VA Hospitals, TBI Links, Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program) has been gathered together and placed on its own web page at <https://www.m4l.usmc.mil/Public/m4lx/start.aspx>

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**Military Severely Injured Center (MSIC)** Website: <http://tinyurl.com/ybbrdy>

Email: [severelyinjured@militaryonesource.com](mailto:severelyinjured@militaryonesource.com) Telephone: 1-888-774-1361

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The **Navy Safe Harbor Program's** Website:

<http://www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/SafeHarbor>

Email: [safeharbor@navy.mil](mailto:safeharbor@navy.mil) Telephone: 1-877-746-8563

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The **National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

PTSD and stress-related disorders. Website: <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/>

Email: [ncptsd@ncptsd.org](mailto:ncptsd@ncptsd.org) Telephone: 802-296-6300

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**Operation Warfighter (OWF)** Service members with meaningful activity outside of the hospital environment that assists in their wellness and offers a formal means of transition back to the military or civilian workforce. Website:

<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/operationwarfighter>

Email: [patrick.brick.ctr@osd.mil](mailto:patrick.brick.ctr@osd.mil) Telephone: 703-588-0953

**Private Resources**

**American Veterans with Brain Injuries (AVBI)** The AVBI online forum is designed for questions to be asked and information shared. Our AVBI live chat and peer advocacy offers personal support. The AVBI Blog hopes to bring public awareness to the many difficult issues that plague the brain injured veteran and their families. Website: <http://www.avbi.org/> Email: [anyone@avbi.org](mailto:anyone@avbi.org)

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The **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** Online Veterans Resource Center to help support active duty military personnel, veterans and their families facing serious mental illnesses such as depression and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The Center's resources are organized into 12 on-line categories:

Traumatic Brain Injury, Post traumatic Stress Disorders, Veterans & Mental Illnesses

Suicide Prevention, Homelessness & NAMI's Missing Person's Network, Veterans Affairs & Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), Families, Children & Spouses, Multicultural Resources, Women Veterans Resources. On-Line Discussion Groups, Public Policy & Legislation, NAMI Veterans Council

Website: <http://www.nami.org/veterans> Telephone: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

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**Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW)** support veterans, those currently serving in our US Armed Forces, and their families through a variety of programs:

- National Veteran Service
- National Legislative Services
- National Military Services

The VFW offers support and assistance to the military community through a variety of programs, including VFW Unmet Needs that helps service members and their families who face unexpected financial difficulties; Operation Uplink, to connect active duty troops and hospitalized veterans with their loved ones; and various community service volunteer activities.