

Surgeons Corner February 1, 2023

A veteran requested that the topic for the month of February was a list of mental health resources available for veterans in Washington state.

If you have mental health problems, know that you are not alone. The VA provided mental health care to 1.7 million veterans last year.

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, WDVA

WDVA provide confidential counseling services to Washington State veterans and family members and provides a list of PTSD counselors. For a link to the list of counselors, see the references section. The eligibility requirements are as follows: "Veterans who have a discharge of General or Honorable and have served during a war era qualify for counseling. Those who have an Other Than Honorable Discharge because of a mental health related issue qualify. War-affected National Guard and reservists also qualify for services, and family members can also be seen through the program as long as the issue is military-related.

Note: King County Residents - To be eligible for services or resources, you must be a veteran"

An important note regarding the War Trauma Counselors listed on the WDVA site is that they are a: "licensed mental health professional who has graduate level training in a counseling-related field and is licensed to practice in the state of Washington. Some of the providers are veterans or family members of veterans. All providers are military and veteran cultural competent" The services are provided at no cost.

To get an appointment call any of the WDVA counselors on the list and leave your contact information. You will need to bring your DD214 or NG Form 22.

VA mental health services

The VA provides mental health services to those enrolled at the VA. Here is what the VA has to say about eligibility: "You must have been called to active duty by a federal order and completed the full period for which you were called or ordered to active duty. **If you had or have active-duty status for training purposes only**, you don't qualify for VA health care". In addition, the COMPACT Act Eligibility, covers veterans in a suicide crisis. The VA may pay for the transport for rural veterans that falls under this act.

Your VA primary care provided can help you get an appointment with a VA mental health professional. If you are unsure about your needs, you can call 877-222-8387

References:

WDVA state PTSD counselors: <https://www.dva.wa.gov/counseling/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/find-ptsd-counselors>

VA mental health services: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/mental-health/>

Dr. Opedal