

PTSD Consultation Program Partner Toolkit: Drop-In Blog Article

The Three P's of Effective PTSD Treatment for Veterans

What does it take to effectively treat a Veteran with PTSD? For Dr. Sonya Norman, Director of the National Center for PTSD's Consultation Program, it takes the three P's:

- **P**rofessional knowledge and understanding of the latest evidenced-based PTSD treatments and research;
- **P**ersistence and resourcefulness to explore and access all treatment options to meet the often complex and co-occurring conditions of Veterans; and
- **P**assion to make a difference in the lives of those who've served our nation.

Dr. Norman knows these characteristics first hand from her earliest years running a PTSD treatment program at the San Diego Department of Veterans Affairs, to her current work with the PTSD Consultation Program and research on psychotherapies for PTSD and alcohol issues. For more than 15 years, Dr. Norman has served as a psychologist specializing in treating Veterans and Service members with PTSD, leveraging evidenced based research and clinical expertise to offer a clearer pathway for Veteran healing and recovery. She and her colleagues within the PTSD Consultation Program share their cutting edge work on treatments such as Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE) and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), which offer some of the most promising and effective treatments for Veterans experiencing PTSD.

"More than at any other time, there are good treatments and tools that providers can access and use that have a tangible impact on Veterans," said Dr. Norman. "That makes me more optimistic than ever that PTSD is treatable."

Knowledge of treatments is essential, and passion to heal the invisible wounds associated with combat and war is equally important when facing the diversity of issues and circumstances experienced by Veterans. However, one of the greatest hurdles to supporting Veterans with PTSD is simply getting an accurate diagnosis, and then getting a Veteran to agree to treatment.

As many providers can attest, one of the classic symptoms of PTSD is avoidance, which immediately creates a challenge in treating Veterans. Even if a Veteran agrees to try treatment, helping the veteran overcome avoidance and other hurdles to successfully complete treatment is where persistence and resourcefulness are key. Creativity, flexibility and commitment go a long way in opening the crucial doorways to healing that are needed. Those qualities also help providers truly understand their Veteran clients' experiences and the complexity of their PTSD needs so they can guide the Veteran toward the most effective solutions for their presenting problems.

To help providers find the best solutions, even when they are treating Veterans with very complicated needs, Dr. Norman and the team of PTSD psychologists, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals within the PTSD Consultation Program, offer free, expert consultation and support. Consultations can be provided by phone or email, and responses are usually given within 24 hours. The

Consultation Program also offers numerous PTSD-related resources and continuing education to help get providers what they need. This helpful, free resource is available to all providers who have questions about treating Veterans with PTSD, or are in need of additional resources and tools. Email the staff at PTSDconsult@va.gov, call (866)-948-7880, or go online to www.ptsd.va.gov/consult to learn more.

“I talk with providers every day who are so good and caring at what they do,” said Dr. Norman. “They have a really strong understanding of PTSD issues, and a conceptualization of cases. Oftentimes I find myself hanging up with someone and thinking, ‘That Veteran is in good hands.’”