

**DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Memorandum**

Date: March 20, 2017

From: Acting Under Secretary for Health (1 0)

Subj Access to Mental Health Services for Other Than Honorable Discharged Servicemembers

To: VISN and VAMC Directors

1. Driven by the need to reduce the number of suicides and treat mental illness in at risk populations, VA will be expanding mental health care access for former servicemembers with administrative discharges under Other Than Honorable (OTH) conditions.

2. Total estimated population of 505,000 with administrative other-than-honorable (OTH) discharges may become eligible for this benefit.

**3. VA will use its existing legal authorities to expand the provision of emergent mental health care to former servicemembers with administrative discharges under Other Than Honorable conditions.**

4. Any individual may self-identify distress and request mental health care. A provider will then assess the person and determine the appropriate course of action in conjunction with the individual, including the provision of emergent mental health care services.

**5. This is for emergent mental health services only. Individuals may enter the system to use this benefit by calling the Veteran Crisis Line or visiting the VA Emergency Department, Urgent Care Center, or Vet Center. Follow-up outpatient, residential, and inpatient mental health and substance use disorder services may be provided for up to 90 days, with social work engagement and non-VA covered community transition to longer term care and appropriate transition of medical needs.** Note: VA does not have the legal authority to utilize Community Care authorities to authorize servicemembers with OTH discharges care in the community at VA expense.

6. Additional detailed guidance to assist in implementing this initiative at your facility will be provided within the next two weeks.

Poonam Alaigh, M.D.

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