



News Release

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Review shows no disparities in access to behavior health care for Soldiers

HEIDELBERG, Germany – A recent review of access to behavior health care services throughout the Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC) shows there is no disparity between access provided to Soldiers who are returning to duty and those who are in the process of leaving the Army for medical reasons.

The ERMC Inspector General conducted a review of behavior health services at all 17 ERMC military treatment facilities in February and March 2012. The findings show that Soldiers who are separating from the Army for medical reasons, either through a Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) or the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES), have the same access to treatment for behavioral health issues, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as those Soldiers who will be returned to duty. In fact, the review indicated that in some cases, access to care is enhanced for transitioning Soldiers such as those assigned to Warrior Transition Units.

“Taking care of our Soldiers is our top priority,” said Brig. Gen. Nadja West, ERMC commanding general. “We took a thorough look at the behavior health services available at our facilities in the region and found Soldiers transitioning out of the Army have the same access to care as those returning to duty. The review also determined that transitioning Soldiers at times have enhanced access as our providers will often go to the Warrior Transition Units to provide care for Soldiers assigned there.”

West initiated the command-wide review after an individual raised concerns that Soldiers at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center who were returning to duty had better access to treatment for behavioral health issues than their counterparts who were in the process of medically separating from the Army. The review showed that is not the case, and that behavioral health services are available at all military treatment facilities in the region.

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One specific concern raised was that the Evolution Program, an eight-week intensive outpatient PTSD treatment curriculum at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center designed to help Soldiers in the European Theater who are struggling with combat stress symptoms, was open only to Soldiers slated to return to duty. While it is designed primarily for those who will be remaining on active duty, Soldiers early in the process of transitioning out of the Army for medical reasons have also been accepted to the program, the review found.

“This is an intensive program that requires a Soldier’s attendance at a multitude of different sessions during the eight-week period, so it can be difficult for someone working through medical separation process to meet the program requirements,” West explained. “If a transitioning Soldier is accepted into the Evolution Program, their separation process stops until they complete the program because the medical separation process would interfere with the Evolution appointments.”

Transitioning Soldiers accepted into the Evolution Program are usually at the beginning of the medical separation process so the impact is minimal. A provider must refer a Soldier for the Evolution Program, and each Soldier is looked at on an individual basis to determine the best course of treatment, whether through the Evolution Program or through treatment at a local military treatment facility.

IG representatives who conducted the review also spoke personally to Soldiers assigned to the Warrior Transition Units (WTU) in Europe. The WTU Soldiers interviewed each indicated they had no problems accessing the behavior health system.

West said the review was the right thing to do given the circumstances.

“We are here to provide the quality health care our Soldiers, Family Members and other beneficiaries deserve,” West said. “When someone expresses a concern that one group isn’t getting access to needed treatment, we’re concerned as well. We have a very important responsibility – taking care of America’s heroes – and it’s something we take pride in doing very well.”