

Texas National Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans: Post-Deployment and Reintegration Problems and the Services to Meet those Needs

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to review key literature on National Guard and Reserve (NGR) service members and veterans who have returned from combat deployments in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom [OEF]) and Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom [OIF]). This is in an effort to describe the major issues pertinent to this population and to identify the services readily available to address these areas of concern. Subsequently, this information was used to develop a handbook identifying easily accessible organizations in Texas that strive to reduce and alleviate the effects of war on NGR service members and veterans. This initiative should facilitate the successful reintegration of this population coming from a combat deployment setting and returning to the civilian world. The issues and services are classified in a conceptual framework of descriptive categories. Document analysis is used to analyze pertinent source documents, including scholarly literature and Internet websites on post-deployment and reintegration services available to NGR service members and veterans in Texas.

About the Author

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to my dad, US Army Staff Sgt. Alan E. Ecle; my brothers, US Air Force Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Ecle and US Marine Veteran Michael A. Ecle; and to all the other brave men and women, past and present, who have served in the US Armed Forces.

And to their families, the unsung heroes.

Thank you for your service.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

When Army National Guard Sgt. Michael Williams¹ returned home to rural Thorndale, Texas after combat service in Iraq, he found transitioning back to civilian life extremely difficult. Initially, he was unable to land a job that paid enough to support his family. Two months prior to his deployment, Sgt. Williams had been laid off from his primary job as a construction superintendent. Now, he was forced to return to an economy that was hit hard by a recession; jobs were limited, businesses had closed and state agencies were experiencing a hiring freeze due to budget restraints.

The sergeant had difficulty sleeping as he was so accustomed to the sounds of war, the constant throbbing of generators, the rumbling of heavy trucks driving by, and the distinctive percussive rotor of helicopters flying overhead. The silence of his home made him uneasy. When he was able to fall asleep, he experienced recurring nightmares. The soldier had lost a few of his buddies due to multiple improvised explosive device (IED, also known as “road bomb”) attacks. Upon returning home, he was haunted by the memories. He often woke in the middle of the night, screaming and drenched in sweat, trembling as he remembered the burning bodies and final screams of his friends. A week after returning home, he stopped sleeping in his bedroom and moved to the living room sofa. Sgt. Williams told his wife that he was not used to sleeping in a bed, but after several nights, his wife realized that he was not sleeping at all. Instead, he was up all night watching television.

Although Sgt. Williams had physically left the battlefield, his mind was still in combat mode. The sound of thunder caused him to tense up and a couple of times he ducked, like he was

¹ Fictional character based on a compilation of military stories and blogs from http://www.samhsa.gov/SAMHSA_News/VolumeXVI_1/jan_feb_2008.pdf and <http://woundedtimes.blogspot.com>, accessed March 3, 2012.

trying to take cover. The explosion of noise reminded him of the mortar attacks his camp in Fallujah² came under every night. While driving, he became extremely agitated, often scanning the roadway for IEDs.

The soldier also had difficulty dealing with civilians. He ordered his wife and children around like they were his soldiers, consistently issuing commands in a harsh tone that lacked any kind of warmth. His two-year-old daughter, who was less than a year old when he had initially deployed, shied away from her father, while his five-year-old son began to fear his father's callousness. As a result, the children exhibited increased symptoms of anxiety.

His wife had difficulty dealing with her husband's lack of emotion and disconnectedness. She felt that he was distant and detached while he often felt emotionally numb and removed. Before his deployment, the couple would spend hours laughing and talking about all kinds of things. Now, they barely engaged in any interpersonal communication. While she often asked about his deployment experience, he struggled to open up about his inner feelings and avoided difficult topics altogether. She could not shake the mounting feeling of loneliness and isolation that began to grow deep within her. This cold, unfeeling person was not the same man she knew a year ago.

And then the angry outbursts began. The first one occurred in a Wal-Mart, when a child was whining for his mother to buy him candy. After five minutes of hearing the child whine, Sgt. Williams stopped what he was doing, and proceeded to berate the little boy and his mother, shouting that the child was a "spoiled, ungrateful little brat that needed his ass whooped" and waving a finger at the boy's mother, condemning the woman as an "incompetent, useless mother who needed to learn how to discipline her child." By the end of this incident, Sgt. Williams' children were crying and his wife was mortified. Although she tried to stop him, he threatened

² One of the deadliest locations in Iraq

that she should never try to undermine his authority again.

After the initial incident, the angry outbursts came more regularly. His wife dreaded going anywhere with him for fear that he would be rude or hateful to someone, whether it was a teacher at their daughter's school, a waiter in a restaurant, or a friend or family member. For the first time in their five years of marriage, his wife feared for her life and for the safety of her children. She could not trust her husband to be left alone with her children. After just 13 months of Sgt. Williams' being home from Iraq, his wife filed for divorce and primary custody of their children.

Sgt. Williams was spinning out of control and he did not know how to handle these reintegration issues. He felt insurmountably abandoned as he struggled to deal with his problems alone. It did not help that he lived so far from any of his military buddies—the only people he felt who could truly understand his pain. Consequently, he began self-medicating, drinking each night until he fell into a stupor. The divorce had finally tipped the scale. After just 16 months of being home from Iraq, the sergeant drank an entire bottle of Jose Cuervo tequila, sat in his bathtub, and pulled out a .45. It was 2:00 am Sunday, March 4, 2008 when Sgt. Michael Williams shoved the weapon into his mouth and pulled the trigger. The gunshot alerted his neighbors, who discovered his lifeless 28-year-old body. Based on interviews from those who knew the soldier, the coroner ruled that Sgt. Williams' death was a result of an acute episode of PTSD that resulted in him taking his own life.

Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, the US National Guard and Reserve (NGR) components have increasingly been called to duty. The military

manpower demands created by US operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have increased the size and use of these reserve components. One key issue is the balance between active-duty forces and the reserve components, often referred to as “citizen soldiers,” who face numerous unique issues that the active duty forces do not and who have their own unique sociology (Greden et al. 2010, 90). These citizen soldiers experience traumas and pressures similar to those experienced by active duty members, such as battlefield conflicts and injuries; IED explosions; deaths among fellow military members during deployment; and prolonged separation from loved ones (Greden et al. 2010, 91). The health and social consequences of these experiences include relationship distress, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), clinical depression, sleep disruption and nightmares, self-medication, substance use and abuse, and suicidal thoughts, acts, and deaths (Greden et al. 2010, 91).

These post-deployment issues are often intensified among NGR members who commonly encounter additional stressors or barriers to treatment that are different from active duty members. Other post-deployment stresses relative to the reserve components include financial pressures and for some, income reductions; concerns about job availability or job security upon returning from deployment; home foreclosures; future prospects of being deployed; and the absence of readily available medical and psychiatric facilities that would have otherwise been available had they returned to an active duty military installation (Greden et al. 2010, 90). For those in rural areas, clinical services sometimes are available only at great distances, generating long travel times that make appointments difficult to keep (Greden et al. 2010, 90).

Additionally, NGR members are sometimes ill-equipped or unprepared for extended or multiple deployments compared to active duty members (Greden et al. 2010, 91). Some NGR members are also either unemployed or under-employed prior to deployment, factors which contribute to

post-deployment financial difficulties and hardship (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 641). Finally, the diffusion and separation across large state regions and loss of everyday contact with military buddies mean that citizen soldiers do not have colleagues and comrades readily available for valuable sharing of experiences and support (Greden et al. 2010, 91). The remoteness and/or distance from military facilities and other military families also contribute to relationship distress among military families before, during and after deployment (Burrell et al. 2003, 11).

In summary, NGR members are different from active duty members for the following reasons:

- Post-deployment, and following military out-processing procedures, they are released into the civilian world, absent from institutionalized and structured military support, unlike active duty members who return to military installations where support is institutionalized and easier to access.
- They often live at a distance from their “battle buddies” – close friends and colleagues who serve as a vital social support system.
- They often live at a distance from post-deployment resources, where accessibility is often a key factor in seeking treatment.
- Some NGR members are unemployed or underemployed prior to deployment. Post-deployment, they return home to face those same circumstances and must cope with the difficulty of seeking employment in a tough economy.
- They may face financial difficulties upon returning home, especially if they were self-employed or making significantly more income in their civilian jobs.
- Civilian employers and co-workers may not understand what the NGR member experienced and why he or she has come home a changed person. They may lack understanding, knowledge and/or compassion for the member.
- NGR families face significant hardships as they are often deeply rooted in the civilian community, and may be living far from formal and/or informal military family support resources.
- NGR members may be ill-prepared or unprepared for multiple or extended deployments.
- NGR members may deploy with a different unit and as a result, separated from their colleagues who serve as an important support system during and following deployment.

Although the United States withdrew all of its troops from Iraq at the end of 2011 (Wilson and DeWilson 2011), there still remain service members deployed or preparing to

deploy to Afghanistan and other hostile regions in the world. Additionally, many OEF/OIF veterans will require lifelong treatment for combat-related problems (Griffith 2010, 177). As a result, it is imperative to continue the study of post-deployment issues among NGR service members and to identify easily accessible services to address these present and future needs.

This is especially true for the State of Texas, as it is home to the largest military population in the nation (approximately 194,965 active duty and NGR military personnel), including 84,721 NGR service members.³ Additionally, the Texas Military Forces is the largest joint force in the nation (25,381 personnel), comprised of 19,564 Texas Army National Guard, 3,014 Texas Air National Guard, 1,921 Texas State Guard, and 883 state and federal civilian employees.⁴ The Texas National Guard alone has sent more than 31,000 troops to war in the past 10 years.⁵

Texas is also home to the largest veteran population in the nation (1,701,675 as of fiscal year 2009) and the number of younger wartime veterans in Texas is expected to grow as a result of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.⁶ Approximately sixty percent of all Texas veterans live within the six largest metropolitan areas of the state. According to statistics provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, more than 75 percent of the net migration of veterans to Texas was between the age group of 20 to 64. This suggests that the vast majority of migrating veterans came to Texas in pursuit of gainful employment and was therefore, most likely to relocate to the metropolitan areas of the state. As a result, the Texas population centers continue to grow and with this increase is a corresponding growth in the concentration of veterans' population. Consequently, Texas will

³ See <http://usmilitary.about.com/library/milinfo/statefacts/bltx.htm>, accessed April 7, 2012.

⁴ See http://www.texasnationalguard.us/pdf_2/LAR_2012_2013.pdf, accessed April 7, 2012.

⁵ See http://www.texasnationalguard.us/pdf_2/LAR_2012_2013.pdf, accessed April 7, 2012.

⁶ See <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/images/uploads/about/tvc-strategic-plan-2011.pdf>, accessed April 7, 2012.

likely see an increase in the number of veterans requiring assistance for post-deployment and reintegration problems. For that reason, it is imperative that service members and veterans know what services are available in Texas and where to access the help they need.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to review key literature on National Guard and Reserve (NGR) service members and veterans who have returned from combat deployments in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom [OEF]) and Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom [OIF]). This is in an effort to describe the major issues pertinent to this population and to identify the services to address these areas of concern. Subsequently, this information was used to develop a handbook identifying easily accessible organizations in Texas that strive to reduce and alleviate the effects of war. This is an initiative to facilitate the successful reintegration of NGR service members and veterans coming from a combat deployment setting and returning to the civilian world.

Research Implications

This research has important implications for guiding Texas NGR service members, veterans and their families in locating the appropriate resources to meet their post-deployment and reintegration needs. Texas has a large variety of post-deployment and reintegration services for veterans and the handbook identifies and organizes the nature and location of these services for ease of access. Military leaders and military family support groups in Texas can offer the handbook to service members and their families as a reference tool for support after service members have returned from deployment. Service providers and veterans' organizations in Texas can also use the handbook to further support their clients and members. Additionally,

service members, veterans and their families may reference the handbook if copies are provided by local community agencies or if a master copy is made available in waiting areas at veteran facilities.

Organization of Paper

The following chapter reviews key literature on NGR members and veterans who have returned from combat deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is in an effort to describe the major issues pertinent to this population and to identify the resources to address these areas of concern. The issues and identified services are classified in a conceptual framework of descriptive categories. Chapter 3 explains the research design used in this study to identify the post-deployment issues in the literature review and the reintegration services that are provided in the handbook. Chapter 4 identifies and describes, in detail, major federal, Texas State, and private organizations that provide services to address post-deployment and reintegration needs. Subsequently, this information was used to develop the *Help for Texas Heroes: A Reintegration Handbook for Texas National Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans*. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the paper by providing recommendations for national initiatives that are fundamental in addressing these significant NGR issues.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to review key literature on NGR service members and veterans who have returned from combat deployments in Afghanistan (OEF) and Iraq (OIF). This is in an effort to describe the major issues pertinent to this population and to identify the services readily available to address these areas of concern. The major issues and services are classified in a conceptual framework of descriptive categories. Subsequently, this information is used to develop a handbook identifying easily accessible organizations in Texas that strive to reduce and alleviate the effects of war. This is an initiative to facilitate the successful reintegration of NGR service members and veterans coming from a combat deployment setting and returning to the civilian world.

Introduction

One of the distinctive aspects of Afghanistan and Iraq in comparison to past conflicts is the activation of mass numbers of US NGR military members (Griffith 2010, 176). NGR service members, colloquially known as “Weekend Warriors,” were no longer just fighting on weekends. More than 2 million US military service members served in the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, where NGR service members comprised over 40% of the total US forces deployed between 2001 and 2010 (Greden et al. 2010, 90). According to Greden et al. (2010, 90), “These ‘citizen soldiers’ experience traumas and stresses comparable to those encountered by active duty soldiers, such as battlefield conflicts and injuries; improvised explosive device

explosions; deaths among fellow soldiers in their units; down-range funerals⁷; and prolonged separation from loved ones.”

However, in contrast to active duty service members, citizen soldiers and other NGR service members face unique stresses and barriers to treatment of their traumatic stresses. Unique post-deployment stresses for NGR service members include “financial pressures and for some, income reductions; concerns with job availability or job security upon returning from deployment; home foreclosures; future prospects of being deployed; and absence of the readily available medical and psychiatric facilities that would [otherwise] have been available had they returned to an active duty military post” (Greden et al. 2010, 91). Some other veterans living in rural areas face a lack of proximity to services that may inhibit a service member or veteran from seeking treatment (Greden et al. 2010, 91). Additionally, a number of NGR service members are so geographically removed from other members of their unit that they do not have the opportunity to regularly engage in the therapeutic sharing of experiences (Greden et al. 2010, 91).

Nevertheless, research indicates that there are four main areas of concern in relation to NGR service members and veterans who have returned from combat deployment. These issues are PTSD, relationship distress, unemployment, and alcohol and substance abuse. The purpose of this paper is not to determine the causal sequence. Rather, its purpose is to identify the services that address and alleviate these problems.

⁷ A colloquial term for combat zone funerals used by some service members

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Along with injury and death, the cost of war includes a large population of veterans with mental health problems (Shea et al. 2010, 100). Research on Vietnam veterans demonstrates that mental health disorders such as PTSD are common effects of combat exposure (Shea et al. 2010, 100). The National Center for PTSD defines PTSD as a type of anxiety disorder that can occur after an individual has seen or experienced a traumatic event (Friedman 2007). Certain traumatic events such as rape, torture, genocide, and severe war zone stress are experienced as traumatic events by almost all people. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* defines PTSD based on three clusters of symptoms: reexperiencing or intrusive recollection, avoidance or numbing, and hyperarousal (Erbes et al. 2011). For those suffering from PTSD, the traumatic event can remain for “decades or a lifetime, dominating psychological experience that retains its power to evoke panic, terror, dread, grief, or despair” (Friedman 2007).

The symptoms associated with reexperiencing or intrusive recollection include daytime fantasies, nightmares, and psychotic reenactments otherwise known as PTSD flashbacks (Friedman 2007). Additionally, trauma-related stimuli that trigger memories of the original traumatic event can induce these psychological and physical reactions (Friedman 2007). Symptoms associated with avoidance or numbing often “reflect behavioral, cognitive, or emotional strategies PTSD patients use in an attempt to reduce the likelihood that they will expose themselves to trauma-related stimuli” (Friedman 2007). Sufferers of PTSD may use these techniques as a way to decrease the strength of their psychiatric response if they are forced to face such stimuli (Friedman 2007). PTSD patients who exhibit avoidant/numbing symptoms may avoid any situation that reminds them of the original traumatic event. Other symptoms of this cluster of PTSD include detachment and psychogenic amnesia, which are characterized by

PTSD sufferers “cutting off the conscious experience of trauma-based memories and feelings” (Friedman 2007). Lastly, because sufferers of PTSD cannot handle strong emotions, particularly those related to the traumatic experience, they remove any feelings associated with an experience (Friedman 2007). This is referred to as “psychic numbing” which is an “emotional anesthesia” that makes it very difficult for sufferers of PTSD to meaningfully engage in interpersonal relationships (Friedman 2007).

Symptoms of the hyperarousal cluster include trouble sleeping, hypervigilance, and exaggerated startle response. Hypervigilance is defined as an “enhanced state of sensory activity accompanied by an exaggerated intensity of behaviors whose purpose is to detect threats” (Friedman 2007). It is often accompanied by a state of increased anxiety. The hypervigilance symptom can be so powerful that PTSD sufferers may appear to exhibit paranoia (Friedman 2007). The exaggerated startle response has a distinct neurobiological reaction that may actually be the most powerful indication that PTSD is present (Friedman 2007).

Results from the National Vietnam Veterans’ Readjustment Study indicate that “Vietnam veterans with PTSD had greater work impairment and unemployment, higher rates of marital problems and divorce, poorer physical health, greater physical limitations, greater rates of violence perpetration, higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse, and more medical utilization than those without PTSD” (Shea et al. 2010, 100). It was also found that among those veterans, there was a significant relationship between higher total PTSD symptom scores and poorer functioning (Shea et al. 2010, 100).

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have prompted much research on the extent of veterans suffering from mental health disorders as a result of combat deployment. It is interesting to note that much of the literature available on veterans’ mental health has indicated that “National

Guard and Reserve troops are more likely than active duty troops to experience psychological problems during and after deployment” (Renshaw 2010, 815). Researchers have hypothesized that increased susceptibility to psychiatric disorders and other mental health problems in NGR troops is caused by factors such as “different levels of predeployment training such troops receive, increased stress due to dual military and civilian roles, and potential difficulties of National Guard and Reserve troops integrating with combat units on deployment” (Renshaw 2010, 815).

Griffith (2010, 177) found that sometime following deployment, reserve troops reported higher rates of PTSD and related symptoms than active duty troops. As a result, it is imperative that researchers conduct more studies to determine the extent of PTSD among NGR veterans now and in the future, in order to address this widespread and expectedly lifelong issue among OEF/OIF troops. The next section of this chapter identifies ways in which PTSD may affect an NGR service member/veteran’s life (relationships, civilian employment, and the likelihood that he or she will fall victim to alcohol and substance abuse). Subsequently, it will identify the services available to address these areas of concern as they pertain to mental health treatment.

Services for NGR Members/Veterans Diagnosed with PTSD

Therapy and Medication

One of the most successful treatments for PTSD is cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) (Friedman 2007). According to Dr. Mathew J. Friedman, Executive Director for the US Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD, “Excellent results have been obtained with some CBT combinations of exposure therapy and cognitive restructuring, especially with female victims of childhood or adult sexual trauma.” Some of the therapies specific to relationship distress associated with PTSD include Strategic Approach Therapy, Cognitive-

Based Couple Therapy, Emotion Focused Couple Therapy, and Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy and may be valuable in treating avoidance and/or management of intense emotions while also treating the interpersonal aspect of the disorder (Erbes et al. 2011, 485).

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) is a therapy that has been demonstrated to be another effective treatment of PTSD (Abel and O'Brien 2010, 50). The International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies cites cognitive-behavioral therapy (including exposure therapy and cognitive-processing therapy) and EMDR as among the PTSD treatments evidencing the greatest empirical support (Abel and O'Brien 2010, 50). In a study conducted by Aubert-Khalifa et al., PTSD patients that were treated by an EMDR therapist had a significant reduction in their PTSD symptoms after a single EMDR therapy session (Abel and O'Brien 2010, 51). After only one EMDR therapy session, heart and rate skin conductance tests (as PTSD sufferers demonstrate abnormal physiological responses to stressful events) during the trauma decreased significantly (Abel and O'Brien 2010, 51). In a study conducted by Raboni, Tufik and Sucheki (2006), PTSD patients exposed to EMDR therapy showed an increase in sleep efficiency and reduced time of waking after sleep. Additionally, patients in this study showed a reduction in depression, anxiety, fatigue, impact of the event, and stress symptoms, and an improvement in quality of life, sleep quality, and general well-being (Raboni et al. 2006, 510).

Another potential treatment option for PTSD sufferers is the integrative use of clinical hypnosis as a therapeutic medium to enhance EMDR treatment. Harford (2010) states that "hypnosis primarily enhances the accessibility of traumatic information while EMDR primarily enhances the reprocessing of traumatic information and that accessibility and reprocessing are reciprocating features" of therapy (Harford 2010, 60). Harford suggests that although no controlled studies have as yet been published on hypnosis as adjunctive therapy for PTSD, he

asserts that combining clinical hypnosis with EMDR therapy could further reduce PTSD symptoms (Harford 2010, 60). Furthermore, clinical hypnosis has been demonstrated to improve treatment outcomes when used as a treatment adjunct with both cognitive behavioral therapy and psychodynamic therapy (Harford 2010, 60).

Another treatment option for those mildly to moderately affected by PTSD is group therapy, although there is a lack of empirical support for this treatment option (Friedman 2007). In group therapy, veterans with PTSD can communicate their traumatic experiences, PTSD symptoms, and functional limitations with other veterans who had comparable experiences. According to Friedman (2007), “This approach has been most successful with war Veterans, rape/incest victims, and natural disaster survivors.”

Combined with therapy, medication has been proven to be a successful component of treatment for sufferers of PTSD. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are types of antidepressant medication that can help PTSD sufferers feel less sad or worried. SSRIs raise the levels of serotonin in the brain to help combat depression. SSRIs are a class of medications that are used as antidepressants in the treatment of depression, anxiety disorders, and some personality disorders (Friedman 2007). Some of the SSRIs recommended by the National Center for PTSD and by the Department of Veterans Affairs include citalopram (Celexa), fluoxetine (such as Prozac), Sertraline (Zoloft) and paroxetine (Paxil).

Relationship Distress

Much of the literature available on active duty military families indicates that deployment upsets the normal functioning of the family.⁸ These separations are characterized by substantial

⁸ See Wheeler and Stone 2010, 545; Wood et al. 1995, 218; Burrell et al. 2003, 8; Erbes et al. 2011; Khaylis et al. 2011, 126; Meis et al. 2010, 560.

stress as family members are forced to adjust to the deployed family member's absence and to redefine their individual roles and establish new routines (Wood, Scarville and Gravino 1995, 218). The stressors include marital strain, child care difficulties, assuming the role of a single parent, children's behavioral and emotional issues, home and car repairs, financial issues, and problems accessing military services.⁹ Moreover, these stressors often occur in conjunction with feelings of depression, anger and loneliness (Wood et al. 1995, 218). Some of the physical problems experienced by non-deployed spouses during deployment include headaches, weight change, menstrual irregularity, and problems sleeping (Wood et al. 1995, 218). Other circumstances that may add stress include spouse unemployment, relocation, pregnancy, or childbirth (Wood et al. 1995, 218). Furthermore, the threat of a deployed spouse being injured or killed in combat may be an added family stress (Wood et al. 1995, 218; Wheeler and Stone 2010, 548).

Reunion also presents a great deal of stress for families as they reintegrate the service member back into the family system (Wood et al. 1995, 218). Research indicates that feelings of anger and resentment may accompany reunion, along with other issues such as marital conflict, marital estrangement, and behavioral problems among children (Wood et al. 1995, 218; Wheeler and Stone 2010, 546). It is during the reintegration period that families must redefine and renegotiate individual roles and responsibilities (Wood et al. 1995, 218). If the family is not adequately prepared for the stress of reunion and reintegration, family members may experience unexpected emotional strain and anxiety and they may exhibit the physical symptoms associated with stress (Wood et al. 1995, 218). Wood et al. (1995, 229) conducted a study of army wives married to soldiers deployed to the Sinai and found that pregnancy, health problems, financial

⁹ See Wood et al. 1995, 218; Wheeler and Stone 2010, 46-49; Meis et al. 2010, 560.

difficulties, marriage problems, loneliness, and depression were some of the main reasons for low separation adaptation and poor subsequent adjustment to reunion.

In addition, it is imperative to study NGR families as they are a unique population because, unlike active duty families, they are predominantly rooted in the civilian world (Wheeler and Stone 2010, 545). As an NGR family, their component status often isolates them from the traditional military environment, where resources are often easier to access (Wheeler and Stone 2010, 545). Furthermore, because of their NGR component status, they do not generally expect multiple or extended deployments (Wheeler and Stone 2010, 545). According to Wheeler and Stone (2010, 545), “Unanticipated participation in combat missions has created a unique situation for NG families filled with ambiguity and insecurity that may place them at greater risk for family distress and other stress-related outcomes.”

While there is limited literature available on NGR families, the research that is available provides some valuable insight as to the effect of deployment on NGR families (Wheeler and Stone 2010, 546). The literature indicates that some NGR families suffer considerable financial strain when their family members return from deployment, as NGR veterans may suffer from PTSD and experience a loss of civilian income due to deployment (Wheeler and Stone 2010, 546; Meis et al. 2010, 561). Additionally, Wheeler and Torres Stone (2010, 546) found that compared to active duty spouses, NGR spouses experience lower levels of integration into the military community.

A spouse's deployment alone puts considerable strain on the general functioning of a military family. This fact, coupled with the lack of easily accessible support and integration systems, places an additional strain on the non-deployed NGR spouse. In an exploratory study of the wives of Army National Guard soldiers, it was found that the deployment of a spouse to a

combat zone affected the mental and physical functioning of these women (Wheeler and Stone 2010, 548). The non-deployed spouses in this study suffered from feelings of anxiety, loneliness, an inability to concentrate on daily tasks, and anger about the current situation (Wheeler and Stone 2010, 548). Among the wives who had children, these women were left with the sole responsibility of taking care of their children on their own. Additionally, more than half of the women expressed disappointment with the NG. They adamantly conveyed their desire for their spouses to separate from the NG upon returning home from deployment, stating that these deployments were not what they had expected when they had agreed to let their spouses join the NG (Wheeler and Stone 2010, 549).

One of the most recurring themes present in the existing literature on the impact of deployment on relationships is the link between relationship distress and poor mental health. Research indicates that among earlier generations of combat veterans, PTSD was linked to “greater relationship distress, poorer communication and intimacy, sexual dysfunction, intimate partner violence, and greater relationship instability” (Erbes et al. 2011, 479).

Further, OEF/OIF veterans also experience similar problems (Erbes et al. 2011, 479; Meis et al. 2010, 560). OEF/OIF veterans have been known to experience problems with relationship confidence, positive bonding, negative communication, and commitment (Erbes et al. 2011, 479). Over 75% of returning OIF/OEF veterans referred for VA behavioral health evaluations reported problems in their intimate relationships or with their children, and more than 50% reported mild to moderate domestic violence involving an intimate partner (Meis et al. 2010, 560). Furthermore, among OEF/OIF veterans, studies have suggested that there may be a positive relationship between the severity of PTSD symptoms and relationship distress (Meis et al. 2010, 561).

In a study of 313 National Guard soldiers recently returned from combat duty in Iraq, Erbes et al. (2011, 479) found no significant relationship between veterans who exhibited PTSD reexperiencing symptoms (such as nightmares, flashbacks, intrusive memories and other emotional and physiological responses to trauma reminders) and poorer relationship adjustment (Erbes et al. 2011, 480). Additionally, there was no significant relationship found between those veterans who experienced PTSD arousal symptoms (such as exaggerated startle response and hypervigilance) and poorer relationship adjustment (Erbes et al. 2011, 480). Based on the results of this study, researchers suggested that “symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, and hypervigilance may be viewed by the couple as being caused by combat deployment, and thus, may lead to fewer attributions of blame and less resentment and perhaps generate increased tolerance, patience, and empathy, buffering the negative effects of PTSD on intimate relationships, at least in the short term” (Erbes et al. 2011, 485). Conversely, symptoms of PTSD such as anger, irritability, and emotional numbing may be viewed by partners as being under the control of the veteran (as they are less obviously linked to the trauma), and may be more likely to contribute to negative changes in couple relationships (Erbes et al. 2011, 485). As a result, it is imperative that veterans who suffer from PTSD receive the help they need in order to promote the healthy functioning of their families and other relationships.

So what happens if relationship distress ultimately cannot be alleviated? While relationship distress is a common phenomenon among deployed troops overall, the military divorce rate has reached its highest level since 1999, as nearly 30,000 marriages ended in fiscal year 2011. According to interviews and Pentagon data released in December 2011, these divorce statistics raise the possibility that troop withdrawals may lead to more divorce: “As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan draw down, we’re going to put more families together who haven’t been

used to being together,” says Chaplain Carleton Birch, a spokesman for the Army Office of Chaplains. The overall military divorce rate was recorded in 2011 as 3.7%, while the US civilian divorce rate recorded in 2009 was 3.5%. The Navy divorce rate of 3.6% and the Army divorce rate of 3.7% were the highest for each service since 2004, while the Air Force rate of 3.9% was the highest in more than twenty years. In 2011, close to 5% of marriages among Air Force enlisted personnel ended in divorce. Finally, the Marine Corps divorce rate in 2011 was 3.8%, which has remained the same since 2010.

Nevertheless, divorce can pose a series of long-term problems for veterans, especially when children have resulted from the marriage. Veterans represent a unique population of non-custodial parents (NCPs), whose work-related experience appears to affect compliance with the child support system in distinctive ways (Whetsell 2011, 3). OEF/OIF veterans may experience unemployment as they transition back to civilian life, while older veterans may have fallen into poverty and homelessness (Whetsell 2011, 3; Berenson 2011, 2). Veterans, who suffer from mental health problems, including PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, and major depression, could have further difficulty with child support compliance (Berenson 2011, 2). According to Whetsell (2011, 3):

Recent veterans may also face unusual bureaucratic obstacles relating to the enforcement of interstate and out-of-state child support orders, requiring complex interagency cooperation across state lines for basic tasks such as modification of order levels. In addition, socio-economically disadvantaged veterans may also be adversely affected by (1) failure to modify order levels commensurate with income fluctuations in a timely manner and (2) the specific child support guidelines of the state of jurisdiction.

Interstate child support orders are especially significant to enforcement among military service members (Whetsell 2011, 34). Service members represent a distinct population characterized by a mobile lifestyle, frequent and/or multiple deployments overseas without

family presence, and multiple tours in combat zones (Inbody & Shields 2010, 6). As troops are frequently relocated to different states and deployed to countries abroad, thus the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA), enacted by Congress, included provisions for international enforcement of child support (Whetsell 2011, 35). Moreover, the issue of out-of-state orders is possibly one of the most significant aspects of child support enforcement among military service members (Whetsell 2011).

Services for Relationship Support

Counseling

Counseling services can offer a great source of support for the veteran and his or her family during the reintegration period following combat deployment. Individual counseling for the veteran and his or her family members, coupled with family-focused and couple-focused counseling, can be extremely beneficial in addressing the stressors and feelings that are common during the reunion. Additionally, counseling for veterans and their families before and during deployment, or when families appear to be functioning well, can serve as a preventative measure against PTSD. Such preventative counseling may also promote commitment to treatment and encourage treatment retention.

Because social support plays a vital role in PTSD recovery, it is imperative that treatment providers regularly screen for signs of social and relationship distress attributed to PTSD symptoms (Erbes et al. 2011, 485). Stressors normal during reunion, such as negative social interactions, can decrease social support and increase the likelihood of a veteran developing PTSD (Erbes et al. 2011, 485). PTSD has a significant interpersonal component and most clinical treatments fail to focus on the interpersonal context (Erbes et al. 2011, 485). This is

detrimental because most OEF/OIF veterans who suffer from PTSD also experience major and immediate relationship distress upon returning home from deployment (Erbes et al. 2011, 485).

PTSD symptoms also often lead to deteriorating social support over time (Erbes et al. 2011, 485). The disorder can have a harmful effect on social functioning, intimate relationships, and the family in general. As a result, Cognitive-Based Couple Therapy, Strategic Approach Therapy, Emotion Focused Couple Therapy, or Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy for PTSD may be valuable in treating avoidance and/or management of intense emotions while also treating the interpersonal aspect of the disorder (Erbes et al. 2011, 485).

Nevertheless, research indicates that perhaps PTSD symptomatology hinders receipt of family-oriented care for those in need of these services (Meis et al. 2010, 560). It is also suggested that “as problems in both of these areas increase, individuals may be decreasingly less likely to utilize programs designed to target both PTSD and relationship distress through couple/family approaches, perhaps due to avoidance dampening soldiers’ willingness to self-disclose or confront relationship problems or due to soldiers’ attributions of relationship distress to PTSD, leading marital/family treatment to appear less urgent or relevant (Meis et al. 2010, 565).”

In a study by Meis and colleagues of 223 National Guard soldiers surveyed two to three months following return from deployment to Iraq and again twelve months later, it was discovered that poorer relationship adjustment was correlated with increased odds of using couple/family care (Meis et al. 2010, 560). Additionally, it was discovered that the association between poorer relationship adjustment and greater odds of obtaining couple/family care were the strongest at low levels of PTSD symptom severity. In addition, the connection between relationship adjustment and utilization of couple/family care was no longer significant when

soldiers acknowledged severe symptoms of PTSD (Meis et al. 2010, 560). Results from the study further indicated that supportive intimate relationships facilitate mental health treatment utilization for soldiers with PTSD symptoms (Meis et al. 2010, 560). The study indicates that “perhaps greater positive involvement by intimate partners is found in satisfied intimate relationships, translating into productive, supportive discussions as a couple about veterans’ need for mental health services with high need (i.e., severe symptoms of PTSD)” (Meis et al. 2010, 564). By and large, these results emphasize the power of supportive intimate relationships in promoting treatment utilization for those with symptoms of PTSD (Meis et al. 2010, 564).

Furthermore, in a recent study of treatment preferences among ninety-seven Army National Guard soldiers deployed to OEF/OIF, it was found that there was a strong interest and significantly greater preference for family counseling over individual treatment (Khaylis et al. 2011, 127). Among the soldiers who screened positive for PTSD, 80% of this subsample of soldiers stated that they would consider family counseling if it were available to them, while 75% stated that they would consider individual counseling (Khaylis et al. 2011, 127). Based on the high level of interest of veterans in family-based interventions over individual treatment, researchers suggest that family-focused interventions may be more effective in treating PTSD and other reunion stressors.

Parenting Intervention and Education

Parenting intervention and education can offer a source of support for those veterans with children. Researchers suggest that parenting training and counseling, such as the Oregon Model of Parent Management Training (PMTO), is showing potential in facilitating healthy parenting behavior among parents affected by traumatic events (Khaylis et al. 2011, 130). Based on a social interaction learning perspective, studies indicate that PMTO enhances positive parenting

and reduces coercive parenting habits that are commonly associated with families dealing with large amounts of stress (Khaylis et al. 2011, 130). According to Khaylis et al. (2011, 130), this approach provides instruction for “parents on affect regulation while providing them positive parenting tools to provide a warm and structured family environment in the face of family stress.”

Child Support and Noncustodial Parent Support

Veterans who are also noncustodial parents may benefit extensively from programs and initiatives that strive to resolve child support issues. In a 2009 VA survey of homeless veterans, out of forty-two identified needs, legal assistance for child support issues received the second highest score for unmet needs of homeless veterans (Berenson 2011, 2). One of the recent innovative approaches to addressing homeless veterans’ child support issues was a pilot program in San Diego known as Stand Down. Stand Down is an annual event in which large numbers of homeless veterans gather together to interact with service providers who offer needed services that the veterans may not be able to access throughout the rest of the year (Berenson 2011, 7). Some of the services include medical care, dental care, and social services (Berenson 2011, 7). In 2006, for the first time, the San Diego Superior Court held a session of its Family Support Division, the Title IV-D court for San Diego County, at Stand Down (Berenson 2011, 7). Personnel from the San Diego Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) screened the applications of more than 900 veterans who registered for Stand Down to establish which veterans had open child-support cases, and which ones might have benefitted from a judicial review of their case(s) (Berenson 2011, 7).

DCSS then filed motions to review more than fifty cases on behalf of more than forty veterans (Berenson 2011, 7). The Thomas Jefferson Veterans Legal Assistance Clinic, a law-

school clinical program that provides legal representation to veterans, provided legal representation to the veterans at the hearings held at Stand Down (Berenson 2011, 7). The results were extremely positive as the court made findings of “no ability to pay based on permanent disability and receipt of needs-based benefits, qualifying some cases for closure under existing California regulations” (Berenson 2011, 7). Conversely, in these cases, any child support arrears remained (Berenson 2011, 7). However, the DCSS would not resort to the aggressive enforcement initiatives available to it in pursuit of such arrears (Berenson 2011, 7). In several other cases, major steps were taken to support the veterans’ efforts to return to society as productive citizens (Berenson 2011, 8). The court released drivers’ and other professional licenses to the veterans (Berenson 2011, 8). Monthly arrears payments were provisionally set at modest amounts so that the veteran would be able to pay while still retaining sufficient income to attain housing (Berenson 2011, 8). In a number of cases, veterans were able to reunite with family members they had been out of touch with for long periods of time (Berenson 2011, 8).

In Texas, the Help Establishing Responsible Orders and Ensuring Support (HEROES) for Children in Military Families Program is a pilot program of the Texas Office of the Attorney General intended to address child support issues among current service members, veterans and their dependents (Whetsell 2011, 4). The goals of HEROES are to: offer service members, veterans and their families improved, personalized assistance in dealing with paternity establishment, child support and parenting time (custody visitation) matters; grant suitable relief in Texas child support cases where military service/combat related injuries have contributed to non-compliance with court orders; and to encourage positive co-parenting solutions for current troops, veterans, and their families (<https://ww.oag.state.tx.us/cs/ofi/index.shtml#heroes>).

The HEROES project is a collaboration of the Judge Advocate General Corps (JAG), the

Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), the Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP), Family Readiness Group staff, Texas Yellow Ribbon, and multiple US and international child support and legal services. Since the beginning of the project in July 2010:

“HEROES has provided more than 650 service members and veterans with specialized, expedited case review, assessment and legal action; 225 Fort Hood service members or dependents with individual appointments to discuss paternity, child support and parenting time issues; 32 paternity, child support and parenting time Fort Bliss and Joint Base San Antonio; presentations and legal briefings at multiple veterans legal clinics and National Guard Yellow Ribbon events; interstate child support and custody training for JAG attorneys and legal assistance staff at Fort Hood and Joint Base San Antonio; all Texas Child Support Division attorneys with training conducted at VISN on recognizing and responding to PTSD (<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/ofi/index.shtml#heroes>).”

Formal Military Family Support Programs

Formal military family support groups can serve as a significant source of support for the family of a veteran before, during, and after deployment. Family support groups initiated by the military or groups tailored to military families facilitate family support services and serve as an important network for families during separation and reunion (Wood et al. 1995, 230). All returning National Guard soldiers are required by their command to participate in educational reintegration programs providing information on available resources and how to access mental health services both within and outside VA (Meis et al. 2010, 565). The Army offers multiple programs such as Army Family Team Building (AFTB) (Burrell et al. 2003, 11). AFTB is “Training for a way of life that prepares everyone in America’s Army to function at one’s highest level, in any situation, with minimal outside support. This training improves personal and family preparedness, which enhances overall Army readiness” (Burrell et al. 2003, 11).

In a 1987 exploratory study of army wives, Wood et al. (1995) found that localized family support programs working on the battalion level and lower levels played a significant role in providing solid support for family health and social functioning during and after deployment.

Additionally, military chaplains played an important role in helping military spouses deal with deployment and family-related issues. This was evident in a study by Burrell et al. (2003) of military spouses whose spouses had deployed to OEF/OIF, in which 22 percent of the spouses were more likely to seek the help of a military chaplain when seeking formal family support.

Bourg and Segal's analyses of Army Soldier and Family Surveys revealed that if soldiers and their spouses perceived their unit leaders and Army policies to be supportive of their families, the soldiers and their spouses were more likely to be committed to the Army (Burrell et al. 2003, 8). Consequently, research suggests that if spouses do not identify with the military community in some way, they will be less likely to support their spouse's retention in the military and that they may generally experience poorer health (Burrell et al. 2003, 8).

Informal Family Support

Informal avenues of family support can play a significant role in providing assistance for family relationships during separation and reunion. Informal forms of support include employment, children, extended family, friends, religion, community activities, church community, and electronic communication (e.g., telephone calls and the Internet). In addition, Wood et al. (1995) found that "being employed, having a social support network of friends and family, and participating in family support group activities were important to women who successfully adjusted to separation" (Wood et al. 1995, 228).

In a study of Army National Guard wives whose husbands had deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq in 2005, Wheeler et al. (2010, 151) found that all of the women mentioned going to visit family or having family visit them as a way they coped with deployment. The women also mentioned that it was extremely beneficial to have family and friends available when they needed help or when they needed advice. In another study of army wives, Wood et al. (1995,

227) found that for most of the women, deployment friendships (friendships acquired during separation) endured even after reunion and the women continued to communicate and support one another through telephone calls and visits.

Unemployment

Under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), an employer must not deny initial employment, reemployment, retention in employment, promotion, or any other benefit of employment to a person on the basis of a past, present or future military service obligation. Uniform service includes all NGR military service, including extended deployments. USERRA covers nearly all employees, including part-time and probationary employees. The act also applies to virtually all US employers, regardless of size. However, USERRA establishes a five-year cumulative total of military service with a single employer, although time served during emergencies, reserve drills, and annually scheduled active duty training does not count toward the five-year allotment. Additionally, NGR service members will not be paid by their civilian employers while they are deployed for extensive periods (once their civilian “leave with pay” allotment has expired). Although these employment protections are extremely vital to NGR members who hold full-time civilian jobs outside of their military service, there still remains the problem of those members who were unemployed or underemployed prior to deployment. As a result, NGR members face unique problems in relation to civilian employment upon returning from deployment, in comparison to active duty service members and civilian populations.

Due to the recent US recession, the media has focused primarily on the unemployment rates of the general population. Conversely, not much interest has been paid to OEF/OIF

veterans and how they are affected by unemployment, in particular recently returned NGR veterans who did not hold civilian jobs prior to deployment or those NGR members who were self-employed, as research indicates that a high proportion of NG service members were unemployed or underemployed prior to deployment (Burnet-Zeigler et al. 2011, 641). A recent Bureau of Labor Statistics report stated that, “OEF/OIF Veterans have higher rates of unemployment than Veterans from other eras and similarly aged individuals in the general population...The total unemployment rate among OEF/OIF Veterans returning post 2001 was 7.3%, and among OEF/OIF Veterans 18 to 24 years of age, it was 14.1%” (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 643). Burnett-Zeigler et al.’s (2011, 641) study of 585 recently returned NG service members from the Midwestern United States discovered that less than half of the NG service members were employed approximately forty-five to sixty days following demobilization. Veterans who were younger, had a high school education or less, lower family income, and poorer mental health status were less likely to be employed. It was also found that a large proportion of the veterans who entered the civilian workforce forty-five to sixty days following deployment suffered from mental health and substance abuse disorders (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 644).

The results of this study suggest that perhaps the time spent away from the civilian world during deployment may have been a disadvantage for those NG service members who did not have civilian jobs prior to deployment. This suggests that civilians (who never deploy) would perhaps have lower unemployment because they could gradually adjust to changing economic conditions, unlike NGR members who must deploy for extensive periods and who must rapidly enter the civilian workforce either fourteen days (for service of thirty-one to 180 days) or ninety days (for service of 181 days or more) following their return to the US (Burnett-Zeigler et al.

2011, 639). Furthermore, deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq average approximately twelve months, with some deployments extending beyond fifteen months. In addition, because the number of troops in the active component of the military is smaller than in past conflicts, the Department of Defense has had to send military personnel on repeat tours in theater to meet the demands of an extended conflict.¹⁰ As a result, the vast amount of time spent away from the civilian world due to extended and repeat deployments could pose a large barrier to those NGR members seeking civilian employment.

In addition to these disadvantages, the presence of mental health disorders among NG members poses a significant problem to civilian employment. Among the NG members previously mentioned, a relationship was found between the presence of a mental health disorder and difficulty maintaining long-term employment. The researchers suggested that psychiatric disorders were more closely linked to maintaining rather than initiating employment.

The literature on the impact of military service on employment indicates that perhaps veteran status alone may not decrease the likelihood of working or decrease lifetime earnings (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 644). However, much of the literature available on employment indicates that mental health problems have a significant impact on work entry, productivity, and retention (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 644). Studies on civilians have revealed that individuals with mental health problems or substance use disorders are more likely to be unemployed or employed only part-time than those who do not have these problems. Research conducted on veterans has indicated that veterans suffering from a psychiatric condition were less likely to hold employment. Veterans suffering from PTSD and depression were paid significantly lower hourly wages than those who did not suffer from those conditions. Veterans suffering from

¹⁰ See <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/images/uploads/about/tvc-strategic-plan-2011.pdf>.

PTSD were more likely to be unemployed and the severity of PTSD increased the likelihood of unemployment.

Services for Employment Support

Employment Counseling

Employment counseling may provide an important source of support for NGR veterans seeking civilian employment following deployment. Early outreach and supportive employment counseling may be beneficial for younger veterans, as many of the younger, lower-income service members are more likely to be unemployed upon returning from deployment (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 641). Research indicates that a high proportion of NG service members may have been unemployed prior to deployment (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 641). As a result, employment counseling may provide unemployed veterans with the tools necessary to attain employment in the civilian world.

Education Assistance

Education assistance is another source of support for NGR veterans who have recently returned from deployment and who may require aid in reintegrating back into civilian life (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 644). Education assistance may provide NGR veterans a means for which to attain a postsecondary education, along with the necessary training and skills needed to become more marketable in a failing economy. Younger veterans may be prime candidates to take advantage of the new GI bill and other educational benefits that are available to them (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 644). Additionally, veterans programs in college institutions may provide valuable assistance to NGR members who are students. These programs may provide guidance on veterans' education benefits and other pertinent reintegration resources.

Supportive Work Therapy Programs

Supportive work therapy programs may be extremely beneficial for veterans who suffer from mental and/or physical problems as a result of combat deployment. Today, the VA offers vocational rehabilitation, employment and compensated work therapy programs for those veterans who suffer from mental and/or physical service-connected disabilities.

Research indicates that “traumatic experiences have the potential to cause future employment problems; particularly as combat exposures have been found to be related to delayed onset of PTSD” (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 644). According to Burnett-Zeigler et al. (2011, 644), “results from the Employment Intervention Demonstration Program demonstrate that employment models that integrate clinical and vocational services are more effective for individuals with psychiatric disorders in the general population and that individuals with psychiatric disorders who participate in some sort of supported employment program are more likely to have better employed-related outcomes.” Consequently, supported work programs may be vital in maintaining employment and possibly in moving employment from part-time to full-time status (Burnett-Zeigler et al. 2011, 644).

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Alcohol consumption has long been a part of military culture (Ferrier-Auerbach et al. 2009, 625). Unfortunately, excessive alcohol consumption in the military has had numerous negative personal and professional consequences. Heavy drinking, otherwise known as binge drinking, is even more common in the military than in other high-risk populations such as college students (Ferrier-Auerbach et al. 2009, 625). Heavy drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks in a single occasion within the past thirty days. What is of even more concern

is that among military members, heavy alcohol use continues to rise (Ferrier-Auerbach et al. 2009, 625). According to Ferrier-Auerbach and colleagues (2009, 625), “Heavy alcohol use in the general population has been associated with serious and potentially fatal health and social consequences, as well as negative consequences for emotional well-being and mental health.”

Seal et al. (2011, 93) analyzed the drinking habits of OEF/OIF military service members and veterans. They found that in more than 48,000 military members participating in the Millennium Cohort Study, NGR service members in particular were at increased risk for “new-onset heavy weekly drinking, binge drinking, and alcohol-related problems, compared to active duty forces” (Seal et al. 2011, 93). Also, in studies of smaller samples of OEF/OIF veterans in VA healthcare undergoing screening, between 22 to 40% of veterans screened positive for high-risk drinking (Seal et al. 2011, 93). Additionally, 7% of a small sample of OEF/OIF veterans were diagnosed as having cocaine and marijuana use disorders (Seal et al. 2011, 94).

These results suggest that because of the unique stressors of this population, NGR members may be at higher risk for developing substance use disorders in comparison to their active duty counterpart. As mentioned earlier, NGR members are forced to transition from a military combat environment to the civilian world much more rapidly than active duty members and may not feel adequately prepared for the stress of deployment and reintegration (Seal et al. 2011, 98). In contrast, active duty members may be able to work through some transition issues by utilizing an extensive military support network, including other service members who could engage in the therapeutic sharing of experiences. Active duty members also have direct access to reintegration services once they return to their installations, unlike most NGR members who live and/or work a distance from any military installation.

Another problem with alcohol and substance abuse in the military is its frequent

relationship to mental health disorders, particularly PTSD. In a large sample of Vietnam veterans, more than 70% of male Vietnam veterans screened positive for comorbid PTSD and a lifetime diagnosis of alcohol use disorder (Seal et al. 2011, 94). It is important to consider comorbid substance use disorders among OEF/OIF veterans because of the high rate of simultaneously occurring mental health problems in this population (Seal et al. 2011, 94). Research has supported the popular hypothesis that self-medication of mental health disorders, particularly PTSD, drives comorbidity with substance use disorders (Seal et al. 2011, 94). Among civilian populations, more than 50% of those diagnosed with having a substance use disorder also have at least one other comorbid mental health disorder (Seal et al. 2011, 94). Consequently, those with a mental health disorder were more likely to abuse alcohol and between 15 to 40% of those diagnosed with having a mental disorder also were found to abuse substances (Ferrier-Auerbach et al. 2009, 626; Seal et al. 2011, 94).

Services to Address Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Traditional Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Programs

Traditional substance abuse and mental health treatment programs have been known to be effective forms of treatment for both substance abuse and mental health disorders which appear to have high rates of co-occurrence. Conventionally, mental health treatment programs, such as those of the VA, employ a step-by-step approach to treat substance abuse and mental health disorders. First, the substance abuse disorder is treated, with the intention of attaining stabilization or sobriety before starting treatment for other mental conditions (Seal et al. 2011, 99).

The Twelve-Step Program has also been a popular and highly effective method for

treating alcohol and substance abuse. The Twelve-Step Program is a set of guiding principles outlining a course of action for recovery from addiction, compulsion, or other behavioral problems. Originally proposed by Alcoholics Anonymous as a method for recovery from alcoholism, the method was then adapted and became the foundation of other twelve-step programs.

Integrated PTSD and Substance Abuse Disorder Treatment Programs

A less conventional approach towards substance abuse treatment is the integration of PTSD and substance abuse disorder treatment programs. These programs are limited, and this may be due to the lack of research to test the effectiveness of these programs (Seal et al. 2011, 99). In defense of this approach, however, there have been numerous uncontrolled smaller studies conducted on the treatment of comorbid PTSD and substance abuse disorder that support the adding of trauma-focused interventions to substance abuse treatment (Seal et al. 2011, 99). An example of the success of this approach is “Seeking Safety,” a popular program in VA, which has been shown to significantly decrease symptoms of both PTSD and SUD among veterans (Seal et al. 2011, 99). Furthermore, the Iraq War Clinician Guide affirms that, “‘Seeking Safety’ should be considered a treatment option for Iraq War veterans who have substance use disorders along with problematic traumatic stress responses” (Seal et al. 2011, 99). Likewise, the VA Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook and VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines promote the coordination of care for veterans suffering from comorbid disorders.

Conclusion

Based on a review of key literature on NGR veterans returning from combat deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, research indicates that some of the major problems experienced by this population include:

- PTSD
- Relationship Distress
- Unemployment
- Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Services to address PTSD include therapy and medication. To prevent or alleviate relationship distress, successful service options include counseling, parenting intervention/education, child support and noncustodial support programs, as well as other formal and informal family support services. Services to reduce veteran unemployment include employment counseling, education assistance, and supportive work therapy programs. Programs to address alcohol and substance abuse include traditional substance abuse and mental health treatment programs as well as integrated PTSD and substance use disorder treatment programs.

In addition, further research is necessary to identify the most effective resources available to address these areas of concern. The services must be tailored toward NGR veterans who face unique stressors, as accessibility is a key factor in seeking treatment and utilizing veterans' services.

This is especially important in Texas, as it is home to the largest military and veteran populations in the nation (approximately 194,965 service members and 1,701,675 veterans).¹¹

¹¹ See <http://usmilitary.about.com/library/milinfo/statefacts/bltx.htm>, accessed April 7, 2012 and <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/images/uploads/about/tvc-strategic-plan-2011.pdf>, accessed April 7, 2012.

Relationship Distress	<p>Burrell, Durand, & Fortado 2003 Erbes , Meis, Polusny, & Compton 2011 Khaylis, Polusny, Erbes, Gewirtz, & Rath 2011 Meis, Barry, Kehle, Erbes, & Polusny 2010 Renshaw 2010 Shea, Vujanovic, Mansfield, Sevin, & Liu 2010 Stecker, Fortney, & Sherbourne 2011 Wheeler & Torres Stone 2010 Wood, Scarville, & Gravino 1995</p>
Counseling	<p>Burrell, Durand, & Fortado 2003 Erbes , Meis, Polusny, & Compton 2011 Meis, Barry, Kehle, Erbes, & Polusny 2010 Khaylis, Polusny, Erbes, Gewirtz, & Rath 2011 Wheeler & Torres Stone 2010 Wood, Scarville, & Gravino 1995</p>
Parenting Intervention and Education	<p>Khaylis, Polusny, Erbes, Gewirtz, & Rath 2011 Wheeler & Torres Stone 2010 Wood, Scarville, & Gravino 1995</p>
Child Support & Noncustodial Parent Support	<p>Berenson 2011 Whetsell 2011 Office of the Attorney General of Texas 2010</p>
Formal Military Family Support Programs	<p>Wood, Scarville, & Gravino 1995 Meis, Barry, Kehle, Erbes, & Polusny 2010 Burrell, Durand, & Fortado 2003</p>
Informal Family Support	<p>Wood, Scarville, & Gravino 1995 Wheeler & Torres Stone 2010</p>
Unemployment	<p>Burnett-Zeigler, Valenstein, Ilgen, Blow, Greden, Valenstein, Spinner, Blow, Gorman, Dalack, Marcus, & Kees 2010 Shea, Vujanovic, Mansfield, Sevin, & Liu 2010</p>
Employment Counseling	<p>Burnett-Zeigler, Valenstein, Ilgen, Blow, Greden, Valenstein, Spinner, Blow, Gorman, Dalack, Marcus, & Kees 2010</p>
Education Assistance	<p>Burnett-Zeigler, Valenstein, Ilgen, Blow, Greden, Valenstein, Spinner, Blow, Gorman, Dalack, Marcus, & Kees 2010</p>
Supportive Work Therapy Programs	<p>Burnett-Zeigler, Valenstein, Ilgen, Blow,</p>

	Greden, Valenstein, Spinner, Blow, Gorman, Dalack, Marcus, & Kees 2010
Alcohol and Substance Abuse	Ferrier –Auerbach, Kehle, Erbes, & Arbisi 2009 Seal, Cohen, Waldrop, Cohen, Maguen, & Ren 2011 Burrell, Durand, & Fortado 2003
Traditional Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Programs	Seal, Cohen, Waldrop, Cohen, Maguen, & Ren 2011
Integrated PTSD and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Programs	Seal, Cohen, Waldrop, Cohen, Maguen, & Ren 2011

Chapter 3. Methodology

Chapter Purpose

This chapter describes the research methodology used to collect the information included in the *Help for Heroes: A Reintegration Handbook for Texas National Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans*.

This applied research project is a descriptive study utilizing document analysis to describe data. Document analysis is used to identify post-deployment and reintegration services in Texas for NGR service members and veterans returning from deployment. A discussion on document analysis, why it was used as a data selection method, and its potential strengths and weaknesses is also presented in this chapter. Document analysis was appropriate to the research purpose as it was necessary for locating services and resources available to the public.

Document analysis was used to analyze websites and other source materials, thereby locating federal, state, and non-governmental services in Texas. Table 3.1 illustrates (1) the major problems experienced by NGR service members and veterans, (2) the types of services to address these problems, and (3) links the problems and service types to the websites of organizations and information databases that provide or connect individuals to needed services. For example, the VA Mental Health Treatment Program and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Mental Health Services Locator are linked to therapy and medication, which address PTSD. Likewise, the National Guard Job Connection Program and the National Resource Directory Veterans Job Bank are linked to employment counseling, a response to unemployment. Subsequently, this information was used to develop a handbook to assist service members and veterans with locating these services.

Table 3.1 Operationalization of Conceptual Framework

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Federal, State and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources
Therapy & Medication	<p>U.S. Veterans Affairs Mental Health Treatment http://www.va.gov/ Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD_flsh.asp?isFlash=1 Veterans Affairs Facility Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1 National Center for PTSD http://www.ptsd.va.gov/ Mental Health Services Locator http://store.samhsa.gov/mhlocator Military OneSource http://www.militaryonesource.mil National Suicide Prevention Lifeline http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/ Vet Combat Call Center http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/media/Call-Center-PSA.asp Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program www.yellowribbon.mil Texas 211 Information Hotline https://www.211texas.org/211/ 211Texas.org https://www.211texas.org/211/ PTSD Coach Mobile Application http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/ptsdcoach.asp</p>
Relationship Distress	Federal, State, and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources
Counseling	<p>U.S. Veterans Affairs Individual, Couple & Family Counseling http://www.va.gov/ Veterans Affairs Facility Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1 Texas 211 Information Hotline https://www.211texas.org/211/ 211Texas.org https://www.211texas.org/211/</p>

	<p>TherapistLocator.net (American Assoc. of Marriage & Family Therapy)</p> <p>www.therapistlocator.net</p> <p>National Resource Directory</p> <p>https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/</p> <p>Military OneSource</p> <p>http://www.militaryonesource.mil</p> <p>Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program</p> <p>www.yellowribbon.mil</p> <p>Texas Joint Forces Support Services - Military Family Life Consultants</p> <p>http://www.txfss.com/</p> <p>Chaplaincy of Texas Army National Guard</p> <p>http://www.txfss.com/</p>
Parenting Intervention & Education	<p>Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program</p> <p>www.yellowribbon.mil</p> <p>Military OneSource</p> <p>http://www.militaryonesource.mil</p> <p>National Resource Directory</p> <p>https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/</p> <p>Texas 211 Information Hotline</p> <p>https://www.211texas.org/211/</p> <p>211Texas.org</p> <p>https://www.211texas.org/211/</p> <p>ChildHelp</p> <p>http://www.childhelp.org/</p>
Child Support & Noncustodial Parent Support	<p>HEROES Program</p> <p>https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/ofl/index.shtml#heroes</p>
Formal Family Support	<p>Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program</p> <p>www.yellowribbon.mil</p> <p>National Resource Directory</p> <p>https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/</p> <p>Military OneSource</p> <p>http://www.militaryonesource.mil</p> <p>National Guard and Reserve Reintegration Support</p> <p>http://ra.defense.gov/programs/fepp/</p> <p>Texas Joint Family Support Services</p> <p>http://www.txfss.com/</p>

	<p>TexVet: Partners Across Texas https://www.texvet.org/support-services Texas Workforce Commission http://www.twc.state.tx.us/tvlp/tvlp_family.html American Red Cross www.redcross.org</p>
Informal Family Support	<p>Facebook http://www.facebook.com Skype www.skype.com</p>
Unemployment	Federal, State, and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources
Employment Counseling	<p>Texas Veterans Commission http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1 FedsHire Vets http://www.fedshirevets.gov/ Texas Workforce Commission http://www.twc.state.tx.us/ TexVet: Partners Across Texas https://www.texvet.org/support-services Texas 211 Information Hotline https://www.211texas.org/211/ 211Texas.org https://www.211texas.org/211/ National Resource Directory https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/ National Guard Job Connection Program (JCEP) http://www.jcep.info DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) www.turbotap.org</p>
Education Assistance	<p>G.I. Bill http://www.gibill.va.gov/ Hazlewood Act http://texas-veterans.com/education/hazlewood. Texas Veterans Commission http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1 Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program www.yellowribbon.mil</p>

	National Resource Directory https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/ Military OneSource http://www.militaryonesource.mil National Guard and Reserve Reintegration Support http://ra.defense.gov/programs/fepp/
Alcohol and Substance Abuse	Federal, State, and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources
Traditional Substance Abuse and Mental Health Programs	Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/TreatmentLocator/faces/quickSearch.jspx U.S. Veterans Affairs Substance Abuse Treatment http://www.va.gov/ Veterans Affairs Facility Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1 Texas 211 Information Hotline https://www.211texas.org/211/ 211Texas.org https://www.211texas.org/211/ Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) www.aa.org/en_find_meeting.cfm?PageID=29 Narcotics Anonymous (NA) www.na.org/?ID=phoneline
Integrated PTSD and SUD Treatment Programs	U.S. Veterans Affairs Substance Abuse Treatment http://www.va.gov/ Veterans Affairs Facility Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1 Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD_flsh.asp?isFlash=1

Document Analysis

Document analysis is defined as “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material”

(Bowen 2009, 27). Similar to other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis involves the examination and interpretation of data in order to extract meaning, develop understanding, and construct empirical knowledge (Bowen 2009).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Document Analysis

In comparison to other qualitative research methods, document analysis has both strengths and weaknesses. One strength of document analysis is that it is an *efficient* method of qualitative research (Bowen 2009). It involves less use of time and requires data selection, as opposed to data collection (Bowen 2009). Another strength of document analysis is *availability*: many documents are in the public domain, especially due to the Internet, and are easily accessible (Bowen 2009). One benefit of utilizing the Internet is that many websites contain hyperlinks to other websites that provide related information and resources. This snowball method results in “accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects” (Babbie 2004, 184).

This research method is also often *cost-effective* (Bowen 2009). Document analysis is less costly than other research methods and is frequently the method of choice when the collection of new data is not feasible (Bowen 2009). The data contained in the documents have already been gathered; what is left is for the content and quality of the documents to be evaluated (Bowen 2009).

Document analysis is also *unobtrusive* and *non-reactive* (Bowen 2009). This research method is obtrusive as the data are unaffected due to observation (Bowen 2009). Reflexivity occurs when there is an “awareness of the researcher’s contribution to the construction of meanings attached to social interactions and acknowledgement of the possibility of the investigator’s influence on the research” (Bowen 2009). Reflexivity is usually not an issue in

document analysis. Document analysis is also *stable*—the researcher’s presence does not alter what is being studied and as a result, documents are suitable for repeated reviews (Bowen 2009). In addition, document analysis is *precise*—the availability of exact names, references, and details make documents useful during research (Bowen 2009). Finally, another strength of document analysis is that documents provide *broad coverage*: they encompass a multitude of events, multiple settings, and a broad range of time (Bowen 2009).

Nevertheless, there are also potential weaknesses with document analysis. With document analysis, there is the possibility of *low retrievability* (Bowen 2009). At times, documentation is not always accessible as documents may be deliberately blocked (Bowen 2009). However, low retrievability is not an issue with this study, as most of the documents pertaining to veterans’ services are not deliberately blocked. Another weakness of using document analysis is *bias selectivity* (Yin 2003, 86). However, this is not an issue in this study as the purpose of this research is to provide as much accurate and complete information as possible, not to construct a theory or assess a program.

Finally, another weakness of using the Internet as a means for retrieving source materials is that uniform resource locators (URLs) can change and material can be removed or changed over time. However, for the purpose of this research, it is not a significant drawback, as most websites in this study refer to governmental organizations with long histories of stable services. While the material may be updated, it is unlikely that the URL will disappear. In addition, if URLs for a governmental organization are changed, alternate URLs are often posted on the old website or users are automatically rerouted to a new location.

Human Subjects Protection

This survey research is an exempt category of research under 45 CFR, Part 46, Section 101(b)(4) which states that an exemption exists if: “Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.” The data (websites and other source documents) were in existence before the project began.

Chapter Summary

The operationalized conceptual framework supports development of the *Help for Heroes: A Reintegration Handbook for Texas National Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans*. The following chapter presents a summary of the resources, agencies, and organizations that are provided in the handbook.

Chapter 4. Results

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and describe services available to NGR service members and veterans who have returned from deployments in Afghanistan (OEF) and Iraq (OIF), based on major issues experienced by this population. The issues and services are classified in descriptive categories. The following provides an overview of federal, Texas State, and private organizations that provide services to address these needs. Subsequently, this information was used to develop the *Help for Heroes: A Reintegration Handbook for Texas National Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans*, identifying easily accessible resources in Texas that strive to reduce or alleviate the effects of war on NGR members and veterans. This is an initiative to facilitate the successful reintegration of Texas NGR members and veterans transitioning from a combat military setting to a civilian environment.

Organization of Chapter

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of major government (federal and state) service providers, programs, and resources that address the four major post-deployment and reintegration problems experienced by service members and veterans: PTSD, relationship distress, unemployment, and alcohol and substance abuse. These federal and state service providers, programs, and resources are:

- ▶ US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- ▶ VA Facility Locator
- ▶ Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs Post-Deployment Guide
- ▶ Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program
- ▶ Military OneSource

- ▶ National Resource Directory
- ▶ Texas Joint Family Support Services (Texas Military Forces)
- ▶ Texas Veterans Commission
- ▶ Texas 2-1-1 Help in Texas Information Program
- ▶ TexVet: Partners Across Texas

The second section of this chapter provides more detailed information on services that are problem focused. For example, the Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator and the National Center for PTSD are linked to therapy and medication, listed under PTSD. Likewise, the US Veterans Affairs Couple and Family Counseling are linked to counseling, in response to relationship distress.

Major Federal and State Government Service Providers and Resources

▶ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The VA provides patient care and federal benefits to veterans and their dependents. Benefits include disability, education and training, vocational rehabilitation and employment, home loan guaranty, dependent and survivor benefits, medical and mental health treatment, life insurance and burial benefits. OEF/OIF combat veterans can receive free medical care for any condition related to their service in Iraq/Afghanistan for five years after the date of their discharge or release. The VA's website provides program information, instructions on how to apply for VA benefits, facility locators, and numerous links to veterans' programs and services. VA regional services can assist with filing the appropriate VA forms. Additionally, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) can also provide aid by answering questions or by petitioning on behalf of the service member, veteran or family member if they consider the

individual qualified to receive benefits. For more information, visit <http://www.va.gov/> or call 1-800-827-1000.

► **Veterans Affairs Facility Locator**

The Veterans Affairs Facility Locator is an online search engine provided by the VA that allows users to locate VA facilities in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Philippine Islands. The search engine is easy to navigate, providing a drop-down menu that offers more concise search options, providing users with the opportunity to search for all types of facilities or by specific types of facilities based on zip code, state, or island territory. The site is a storehouse of facility and key staff information within 1,715 VA facilities, maintained on a regular basis by editors and administrators nationwide throughout the VA network. Designed for ease of use, this site categorizes information for browsing by state and administration, as well as by viewing through an interactive map of the United States. To access the facility locator, visit <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1>.

► **Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs Guide**

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs website is a useful site that provides information on military reserve affairs. The website features information on Reserve issues including demobilization, health care (including links to information on VA PTSD treatment), TRICARE¹² Health Insurance, education benefits, and family and employer programs and policy. The website provides information on who is eligible and what steps need to be taken to attain health insurance under TRICARE. Under the subcategory mobilization, service members and their families can access a Demobilization Guide that outlines Reserve demobilization and transition benefits. This is an extremely useful guide that provides information on topics such as demobilization, transition assistance, reemployment, students,

¹² TRICARE is the health insurance program for service members, retirees and their dependents.

small business owners, health care, VA health care, and veterans benefits, and provides useful links for service members and veterans. For more information and to access this Demobilization Guide, visit <http://ra.defense.gov/programs/fepp/>.

► **Texas Joint Family Support Services (TJFSS)**

The Texas Joint Family Support Services (TJFSS) is a unit within the Texas Military Forces that provides services to promote resiliency and wellness for all Texas National Guard Soldiers and Airmen. TJFSS provides help for mental health, retirement, transition assistance, TRICARE Health Insurance, education services, VA services, chaplain services, legal services, family support programs, and more. Service members and their families can also download a Family Readiness Smartbook, which provides information and contact numbers for each service. *This handbook is recommended for all Texas National Guard members and their families.* For more information and to download the TJFSS Family Readiness Smartbook, visit <http://www.txfss.com/> (call toll-free 1-800-252-8032).

► **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is a DoD-wide initiative to support the welfare of NGR members and their dependents, by connecting them with resources and services throughout the deployment cycle. Through Yellow Ribbon events, service members and their families are able to connect with local resources before, during, and after deployments. Reintegration after returning from deployment is a critical time for NGR members, as they often live far from military installations and other members of their units. Commanders and other military leaders play a vital role in ensuring that NGR members and their families attend Yellow Ribbon events where they can access information on health care, education and training opportunities, financial, and legal benefits. The Yellow Ribbon

Reintegration Program works together with affiliated federal entities, including the Small Business Administration and Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs, to provide updated and pertinent information to NGR members and their families. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free 1-800-252-8032.

► **Military OneSource**

Military OneSource is a free service provided by the Department of Defense to military members and their families to help with a wide range of concerns to include military life and deployment, family and recreation (parenting and child care), health and relationships (mental health and addictions, relationships, emotional well-being), career and education, financial and legal, crisis and disasters, and other areas of need for family members and wounded service members. Services are available twenty-four hours a day—by telephone and online. Many Military OneSource staff members have prior military experience (veterans, spouses, guardsmen, reservists), and all receive continuous training on military issues and military lifestyle. The program can be especially useful to NGR members and their families who live at a distance from military installations. Some of the services include call center and online support, personal counseling (face-to-face, telephone, online), financial services, tax services, and a Spouse Career Center. Military OneSource offers three kinds of short-term, non-medical counseling options to active duty and NGR members and their families. Counseling services are designed to provide help with short-term issues such as adjustment to situational stressors, stress management, decision making, communication grief, blended-family issues, and parenting skills issues. Military OneSource can arrange for individuals or family members to meet face-to-face with a professional counselor in the local community, or for those who prefer or are unable to meet

face-to-face, telephone and online (instant-messaging) consultations are available. Each eligible military member or family member may receive up to twelve sessions, per issue, per counselor at no cost. Those requiring counseling for long-term medical issues will be referred to TRICARE or a military treatment facility. For more information on Military OneSource services, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil> or call toll-free 1-800-342-9647.

► **National Resource Directory (NRD)**

The National Resource Directory (NRD) is a comprehensive web portal that connects wounded warriors, service members, veterans, and their families with services and resources to support them. The NRD has information on thousands of national and local programs, services and organizations, many in local communities that support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration, including family counseling and family support groups. There are multiple ways to search the web portal, including: NRD sources (search and advanced search), information by subject, information by state/territory, and through the site map. Information on the web site is divided among the following subject areas: benefits and compensation; education and training; employment; family and caregiver support; health; homeless assistance; housing, transportation and travel; volunteer opportunities; and other services and resources. Each of these main subject areas is further divided into subfolders to help users find more detailed information. For example, if a user is a veteran or family member looking for family support, he/she might wish to go to the family and caregiver support section of the site, and then click on the "Coping with Deployment" subfolder and browse for family counseling services. Also, by clicking on the link NRD Sources on the website homepage, a veteran or family member can search for local family counseling services. Detailed instructions on how to use the web portal are available by clicking on the link titled, "How to Use this Site" which is located on the website's homepage.

Finally, the website features numerous links and phone numbers to other sites and organizations including the Veterans Crisis Line, the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, the VA Caregiver Support Line, and the Wounded Warrior Resource Center. For more information, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

► **Texas Veterans Commission**

The Texas Veterans Commission serves veterans and their family members in all matters pertaining to veterans' disability benefits and rights. It is the appointed agency of the State of Texas to represent the State and its veterans before the VA. The agency represents veterans in filing VA disability claims and during VA appeals processes, while also providing assistance to dependents with survivor benefits. The agency has more than seventy-five claims counselors accredited by the VA to represent veterans with disability claims and appeals. Counselors also assist veterans and their families with questions regarding benefits, survivor and dependent needs, filling out VA paperwork, and medical issues. The highest proportion of veterans live near the major cities of Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin, El Paso, and the Rio Grande Valley. In order to serve these veterans, Texas Veterans Commission claims and benefits counselors are located in VA regional offices, VA medical facilities, VA clinics, and military installations throughout the State. The agency's website features useful information such as an office listing, contact information, veterans' education, and veterans' employment. For more information, visit <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/>.

► **Texas 2-1-1 Help in Texas Information Program**

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas, including PTSD treatment, family support services, employment services, education opportunities, and alcohol and substance abuse treatment.

Callers can speak with a skilled resource specialist who can provide information and referrals twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year. (An alternate toll-free number is 1-877-541-7905.)

211Texas.org is a website provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission that connects citizens with the information and services they need, including PTSD treatment, family support services, employment services, education opportunities, and alcohol and substance abuse treatment. The website serves as a database for over 60,000 state and local human services programs. Users can search for a service by entering a need and a location.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Table 4.1 lists the services for NGR members and veterans suffering from PTSD; the federal, state and private organizations/programs that provide the identified services; and the corresponding handbook page numbers.

Table 4.1 Services for PTSD

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Federal, State and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources	Corresponding Handbook Page Numbers
Therapy & Medication	U.S. Veterans Affairs Mental Health Treatment	5
	Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator	5
	Veterans Affairs Facility Locator	5
	National Center for PTSD	5
	Mental Health Services Locator	6
	Military OneSource	6
	National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	6
	Vet Combat Call Center	6
	Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program	7
	Texas 211 Information Hotline	7

	211Texas.org	7
	PTSD Coach Mobile Application	7

Therapy and Medication

The VA provides therapy for PTSD including cognitive behavioral therapy, cognitive processing therapy, Prolonged Exposure Therapy, EMDR therapy, group therapy, counseling, and medication. Antidepressant medications, anti-anxiety medications, mood stabilizing medications, and other medications to ease nightmares, irritability, sleeplessness, depression, and anxiety are included as part of the PTSD treatments. The VA offers inpatient and outpatient care, and VA counseling is also available at local Vet Centers. For more information on the VA's PTSD treatment programs, visit <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp> or call the Vet Combat Call Center at 1-866-496-8838. To locate a VA facility, visit <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1>.

The **Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator** is an online search engine provided by the VA that allows users to locate specialized PTSD programs in all fifty states, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Philippine Islands. The search engine is simple to navigate, providing a drop-down menu that offers more concise search options, giving users the option to search for all programs or by specific type of PTSD program, as well as by zip code or by state or island territory. Each medical center within VA has PTSD specialists who provide treatment for veterans with PTSD. The VA provides nearly 200 specialized treatment programs. A referral is usually needed to access the specialty programs. To access the program locator, visit http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD_flsh.asp?isFlash=1.

The **National Center for PTSD** website provides a vast amount of information on PTSD and where to get help for PTSD. The National Center for PTSD is a center for research

and education on the prevention, understanding and treatment of PTSD, in an effort to improve the well-being and understanding of American veterans. Although the center does not provide direct clinical care, it does provide information to help individuals find local mental health services and information on trauma and PTSD. The website's homepage provides a bright red link to a PTSD program locator titled, "Where to Get Help for PTSD." Here, multiple options are available to the user: if in a crisis, users are given emergency information, including the Suicide Prevention Lifeline phone number, the Veterans Crisis Line phone number and a link to an online Veterans Confidential Live Chat. For those NGR service members and veterans who would like to seek treatment outside of the VA, there is a link available for "Finding and Choosing a Therapist" (<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/where-to-get-help.asp>). Here, a user has the option of locating a therapist either by telephone or online. Multiple links are available for other online therapy locators. These databases include profiles of therapists and the types of therapy they provide, including age-specific therapies, individual, couple, family, group, primarily female, primarily male, and gay, lesbian and bisexual therapies. Multiple types of therapies are available, including cognitive behavioral therapy, EMDR, violence, trauma, anger, and anxiety. For more information, visit <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>.

The **Mental Health Services Locator**, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is an online search engine that locates local mental health services (including PTSD treatment) for NGR members and their families. *This database may be extremely helpful to those troops and veterans who do not want to seek PTSD treatment within the VA or federal system, as it is able to locate public services beyond the VA/federal government.* The database is a host of information collected in 2010 and is continuously updated as new information becomes available. The Mental Health Services Locator allows users to

locate PTSD treatment programs in all fifty states, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. There are multiple search options which allow users to search by state, zip code, and service settings (e.g., administrative, inpatient care, outpatient care, and residential care). To access the locator, visit <http://store.samhsa.gov/mhlocator>.

Military OneSource provides free PTSD screening and short-term counseling for military members. Available twenty-four hours a day, by telephone and online, Military OneSource offers short-term, non-medical counseling , designed to provide help with short-term issues (that may be related to an individual suffering from PTSD) such as: adjustment to situational stressors, stress management, communication grief, as well as PTSD screening. Military OneSource can arrange for individuals to meet face-to-face with a professional counselor in the local community or for those who prefer or are unable to meet face-to-face, telephone and online (instant-messaging) consultations are available. Each eligible military member may receive up to twelve sessions, per issue, per counselor at no cost. Those requiring counseling for long-term medical issues will be referred to TRICARE or a military treatment facility. To access Military OneSource services, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil> or call 1-800-342-9647.

The **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, is a twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week telephone and online chat line service available to individuals who are experiencing or who know someone who is experiencing emotional distress or suicidal crisis. The Veterans Crisis Line, which works in conjunction with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat line, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online, or send a text message to

838255 to receive confidential support twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. To access the chat line, visit <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.

The **Vet Center Combat Call Center 1-877-WAR-VETS**, is a free twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week confidential call center where combat veterans, service members and their families can call to talk about their military experience, their struggle with PTSD, or any other issue they are facing during their readjustment to civilian life. The staff is comprised of combat veterans from several eras as well as family members of combat veterans. For more information, visit <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/media/Call-Center-PSA.asp>.

The **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program** connects NGR members and their families with information on where to get PTSD treatment. Through Yellow Ribbon events, service members can also learn coping skills to manage anger, prevent suicide, and ways to handle stressful situations—problems that can be related to PTSD. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free 1-800-252-8032.

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas, including PTSD therapy for service members and veterans. Callers can speak with a skilled resource specialist who can provide information and referrals twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year. An alternate toll-free number is 1-877-541-7905.

211Texas.org is a database provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission that connects service members and veterans with organizations that provide PTSD therapy. The website serves as a database for over 60,000 state and local human services programs. Users can search for veterans' services by entering a need and a location. For

example, if a service member/veteran is looking for PTSD counseling in Austin, simply click “Search” on the website’s homepage and enter “PTSD” or “Veterans” under “Need” and “Austin” under “Location” to gain access to local PTSD treatment programs.

The **PTSD Coach mobile application** (colloquially known as a “mobile app”) is a convenient and helpful tool for NGR members who utilize smart phones and other compatible portable electronic devices such as computer tablets and media players. The app is a self-management tool that can help users learn about and manage symptoms that commonly arise after experiencing a traumatic event. Created by the VA’s National Center for PTSD and the DoD’s National Center for Telehealth and Technology, the app provides dependable information on PTSD and treatments that have been proven to work; tools for screening and tracking PTSD symptoms; accessible, uncomplicated skills to help users deal with stress symptoms; and direct links to other resources such as the Veterans Crisis Line, the 24/7 Combat Call Center, the VA Facility Locator; Military OneSource; and the Mental Health Services Locator. The questionnaire used in the app, the PTSD Checklist (PCL), is a reliable and valid self-report measure used across VA, DoD, and in the community. The PTSD Coach app is not intended to replace professional care, but it is a useful tool for those who have or think they may have PTSD, as it provides facts and valuable self-help skills based on research. It is also helpful for family members and can be downloaded from iTunes and Android Market. For more information, visit <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/ptsdcoach.asp>.

Relationship Distress

Table 4.2 lists the services for NGR members and veterans experiencing relationship distress; the federal, state and private organizations/programs that provide the identified services; and the corresponding handbook page numbers.

Table 4.2: Relationship Distress

Relationship Distress	Federal, State and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources	Corresponding Handbook Page Numbers
Counseling	U.S. Veterans Affairs Individual, Couple & Family Counseling Veterans Affairs Facility Locator Texas 211 Information Hotline 211Texas.org TherapistLocator.net (American Assoc. of Marriage & Family Therapy) National Resource Directory Military OneSource Texas Joint Forces Support Services - Military Family Life Consultants Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Chaplaincy of Texas Army National Guard	9 9 9 9-10 10 10 10 10 11 11
Parenting Intervention & Education	Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Military OneSource National Resource Directory Texas 211 Information Hotline 211Texas.org ChildHelp	11 11 12 12 12 12
Child Support & Noncustodial Parent Support	HEROES Program	12

Formal Family Support	Texas Joint Family Support Services	13
	Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program	13
	National Resource Directory	13-14
	Military OneSource	14
	National Guard and Reserve Reintegration Support	14
	TexVet: Partners Across Texas	14
	American Red Cross	14-15
	Texas Workforce Commission	15
Informal Family Support	Facebook	15
	Skype	16

Counseling

The VA provides individual, group, couple and family readjustment counseling for combat veterans and their families. VA family counseling is provided at community-based Vet Centers and is prepaid through military service. Veterans who served in a combat zone and received a campaign ribbon (OEF, OIF, etc.), as well as their families, are eligible for counseling at Vet Centers. To locate a Vet Center visit <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isFlash=1> or call 1-866-496-8838 during normal business hours.

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas that provide marital and family counseling. Callers can speak with a skilled multilingual resource specialist who can provide information and referrals twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year. (An alternate toll-free number is 1-877-541-7905.)

211Texas.org is a website provided by the Texas Health and Human Services

Commission that connects citizens with the information and/or services they need (including individual and family counseling). Users can search for family counseling services by entering a need and a location. For example, if a service member/veteran or family member is looking for veterans' family counseling in Austin, simply click "Search" on the website's homepage and enter "veterans" or "family counseling" under "Need" and "Austin" under "Location" to gain access to local services.

Sponsored by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), **TherapistLocator.net** is a database that lists more than 15,000 marriage and family therapists in the US. *This service is especially helpful for those service members and veterans who would like to seek marital or family counseling outside of the VA/governmental network.* All of the therapists are members of the AAMFT and must meet stringent education and training requirements established by the AAMFT. AAMFT therapists provide counseling for and information on domestic violence, PTSD, adolescent behavior, children and divorce, children's attachment, depression, anger, infidelity, marital distress, marriage preparation, and much more. The website also lists the specializations of each therapist.

The **National Resource Directory (NRD)** is a comprehensive web portal that provides a database of family counseling services in the United States. Service members, veterans and their families can search for family counseling services in the local area by entering key words (i.e. "family counseling") and a location (state or zip code). Service members and veterans can further filter a search by specifying a type of counseling service: all, governmental only or non-governmental only. *This feature is especially helpful for those who would like to seek counseling outside of the VA/governmental network.* For more information, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

Military OneSource provides short-term, non-medical family counseling options to NGR members and their families. Counseling services are designed to provide help with short-term issues such as adjustment to situational stressors, stress management, decision making, communication grief, family issues, and parenting skills issues. Military OneSource can arrange for individuals or family members to meet face-to-face with a professional counselor in the local community or for those who prefer or who are unable to meet face-to-face, telephone and online (instant-messaging) consultations are available. Each eligible service member or family member may receive up to twelve sessions, per issue, per counselor at no cost. For more information on Military OneSource services, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>.

The **Texas Joint Forces Support Services** unit provides Military Family Life Consultants (MFLCs) that offer family counseling to all National Guard (Army & Air) members and their families. MFLCs are able to assist individuals and families with:

- Deployment and reintegration issues
- Marriage and relationship issues
- Parenting/sibling & family issues
- Communication
- Stress and anxiety
- Depression

Consultations are free and anonymous and no records are kept. After-hours and weekend appointments are available, and group or off-site meetings can be arranged. For more information, call (888)755-9355 or visit <http://www.txfss.com/>.

The **Chaplaincy of the Texas Army National Guard** provides counseling for Army National Guard members and their families. The unit offers a Strong Bonds program which

focuses on strengthening the family. Additionally, the Chaplaincy provides multiple training programs for suicide awareness/prevention, battlemind¹³ (pre/post deployment), soldier and spouse modules, anger management, marriage enrichment events, and single soldier events. To contact chaplain services twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, call 1-866-822-7685 Option 8# or e-mail TexasChaplain@ng.army.mil.

The **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program** provides family counseling, briefings, workshops and seminars to assist service members and their families throughout the deployment process. Yellow Ribbon events include: briefings on family separation, coping with deployment, the effects of combat operational stress, reintegration issues, marriage and single family workshops, and reconnecting with children. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free 1-800-252-8032.

Parenting Intervention and Education

The **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program** provides parenting support and education through its events, in an effort to support NGR members and their families throughout the deployment process. Yellow Ribbon events focus on helping NGR members reconnect with their children. The program also provides youth programs for the children. Childcare is provided for children ages zero to five and the Texas National Guard Youth Program sponsors activities for children ages six to seventeen focusing on the effects of the deployment cycle. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free

¹³ “Battlemind” is a term that refers to being mentally prepared for military combat.

1-800-252-8032.

Military OneSource provides online parenting education and support for all military members. Under the subcategory, “Family and Recreation,” there is a link to “Parenting and Child Care.” Here, parents can learn about the following topics: adoption, becoming a parent, child care, parenting skills, and stages of development. Each topic is subdivided into separate links for more detailed information. The parenting and child care page also provides links to other organizations that offer parenting education and support. In addition, Military OneSource features a link to the Sittercity Childcare Program, an online database funded by the DoD that can be used to find local sitters and military subsidized care providers. For more information on Military OneSource services, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>.

The **National Resource Directory (NRD)** is a comprehensive web portal that connects service members, veterans and their families with local parenting intervention, education and childcare services. Under the homepage subcategory “Family and Caregiver Support,” users can search for resources in their community that provide parenting intervention and education. The website also organizes searches based on parenting topics such as child care, talking to children, and children with special needs. For more information, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with child care and parenting intervention services in Texas. Callers can speak with a skilled multilingual resource specialist who can provide information and referrals twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year. An alternate toll-free number is 1-877-541-7905.

211Texas.org is a database that can connect citizens with child care and parenting education/intervention services. Users can search for childcare and parenting education services

by entering a need and a location. For example, if a service member/veteran or family member is looking for parenting classes in Austin, simply click “Search” on the website’s homepage and enter “parenting classes” under “Need” and “Austin” under “Location” to gain access to local parenting classes.

ChildHelp provides a toll free, anonymous and confidential twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week hotline for parents who need assistance or parenting advice. The hotline is staffed with professional crisis counselors who offer crisis intervention and information on thousands of support services. When calling 1-800-4-A-CHILD (-800-422-4453), a qualified counselor can assist veterans/service members or family members if they need help and want to talk to a counselor, are in physical or emotional crisis and need support, or would like literature or access to child care or parenting services.

Child Support and Noncustodial Parent Support

In Texas, the **Help Establishing Responsible Orders and Ensuring Support (HEROES) for Children in Military Families Program** is a pilot program of the Texas Office of the Attorney General intended to address child support issues among current service members, veterans and their dependents. The goal of HEROES is to offer service members, veterans and their families improved, personalized assistance in dealing with paternity establishment, child support and parenting time (custody visitation) matters; grant suitable relief in Texas child support cases where military service/combat related injuries have attributed to non-compliance with court orders; and to encourage positive co-parenting solutions for current troops, veterans and their families. The HEROES project is a collaboration of the Judge Advocate General Corps (JAG), the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), the Texas Veterans Leadership

Program (TVLP), Family Readiness Group staff, Texas Yellow Ribbon, and multiple US and international child support and legal services. Since the beginning of the project in July 2010:

“HEROES has provided more than 650 service members and veterans with specialized, expedited case review, assessment and legal action; 225 Fort Hood service members or dependents with individual appointments to discuss paternity, child support and parenting time issues; 32 paternity, child support and parenting time Fort Bliss and Joint Base San Antonio; presentations and legal briefings at multiple veterans legal clinics and National Guard Yellow Ribbon events; interstate child support and custody training for JAG attorneys and legal assistance staff at Fort Hood and Joint Base San Antonio; all Texas Child Support Division attorneys with training conducted at VISN on recognizing and responding to PTSD (<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/ofc/index.shtml#heroes>).”

For more information, visit <https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/ofc/index.shtml#heroes>.

Formal Family Support

The **Texas Joint Family Support Services (TJFSS)** is a unit within the Texas Military Forces that provides a variety of family support services to promote resiliency and wellness for all Texas National Guard members and their families. TJFSS offers multiple resources for family support, including Family Readiness Teams, Family Readiness Support Assistants, Family Assistance Specialists, Family Readiness Groups, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Strong Bonds Program, and much more. Family Readiness Groups (FRG) are “the heart and soul of the National Guard.” Comprised of guard members, civilians, family members, volunteers, and unit commanders, FRGs provide the opportunity for mutual social and emotional support within units, as well as outreach services and information. FRGs are vital to the military as they often provide firsthand information to families about their Soldiers/Airmen, including deployment updates when their Soldiers/Airmen cannot be contacted directly.¹⁴ Family members can join a FRG at any time. The unit’s website provides a wealth of information on the various programs and provides a list of contact phone numbers. Service members and their

¹⁴ During combat deployment, direct communication between a Soldier/Airman and his or her family may be limited.

families can also download a Family Readiness Smartbook which provides information and contact numbers for each service. *This handbook is recommended to all Texas National Guard members and their families.* For more information and to download the TJFSS Family Readiness Smartbook, visit <http://www.txfss.com/> (call toll-free 1-800-252-8032).

The **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program** is a DoD-wide initiative to support and strengthen NGR members and their families by connecting them with resources and services throughout the deployment cycle. Through Yellow Ribbon events, NGR members and their families are able to engage in family-strengthening events. These events include seminars focusing on topics such as family separation, coping with deployment, member and spouse employment, reintegration issues, marriage, single soldiers, reconnecting with children, assistance with personnel issues (for spouses and members), and financial counseling for families. The two-day post-deployment events occur at hotels, resorts, and conference centers. These post-deployment events are designed for the service member and his or her family to relax, reconnect and receive information together. Child care is provided for children ages zero to five and the Texas National Guard Youth program sponsors activities for children ages six to seventeen, focusing on the effects of the deployment cycle. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, and www.yellowribbon.mil.

The **National Resource Directory (NRD)** is a comprehensive web portal that connects service members, veterans and their families with local and national family support services. Users can search for family support programs by state or zip code, or search by subject. Under the folder “Family & Caregiver Support,” located on the NRD homepage, users can search for information on family support services including service member and veteran support

organizations, branch-specific resources, organizations that help families cope with deployment, support groups, family recreation services, caregiver support resources/services, and domestic violence and sexual assault resources. Additionally, this folder offers information on services that provide financial information and assistance for families. To search for local family support services, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

Military OneSource is a free online service, sponsored by DoD, that provides booklets, articles, recordings, and other resources to help support military families. Under the homepage subcategory “Family and Recreation,” NGR families can search for family support information on elder care, recreation, parenting, child care, home maintenance, as well as shopping tips on becoming a more knowledgeable consumer. Under the link “Elder Care,” users can find information to help them sort through complex issues that arise due to a family member’s aging. Likewise, under the link “Recreation,” there are free online libraries and audio books, as well as tools to help plan a vacation. To access family support resources provided by Military OneSource, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>.

The **Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs website** is a useful site that provides information on Reserve family support services and resources. Under the subcategory “Family Readiness,” there is information on family and employer programs and policy, a family toolkit (handbook for Reserve families), a soldier’s parent guide, and numerous helpful links to other resources including the Army Family Liaison Office and Military Homefront, a DoD website for official military community and family policy. Under the subcategory “Mobilization,” service members and their families can access a demobilization guide that outlines Reserve demobilization and transition benefits. This is an extremely useful guide that provides information on topics such as demobilization, transition assistance,

reemployment, students, small business owners, healthcare, VA healthcare, veterans' benefits, and provides useful links for NGR service members and veterans. For more information, visit <http://ra.defense.gov/programs/fepp/>.

The **TexVet: Partners Across Texas** website is a hub for network and event-based activities for military service members, veterans and their families. The community calendar provides information on local family services and activities, including workshops and peer-to-peer support groups. The website also provides information on specialized support groups including military mothers, military spouses, military children, and homeless veterans' support groups. For more information on the various programs and events, visit <https://www.texvet.org/support-services>.

The **American Red Cross** connects military service members with their families during an emergency or crisis. For NGR members, the Red Cross offers: emergency communication, access to emergency financial assistance, counseling, and veterans services. Financial assistance is available for emergency travel, burial of a loved one, assistance to avoid privation, etc. Assistance includes funding for roundtrip airfare, lodging costs, food and incidentals. For example, if a service member is deployed and a family member has an emergency back home (e.g., spouse, child or parent is severely injured, sick or dies), a family member can call Red Cross to notify the deployed Soldier/Airman. Likewise, if a member is not deployed and a crisis occurs away from his or her current location, the Soldier/Airman can contact the Red Cross for assistance. Contact the Military Call Center at (877) 272-7337 or visit <http://www.redcross.org/where> to locate a local Red Cross Chapter and to read more on the organization's services for military members and veterans.

The **Texas Workforce Commission** website provides numerous links to military family

support groups and services. Some of these groups include Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., Marine Moms Online, Military Connections, Veterans' Families United, and other family support organizations. For more information, visit http://www.twc.state.tx.us/tvlp/tvlp_family.html.

Informal Family Support

Facebook is a social networking service and website that connects more than 845 million active users. Here, service members, veterans and their families can connect with other military members and families. The website allows users to connect with and to create military family and veterans support groups and pages. NGR families can locate open groups or public pages to establish connections with military support groups. For example, the Fort Hood Area Events¹⁵ page allows users to post questions on a streaming wall and other members can respond to inquiries. So, if a military spouse near Fort Hood would like information on where she could access child care in the Fort Hood/Killeen area, all she would have to do is post the question and members of the page would respond. Likewise, the Chamorro¹⁶ Military Families Group allows Chamorro military families to communicate and connect at military installations all over the world. The group's description states: "It is hard enough being away from the island, but then you start to miss the music, culture, language and people. Use this group to find other locals (Chamorros) in your area who can relate to being away from home and being a part of military life." To start a Facebook account and to locate similar groups, visit <http://www.facebook.com>.

Skype is an Internet service that allows users to communicate with friends and family by voice, video and instant messaging. Videoconferencing allows military families to see and hear their loved ones in real-time. For example, a Soldier can witness the birth of his baby while

¹⁵ See www.facebook.com/FHWWWE.

¹⁶ Chamorro refers to a native of the island of Guam, a U.S. territory in the Pacific.

deployed, and a Marine can see and hear her mother located thousands of miles away in real-time. This service allows military members and their families to visually interact with their families and friends, no matter how far away they may be. To utilize videoconferencing, all that is required is Internet service¹⁷ and a web camera. To download Skype, visit www.skype.com.

Unemployment

Table 4.4 lists the services for NGR members and veterans experiencing civilian unemployment; the federal, state and private organizations/programs that provide the identified services; and the corresponding handbook page numbers.

Table 4.4: Unemployment

Unemployment	Federal, State and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources	Corresponding Handbook Page Numbers
Employment Counseling	Texas Veterans Commission FedsHire Vets Texas Workforce Commission TexVet: Partners Across Texas Texas 211 Information Hotline 211Texas.org National Resource Directory National Guard Job Connection Program (JCEP) DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	18 18 18-19 19 19 19 19 20 20-21
Education Assistance	G.I. Bill Hazlewood Act Texas Veterans Commission Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program National Resource Directory Military OneSource	21 22 22 23 23 23

¹⁷ See www.skype.com to see system requirements.

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Employment Counseling

The **Texas Veterans Commission** offers employment counseling services to Texas veterans and aids employers in finding qualified veteran job applicants. The aim of these services is to match veteran job seekers with top employment opportunities. Over 190 Texas Veterans Commission employment representatives provide a full range of employment services. They are located in more than seventy-five cities throughout Texas and offer one-on-one assistance to veterans with job applications, résumé preparation, job matching and searches, as well as other concentrated services. The Texas Veterans Commission has staff in workforce centers that provide intensive employment counseling services to disabled veterans, economically or educationally disadvantaged veterans, and veterans with other barriers to employment, particularly homeless veterans. Additionally, the Texas Veterans Commission assigns staff to designated VA facilities to help disabled veterans with intensive vocational rehabilitation and employment. The agency's website is also an extremely useful tool as it provides online information to assist veterans and service members with finding a job, drafting résumés, completing employment applications, finding information on how to translate their military occupational skills into civilian occupational skills, and finding information on job fairs and active duty transition assistance programs. The website also features a job board, information on veterans' preference, reemployment, on-the-job training, employment for spouses and caregivers, as well as multiple job search links. Furthermore, a search engine helps users find the closest claims and employment offices by zip code. For more information, visit <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/> or call 1-800-VETS (8387).

The **FedsHireVets** website is a one-stop resource for federal veteran employment information. In partnership with the US Office of Personnel Management, DoD, Labor, VA,

Homeland Security, and other federal agencies, the website is a source of federal employment information for veterans, transitioning service members, and their families. A goal of the website is to provide reliable and accurate information and valuable training and other resources in an approach that will benefit both the applicant and hiring agency. Information on topics such as veterans' preference, special hiring authorities for veterans, information on federal hiring practices, education and training resources, helpful links, and other pertinent information can be extremely beneficial for veterans and transitioning service members who would like to work for the federal government. Additionally, there is a direct link to the website USAJOBS, which is a one-stop source for federal jobs and employment information and is the primary website for those seeking federal employment. For more information, visit <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>.

The **Texas Workforce Commission** (TWC) offers priority service for veterans at all Workforce Solutions Offices. TWC offers employment services including career counseling, job placement services, job search resources, training programs, resume and application assistance, career development assistance, and unemployment benefits. Many of the offices have Veterans Representatives. TWC also provides a Veterans Leadership Program, a referral service that links veterans with federal and local services to facilitate a successful transition to civilian life. The program also connects veterans to employers for potential hiring. Additionally, the TWC website provides a wealth of information, including the state's largest online job matching system, [WorkinTexas.com](http://www.workintexas.com), as well as information on how to apply for Unemployment Benefits. *Many service members are eligible for Unemployment Benefits.¹⁸ To apply for Unemployment Benefits, visit the TWC website or call 1-800-939-6631.* TWC also offers computers, Internet access, telephones, copiers, job workshops and seminars. For more information and to locate a TWC office, visit <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>.

¹⁸ Eligibility may vary; contact the Unemployment Benefits Line to apply for benefits.

The **TexVet Partner Across Texas** website is a vast networking and referral services database for Texas veterans and transitioning service members searching for employment. By collecting federal, state, and local VSO information, TexVet has created an online Veterans Services Provider Network (VSPN). The employment section of the website is organized by the following subheadings: Job Preparation, Transitioning, Job Leads, Financial Assistance, and Partners and Resources. Under each subheading, an extensive number of events in Texas are listed by title and location. For example, under the subheading “Job Preparation,” numerous job fairs, career advising events, training opportunities, and other employment preparation events throughout Texas are listed. The website also features numerous links to other helpful websites, services and organizations for service members, veterans and their families. For more information, visit <https://www.texvet.org/>.

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas, including employment counseling services for veterans and their families. Callers can speak with a skilled resource specialist who can provide information and referrals twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year. An alternate toll-free number is 1-877-541-7905.

211Texas.org is a website provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission that connects citizens with employment support services, including agencies and programs that provide employment counseling. The website serves as a database for over 60,000 state and local human services programs. Users can search for employment services by entering a need and a location. For example, if a service member/veteran is looking for a job in Austin, he can simply click “Search” on the website’s homepage and enter “employment” under “Need” and “Austin” under “Location” to gain access to local services.

The **National Resource Directory (NRD)** is a comprehensive database that connects veterans with helpful employment support tools, resources and programs, including organizations that provide employment counseling to transitioning service members and veterans. Some of the services and information topics featured in this database include: career exploration tools, transition assistance, working for the government, self-employment and business ownership, military to civilian skills translators, job listings, placement assistance, mentoring, employment laws and veterans preference, unemployment benefits, and employment support programs. The NRD is also home to the **Veterans Job Bank**, a central database that allows veterans to access jobs available specifically for them. A veteran can search for jobs by entering key words (e.g., job title), their military occupation specialty (MOS), and/or a location. To access the National Resource Directory, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

The **National Guard Job Connection Education Program (JCEP)** is an employment partnership initiative designed to provide one-on-one employment counseling and job-placement assistance for NGR service members, veterans and their spouses. The objective of the program is to help participants identify skills honed in the military and to create a plan for transferring them to a civilian job setting. In this process, JCEP helps participants to understand and master key job-search resources for optimal job placement. Provided by the Army National Guard, committed training specialists and skilled business advisors assist participants in finding employment. Program training and career counseling services are provided at multiple National Guard Armories and select community facilities. JCEP provides one-on-one career counseling, education assistance for service members who are interested in earning their degrees or trade certifications, resume review and mock interviews, applicable workforce training, online job search training and assistance, and personal assistance from a business advisor working with

local employers to hire JCEP participants. JCEP works with local businesses and explains to these companies the program mission and the benefits of hiring a service member or veteran. Although JCEP cannot guarantee participants will get the job, they strive to ensure that the participant's application and résumé are appropriate for the position and that the hiring manager is aware a JCEP participant is interested in the position and has applied. For more information, visit <http://www.jcep.info>.

The **DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP)** was developed to assist in the transitioning of military personnel and family members leaving active duty service. After serving 180 or more days of continuous active duty, and prior to a member's separation or release from active duty, National Guard and Reserve members are required to receive transition counseling from a member of a military installation Transition Assistance Staff, Command Career Counselor (Navy), or Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) staff. During the transition counseling session, the member will be given an overview of all the topics contained on DD Form 2468-1, "Pre-separation Counseling Checklist for Reserve Component Service Members Released from Active Duty." NGR members are entitled to receive transition assistance for up to six months after they have been released from active duty and return home. To access this help, the member must contact the nearest military installation or Command Career Counselor where he or she lives. Personnel office staff, relocation specialists, education counselors, and many others can help. Professional guidance and counseling are available at local Transition Assistance Offices, in addition to workshops, publications, information resources, automated resources, and government programs. The first step in this process is to access the TAP website created for NGR members. NGR members can access the website at www.TurboTAP.org. Once there, NGR members should review the Transition Guide for Guard

and Reserve. Consulting with a Transition Assistance Counselor and using the DD Form 2468-1, “Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Checklist for Deactivating/Demobilizing National Guard and Reserve Service Members” will also help determine options. During demobilization/deactivation out-processing, NGR members will receive information on the benefits and services available to the member by a Transition Assistance, Army Career and Alumni Program, or Navy Command Career counselor. This counselor will guide the member through the DD Form 2648-1, “Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Checklist for Deactivating/Demobilizing National Guard and Reserve Service Members” and will assist the member in completing the form, give him a copy, and ensure that the original copy with his signature is placed in his military personnel file. Listed below are the names of each service’s TAP.

- **Army:** Army Career and Alumni Program - The Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) is a military personnel function and the Centers are found under the Director of Human Resources (DHR) or the Military Personnel Office (MILPO). <http://www.acap.army.mil/>
- **Army National Guard:** The National Guard has placed a transition assistance advisor (TAAs) at each of the State Joint Forces Headquarters to serve as the statewide point of contact and coordinator for easy access to Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and to provide assistance in access to entitlements through the Military Health System (TRICARE). A directory of state offices can be found at: <http://www.ngb.army.mil/resources/states.aspx>. For more information on TAAs, visit: www.taapmo.com.
- **Navy:** Fleet and Family Support Center. Navy personnel should make an appointment with their Command Career Counselor for a Pre-separation counseling interview and the Navy CONSEP (Career Options and Skills Evaluation Program) self-assessment at least 180 days prior to separation. <https://www.nffsp.org/>
- **Marines:** Career Resource Management Center (CRMC)/Transition & Employment Assistance Program Center. <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/tamp/index.cfm>
- **Air Force:** Airman and Family Readiness Center. Members can find the nearest office using the military installation finder at: www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil
- **Coast Guard:** Worklife Division – Transition Assistance. Coast Guard Worklife staffs can be found at your nearest Integrated Support Command. <http://www.uscg.mil/worklife/>

Additionally, **TurboTAP.org** is a useful website for NGR members that contains a wealth of information on NGR-specific reintegration assistance, to include information on employment assistance, entrepreneurship, relocation assistance, education and training, health

care, life insurance, personal finances, Guard/Reserve, veterans benefits, disabled veterans, retirees, employment restrictions, and leaving the service. Under the subcategory “Employment Assistance,” there are numerous links to information, resources and programs that are available to job-seekers. On the main homepage, www.turbotap.org/register.tpp, online career courses are featured. The Online Career Decision Toolkit features online career transition courses to help members transition to the civilian workforce. Finally, the website provides access to multiple online learning events, webinars (live online seminars), that are primarily delivered to demobilizing NGR service members, Wounded Warriors and their families. Through these live webinars, members will have the opportunity to learn how to translate their military experience into civilian terms, create a new financial plan or even understand the federal employment system. Members will also be able to connect with those who are going through similar experiences and learn from one another. Live trainers facilitate these highly interactive sessions, which are designed to give the member practical information that can be put to use immediately. These live webinars are accessible from any location where broadband Internet and phone are available. Through the website, military members can register for courses of their choice by clicking on a link. To access the site, visit www.turbotap.org.

Education Assistance

The VA administers a variety of education benefit programs. Many veterans and service members can qualify for more than one education benefits program. The education benefits programs administered by the VA include: Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD), Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR), Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP), Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP), Educational Assistance Test Program (Section 901), Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance

Program (DEA), National Call to Service Program, and the Veterans Retraining Program. The VA website provides an easy-to-navigate portal for veterans and service members to apply for benefits (available through the Veterans Online Application [VONAPP]) and to choose a school (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/>). Under the link “Apply for Benefits,” a step-by-step “Road Map for Success” guides users through the application process to determine the applicant’s best benefit, school options and programs (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/apply-for-benefits/application/>). By clicking on the subcategory, “Post 9/11 GI Bill & Other Programs,” links to full descriptions of the education benefits are provided (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/index.html>). Under this subcategory, NGR members and veterans can also click on the link “Benefit Comparison Tools” in the “Resources” section for help in determining which program best fits their particular needs. Additionally, free education and vocational counseling services are available to service members and veterans. To apply for free education and vocational counseling services, service members and veterans should complete the application available on the VA website (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/support/counseling-services/>).

The **Hazlewood Act** provides qualified veterans, spouses, and children with an education benefit of up to 150 hours of tuition and fee exemptions at state-supported colleges or universities. Effective the fall 2009 term/semester, in order to be eligible to receive a Hazlewood Act Exemption, a veteran must:

- Have been a Texas resident upon entry into the military, entered into active federal duty in the State of Texas, or declared Texas as his or her home of record at the time of entry into the armed forces as documented on his or her DD Form 214;
- Have a military discharge of honorable or general, under honorable conditions;
- Served at least 181 days of active duty service (excluding training);
- Not be in default on an education loan made or guaranteed by the State of Texas and not in default on a federal loan if that default is the reason the student cannot use his or her federal veterans’ benefits.

The Hazlewood Act benefit is also extended to the dependent children and spouses of eligible veterans who died in the line of duty or as a result of injury or illness directly related to military service, are missing in action, or who became totally disabled for purposes of employability as a result of a service-related injury or illness. This benefit also applies to the dependent children and spouses of members of Texas National Guard or Air National Guard units who were killed while on active duty while serving either the State of Texas or the United States or are totally disabled for purposes of employability. An eligible child or spouse must provide official military documentation indicating that he or she meets the requirements. Make note that service in the Texas National Guard *alone* does not qualify an individual for Hazlewood Act benefits. The Hazlewood Act benefit is for veterans who served in the armed forces of the United States. The National Guard is a state unit. However, an individual in the National Guard who is called into active duty by a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces who served at least 181 days (excluding training) and meets all other program requirements may qualify for Hazlewood Act benefits. To find out if a veteran or his/her family is eligible for this exemption, the Texas Veterans Commission website provides more detailed information. To use Hazlewood benefits or to transfer unused benefits to an eligible child, applicants must complete an application/release form, which are both available on the Texas Veterans Commission website. For more information, visit <http://texas-veterans.com/education/hazlewood>.

The **Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)** provides education assistance to all veterans in Texas. A goal of the organization is to ensure that every veteran and family member eligible for federal or state veterans' education benefits has the opportunity to pursue whatever educational endeavor they choose. TVC provides education counseling to veterans and investigates VA educational and benefit complaints from veterans and other eligible family

members. The agency has more than seventy-five claims counselors throughout the state, accredited by the VA, to provide assistance with filing claims for VA and state education benefits, including the G.I. Bill and Hazlewood Act. The TVC directory provides contact information to every TVC site in Texas. The agency's website also provides a search engine to allow veterans and service members to search for offices closest to them. To contact a local education counselor, visit <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/>.

The **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program** provides reintegration events exclusively for National Guard and Reserve service members that feature information on federal and state education benefits. NGR service members and their families have the opportunity to attend seminars that discuss education benefits including the G.I. Bill and Hazlewood Act. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free 1-800-252-8032.

The **National Resource Directory (NRD)** is a comprehensive web portal that connects service members and veterans with education and training support services. The web portal provides information on education benefits and programs including Post-911 GI Bill benefits, other VA education programs (including the Montgomery GI Bill), as well as other DoD programs. Users can also search for scholarships and grants for service members, veterans, spouses, and dependents, as well as other general scholarships. The NRD also offers guidance on how to get federal and state financial aid, how to choose a career path, assistance with finding programs and applying to schools, as well as guidance on apprenticeship, licensing and credentials. For more information, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

Military OneSource provides online education support to service members and veterans

by connecting them with career and education information and resources. The website features information on preparing for, applying to, and paying for college and a wide array of materials and resources to help plan a career. Military OneSource also offers: Spouse Education and Career Opportunities, a network of comprehensive spouse education and career opportunity resources, including portable careers. For more information on Military OneSource education support sources, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Table 4.5 lists the services for NGR members and veterans suffering from alcohol and/or substance abuse; the federal, state and private organizations/programs that provide the identified services; and the corresponding handbook page numbers.

Table 4.5 Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Alcohol and Substance Abuse	Federal, State and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources	Corresponding Handbook Page Numbers
Traditional Substance Abuse and Mental Health Programs	Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator U.S. Veterans Affairs Substance Abuse Treatment Veterans Affairs Facility Locator Texas 211 Information Hotline 211Texas.org Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Narcotics Anonymous (NA)	25 25 25 25 25 26 26
Integrated PTSD and SUD Treatment Programs	U.S. Veterans Affairs Substance Abuse Treatment	26

Traditional Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Programs

The **Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator**, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is an online search engine that provides users with a wide range of information on substance abuse and mental health services useful to military members, veterans, and their families. This database may be extremely helpful to those troops and veterans who do not want to seek substance abuse treatment within the VA or federal system, as it locates public services beyond the VA/federal system. The Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator allows users to locate substance abuse treatment facilities in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. There are multiple search options which allow users to search within the local area. To access the locator, visit <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/TreatmentLocator/faces/quickSearch.jspx>.

The **Department of Veterans Affairs** provides effective, scientifically proven substance abuse treatment for all eligible veterans. The VA offers a variety of different treatment options including individual, couple, family and group therapies, as well as medications to assist veterans in reducing their use of alcohol, tobacco and drug use. A patient coming to VA can expect to find the following types of care: first-time screening for alcohol or tobacco use in all care facilities, short outpatient therapy, intensive outpatient treatment, residential (live-in) care, medically managed detoxification (stopping substance use safely), continuing care and relapse prevention, marriage and family counseling, self-help groups, drug substitution therapies, and newer medicines to reduce craving. To access these services, veterans and service members should speak with an existing VA health care provider or contact a local VA medical center or Vet Center. For more information, service members and veterans can call toll free 1-800-827-

1000 or visit <http://www.va.gov> . To locate a VA facility, visit <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1>.

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas, including substance abuse treatment services and programs. Callers can speak with a skilled resource specialist who can provide information and referrals twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year. An alternate toll-free number is 1-877-541-7905.

211Texas.org is a website provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission that connects citizens with the information and/or services they need (including substance abuse treatment). The website serves as a database for over 60,000 state and local human services programs. Users can search for substance abuse treatment by entering a need and a location. For example, if a service member/veteran is looking for substance abuse treatment in Austin, he can simply click “Search” on the website’s homepage and enter “substance abuse treatment facilities” under “Need” and “Austin” under “Location” to gain access to local substance abuse treatment programs.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a voluntary fellowship of men and women who come together with the shared intent of attaining and maintaining sobriety. The only requirement for membership is a desire to quit drinking. There are no membership fees or dues to join AA. The philosophy behind AA is total abstinence—members simply stay away from one drink, one day at a time. Sobriety is maintained through sharing experience, strength and hope at group meetings and through the suggested Twelve Steps for recovery from alcoholism. For more information, visit www.aa.org/en_information_aa.cfm?PageID=11. To find a local meeting, visit www.aa.org/en_find_meeting.cfm?PageID=29.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) is a non-profit voluntary fellowship of men and women who come together with the shared intent of attaining and maintaining sobriety. Membership is open to all drug addicts, regardless of the type of drug or combination of drugs used. Founded in the same philosophy of the Alcoholics Anonymous program, sobriety is maintained through sharing successes and challenges in overcoming drug addiction and living drug-free lives through the application of the principles contained within the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA. For more information or to find a local meeting, call 1-818-773-9999 extension 771 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. or visit www.na.org/?ID=phoneline.

Integrated PTSD and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Programs

The **Department of Veterans Affairs** provides effective integrative PTSD and substance abuse treatment for all eligible veterans, including National Guard members and Reservists who have completed a federal deployment to a combat zone. Substance Use PTSD Teams (SUPTs) treat the combined problems of PTSD and substance abuse in outpatient (not live-in) clinics that can meet with patients on a regular basis. Every VA Medical Center has providers that have been trained to offer PTSD treatment. Note that although not all VA Medical Centers offer *integrative* PTSD and substance abuse treatment services, service members and veterans can still get effective PTSD and substance abuse treatment through traditional programs. A doctor can refer you to a mental health provider who is a PTSD specialist. To access these services, veterans and service members should speak with an existing VA health care provider or contact a local VA Medical Center or Vet Center. To locate a VA facility, search the Veterans Affairs Facility Locator at <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1> or the Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator at

http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD_flsh.asp?isFlash=1. Make note that a referral is usually needed to access specialty programs. Also, service members and veterans can call the VA general hotline at 1-800-827-1000.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

NGR service members live in two different yet coexisting cultures. They play dual roles as citizen soldiers, spending most of their time in the civilian world. These service members have also played vital roles in both past and present military conflicts throughout the world, increasing the likelihood and duration of combat deployments. During and post-deployment, NGR members experience problems similar to that of active duty members, but upon returning home, often lack the available support systems of military installations. Although the US Veterans Administration and community resources are available for most, many NGR members face the following problems: they are reluctant to access such programs because of a stigma towards mental health treatment; they are unaware of these programs; and they may have difficulty accessing these resources due to geographic location or because of some barrier related to their civilian roles. A major national initiative is needed to enable a far greater proportion of returning citizen soldiers with mental health problems to break through their internal resistance, enter, and hopefully benefit from available treatments.

I advocate that it is the government's—specifically the military's—responsibility to take care of their service members and veterans. During out-processing and post-deployment activities, the military must ensure that its members know where they need to go to get the help they need. This is an extremely sensitive and vital window of opportunity to ensure that members are aware of the resources available to them. Members returning from deployment may be in a rush to get back to their families, but they should at least be armed with a phone number, brochure, website address, and/or a handbook to refer to should they need assistance or guidance related to their transition. These transitioning and support services must be readily available and easily accessible to members and veterans, for accessibility is a key factor in

determining whether troops or veterans get the help they need.

To combat the stigma toward mental health treatment and a general distrust of the VA, there needs to be more of an emphasis on the use of private service providers for veterans' issues including mental health treatment. A major public-private partnership is necessary to facilitate this movement. Veterans need to be aware that there are private programs available to them. The government also needs to ensure that private providers are given an incentive to serve our veterans, perhaps through grant funding, tax breaks or other means. Combined, these initiatives should help facilitate the successful transition of our National Guard and Reserve members and veterans into society, powerfully ensuring that "no man is left behind."

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Appendix A

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Help for Heroes

A Reintegration Handbook for Texas National
Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans

Updated: October 2013



Introduction

- ▶ The purpose of this handbook is to identify and describe services available to Texas National Guard and Reserve (NGR) members and veterans who have returned from combat deployments in Afghanistan (OEF) and Iraq (OIF). This is an effort to reduce and alleviate the effects of war on NGR members and veterans, and to facilitate the successful reintegration of this population as they transition from a combat military setting to a civilian environment.
- ▶ The handbook identifies resources to help combat four major post-deployment issues: PTSD, relationship distress, unemployment, and alcohol and substance abuse.
- ▶ The handbook provides a directory of public and private service providers and resources available throughout Texas. It offers program details, as well as contact information for agencies and resources. Many of these resources are accessible in almost every U.S. state and territory through the use of the Internet and toll-free phone numbers.
- ▶ For ease-of-access and convenience, each section of this handbook offers a “Quick List” of services, website addresses and toll-free numbers, if available.
- ▶ Service providers and military installations can use the handbook as a supplemental guide for clients/troops by: providing copies of the handbook to their clients/troops, displaying a master copy in waiting areas frequented by service members or veterans, or by providing a link to the handbook on their organization’s website.

This handbook was submitted by Genedine M. Aquino to the Department of Political Science at Texas State University—San Marcos in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Public Administration, and is available online at Digital Collections at Texas State University (<https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/105>). Ms. Aquino can be contacted via e-mail at genedine.aquino@gmail.com.

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Major Government Service Providers

The following provides an overview of federal, Texas State, and private organizations that provide services to address post-deployment issues such as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), family distress, unemployment, and alcohol and substance abuse.

- ▶ **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**
- ▶ **Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs Post-Deployment Guide**
- ▶ **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**
- ▶ **Military OneSource**
- ▶ **National Resource Directory**
- ▶ **Texas Joint Family Support Services (Texas Military Forces)**
- ▶ **Texas Veterans Commission**
- ▶ **Texas 2-1-1 Help in Texas Information Program**
- ▶ **TexVet: Partners Across Texas**

▶ **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**

The VA provides patient care and federal benefits to veterans and their dependents. Benefits include disability, education and training, vocational rehabilitation and employment, home loan guaranty, dependent and survivor benefits, medical and mental health treatment, life insurance and burial benefits. OEF/OIF combat veterans can receive free medical care for any condition related to their service in Iraq/Afghanistan for five years after the date of their discharge or release. The VA's website provides program information, instructions on how to apply for VA benefits, facility locators, and numerous links to veterans' programs and services. VA regional services can assist with filing the appropriate VA forms. Additionally, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) can also provide aid by answering questions or by petitioning on behalf of the service member, veteran or family member if they consider the individual qualified to receive benefits. For more information, visit <http://www.va.gov/> or call **1-800-827-1000**.

▶ **Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs Guide**

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs website features information on Reserve issues including demobilization, TRICARE¹⁹ Health Insurance, education benefits, and family and employer programs and policy. Under mobilization, service members and their families can access a **Demobilization Guide** that outlines Reserve demobilization and transition benefits. For more information and to access this Demobilization Guide, visit <http://ra.defense.gov/programs/fepp/>.

¹⁹ TRICARE is the health insurance program for service members, retirees and their dependents.

► **Texas Joint Family Support Services (TJFSS)**

TJFSS is a unit within the Texas Military Forces that provides services to promote resiliency and wellness for all Texas National Guard Soldiers and Airmen. TJFSS provides help for: mental health, retirement, transition assistance, TRICARE Health Insurance, education services, VA services, chaplain services, legal services, family support programs, and much more. Service members and their families can also download a **Family Readiness Smartbook** which provides information and contact numbers for each service. *This handbook is recommended for all Texas National Guard members and their families.* For more information and to download the TJFSS Family Readiness Smartbook, visit <http://www.txfss.com/> (call toll-free **1-800-252-8032**).

► **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is a DoD-wide initiative to support the welfare of NGR members and their dependents, by connecting them with resources and services throughout the deployment cycle. Through Yellow Ribbon events, service members and their families are able to connect with local resources before, during, and after deployments. Reintegration after returning from deployment is a critical time for NGR members, as they often live far from military installations and other members of their units. At Yellow Ribbon events, NGR members and their families can access information on health care, education and training opportunities, financial, and legal benefits. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free **1-800-252-8032**.

► **Military OneSource**

Military OneSource is a free service provided by the Department of Defense to military members, Wounded Warriors and their families to help with a wide range of concerns to include: military life and deployment, family and recreation (parenting and child care), health and relationships (mental health and addictions, emotional well-being), career and education, financial and legal, crisis and disasters, and other areas of need. Services are available 24/7—by telephone and online. Other services include personal counseling (face-to-face, telephone, online), financial advising, tax help, and career counseling. For more information, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil> or call toll-free **1-800-342-9647**.

► **National Resource Directory (NRD)**

The National Resource Directory (NRD) is a comprehensive web portal that connects members, veterans, and their families with resources to support them. The NRD has information on thousands of national and local programs, many in local communities that support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration. NRD connects users with sources that provide military and veteran benefits and compensation; education and training; employment assistance; family and caregiver support; health care; homeless assistance; housing, transportation and travel; volunteer opportunities; as well as other services and

resources. Finally, the website features numerous links and phone numbers to other valuable services such as the Veterans Crisis Line, the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, the VA Caregiver Support Line, and the Wounded Warrior Resource Center. For more information, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

► **Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)**

TVC serves veterans and their family members in all matters pertaining to veterans' disability benefits and rights. It is the appointed agency of the State of Texas to represent the State and its veterans before the VA. The agency represents veterans in filing VA disability claims and during VA appeals processes, while also providing assistance to dependents with survivor benefits. Counselors also assist veterans and their families with filling out VA paperwork. TVC claims and benefits counselors are located in VA regional offices, VA medical facilities, VA clinics, and military installations throughout the State. For more information, visit <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/>.

► **Texas 2-1-1 Help in Texas Information Program**

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas, including PTSD treatment, family support services, employment services, education opportunities, and alcohol and substance abuse treatment. Callers can speak with a skilled resource specialist who can provide information and referrals 24/7 throughout the year. (An alternate toll-free number is **1-877-541-7905**.)

211Texas.org is a website provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission that connects citizens with the information and services they need, including PTSD treatment, family support services, employment services, education opportunities, and alcohol and substance abuse treatment. The website serves as a database for over 60,000 state and local human services programs. Users can search for a service by entering a need and a location.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The following table lists services for NGR members and veterans experiencing PTSD; the federal, state and private organizations and programs that provide the identified services; and contact information for these resources.

PTSD	Federal, State and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources
Therapy & Medication	<p>US Veterans Affairs Mental Health Treatment http://www.va.gov/ (1-800-827-1000)</p> <p>Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD_flash.asp?isFlash=1</p> <p>Veterans Affairs Facility Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1</p> <p>National Center for PTSD http://www.ptsd.va.gov/</p> <p>Mental Health Services Locator http://store.samhsa.gov/mhlocator (1-800-662-HELP (4357))</p> <p>Military OneSource http://www.militaryonesource.mil (1-800-342-9647)</p> <p>National Suicide Prevention Lifeline http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/ (1-800-273-TALK (82550))</p> <p>Vet Combat Call Center http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/media/Call-Center-PSA.asp (1-877-WAR-VETS)</p> <p>Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program www.yellowribbon.mil (1-800-252-8032)</p> <p>Texas 211 Information Hotline https://www.211texas.org/211/ (2-1-1 or 1-877-541-7905)</p> <p>211Texas.org https://www.211texas.org/211/</p> <p>PTSD Coach Mobile Application http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/ptsdcoach.asp</p>

Therapy and Medication

► U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The VA provides therapy for PTSD including cognitive behavioral therapy, cognitive processing therapy, Prolonged Exposure Therapy, EMDR therapy, group therapy, counseling, and medication. Antidepressant medications, anti-anxiety medications, mood stabilizing medications, and other medications to ease nightmares, irritability, sleeplessness, depression, and anxiety are included as part of the PTSD treatments. The VA offers inpatient and outpatient care, and VA counseling is also available at local Vet Centers. For more information on the VA's PTSD treatment programs, visit <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp> or call the **Vet Combat Call Center** at **1-866-496-8838**. To locate a VA facility, visit <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1>.

► Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator

The Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator is an online search engine provided by the VA that allows users to locate specialized PTSD programs in all fifty states, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Philippine Islands. The search engine is simple to navigate, providing a drop-down menu that offers more concise search options, giving users the option to search for all programs or by specific type of PTSD program, as well as by zip code or by state or island territory. Each medical center within VA has PTSD specialists who provide treatment for veterans with PTSD. Additionally, the VA provides nearly 200 specialized treatment programs. A referral is usually needed to access the specialty programs. To access the program locator, visit http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD_flash.asp?isFlash=1.

► National Center for PTSD

The National Center for PTSD offers a vast amount of information on PTSD and where to get help for PTSD. The website allows access to a Suicide Prevention Lifeline phone number, the Veterans Crisis Line phone number and a link to an online Veterans Confidential Live Chat. For those NGR service members and veterans who would like to seek treatment outside of the VA, there is a link available for "Finding and Choosing a Therapist" (<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/where-to-get-help.asp>). Here, a user has the option of locating a therapist either by telephone or online. Users can also search for specific therapies including age-specific therapies, individual, couple, family, group, primarily female, primarily male, and gay, lesbian and bisexual therapies. For more information, visit <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>.

► **Mental Health Services Locator**

The Mental Health Services Locator, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is an online search engine that locates local mental health services (including PTSD treatment) for NGR members and their families. *This database may be extremely helpful to those troops and veterans who do not want to seek PTSD treatment within the VA or federal system, as it is able to locate public services beyond the VA/federal government.* To access the locator, visit <http://store.samhsa.gov/mhlocator>.

► **Military OneSource**

Military OneSource provides free PTSD screening and short-term counseling for military members. Available 24 hours a day, by telephone and online, Military OneSource offers short-term, non-medical counseling, designed to provide help with short-term issues (that may be related to an individual suffering from PTSD) such as: adjustment to situational stressors, stress management, communication grief, as well as PTSD screening. Military OneSource can arrange for individuals to meet face-to-face with a professional counselor in the local community or provide telephone and online consultations. Each eligible military member may receive up to 12 sessions, per issue, per counselor at no cost. Those requiring counseling for long-term medical issues will be referred to TRICARE or a military treatment facility. To access Military OneSource services, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil> or call **1-800-342-9647**.

► **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255), is a 24/7 telephone and online chat line service available to individuals who are experiencing or who know someone who is experiencing emotional distress or suicidal crisis. The **Veterans Crisis Line**, which works in conjunction with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat line, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, [chat online](#), or send a **text message to 838255** to receive confidential support at anytime. To access the chat line, visit <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.

► **Vet Center Combat Call Center 1-877-WAR-VETS**

The Vet Center Combat Call Center 1-877-WAR-VETS, is a free 24/7 confidential call center where combat veterans, service members and their families can call to talk about their military experience, their struggle with PTSD, or any other issue they are facing during their readjustment to civilian life. The staff is comprised of combat veterans from several eras as well as family members of combat veterans. For more information, visit <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/media/Call-Center-PSA.asp>.

► **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program connects NGR members and their families with information on where to get PTSD treatment. Through Yellow Ribbon events, service members can also learn coping skills to manage anger, prevent suicide, and to handle stressful situations—problems that can be related to PTSD. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free **1-800-252-8032**.

► **Texas 2-1-1 Help in Texas Information Program**

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas, including PTSD therapy for service members and veterans. Callers can speak with a skilled resource specialist who can provide information and referrals 24/7. An alternate toll-free number is **1-877-541-7905**.

211Texas.org is a database provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission that can connect service members and veterans with organizations that provide PTSD therapy. The website serves as a database for over 60,000 state and local human services programs. Users can search for veterans' services by entering a need and a location. For example, if a service member/veteran is looking for PTSD counseling in Austin, simply click "Search" on the website's homepage and enter "PTSD" or "Veterans" under "Need" and "Austin" under "Location" to gain access to local PTSD treatment programs.

► **PTSD Coach mobile app**

The PTSD Coach mobile app is a convenient and helpful tool for NGR members with smart phones and other compatible portable electronic devices. The app is a self-management tool that can help users learn about and manage symptoms that commonly arise after experiencing a traumatic event. Created by the VA's National Center for PTSD and the DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology, the app provides information on PTSD and treatments that have been proven to work; tools for screening and tracking PTSD symptoms; uncomplicated skills to help users deal with stress symptoms; and direct links to other valuable resources. The questionnaire used in the app, the PTSD Checklist (PCL), is a reliable and valid self-report measure used across VA, DoD, and in the community. The app is not intended to replace professional care, but it is a tool for those who have or think they may have PTSD, as it provides facts and valuable self-help skills based on research. To download the app, visit <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/ptsdcoach.asp>.

Relationship Distress

The following table lists the services for NGR members and veterans experiencing relationship distress; the federal, state and private organizations and programs that provide the identified services; and contact information for these resources.

Relationship Distress	Federal, State and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services Resources
Counseling	<p>U.S. Veterans Affairs Individual, Couple & Family Counseling http://www.va.gov/ (1-800-827-1000)</p> <p>Veterans Affairs Facility Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1</p> <p>Texas 211 Information Hotline https://www.211texas.org/211/ (2-1-1 or 1-877-541-7905)</p> <p>211Texas.org https://www.211texas.org/211/</p> <p>TherapistLocator.net www.therapistlocator.net</p> <p>National Resource Directory https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/</p> <p>Military OneSource http://www.militaryonesource.mil (1-800-342-9647)</p> <p>Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program www.yellowribbon.mil (1-800-252-8032)</p> <p>Texas Joint Forces Support Services - Military Family Life Consultants http://www.txfss.com/ (1-800-252-8032)</p> <p>Chaplaincy of Texas Army National Guard http://www.txfss.com/ (1-866-822-7685 Option 8#)</p>
Parenting Intervention & Education	<p>Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program www.yellowribbon.mil (1-800-252-8032)</p> <p>Military OneSource http://www.militaryonesource.mil (1-800-342-9647)</p> <p>National Resource Directory https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/</p> <p>Texas 211 Information Hotline https://www.211texas.org/211/ (2-1-1 or 1-877-541-7905)</p> <p>211Texas.org https://www.211texas.org/211/</p> <p>ChildHelp http://www.childhelp.org/ (1-800-4-A-CHILD (-800-422-4453))</p>
Child Support & Noncustodial Parent Support	<p>HEROES Program</p>

	https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/ofc/index.shtml#heroes (512-460-640)
Formal Family Support	<p>Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program www.yellowribbon.mil (1-800-252-8032)</p> <p>National Resource Directory https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov</p> <p>Military OneSource http://www.militaryonesource.mil (1-800-342-9647)</p> <p>National Guard and Reserve Reintegration Support http://ra.defense.gov/programs/fepp/</p> <p>Texas Joint Family Support Services http://www.txfss.com/ (1-800-252-8032)</p> <p>TexVet: Partners Across Texas https://www.texvet.org/support-services</p> <p>Texas Workforce Commission http://www.twc.state.tx.us/tvlp/tvlp_family.html (512-463-2222)</p> <p>American Red Cross www.redcross.org (877-272-7337)</p>
Informal Family Support	<p>Facebook http://www.facebook.com</p> <p>Skype www.skype.com</p>

Counseling

► U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The VA provides individual, group, couple and family readjustment counseling for combat veterans and their families. VA family counseling is provided at community-based **Vet Centers** and is prepaid through military service. Veterans who served in a combat zone and received a campaign ribbon (OEF, OIF, etc.), as well as their families, are eligible for counseling at Vet Centers. For more information visit <http://www.va.gov/> or to locate a Vet Center visit <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isFlash=1> (Call toll-free **1-800-827-1000**).

► Texas 2-1-1 Help in Texas Information Program

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas that provide marital and family counseling. Callers can speak with a skilled multilingual resource specialist who can provide information and referrals 24/7 throughout the year. (An alternate toll-free number is **1-877-541-7905**)

211Texas.org is a website provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission that connects citizens with the information and/or services they need (including individual and family counseling). Users can search for family counseling services by entering a

need and a location. For example, if a service member/veteran or family member is looking for veterans' family counseling in Austin, simply click "Search" on the website's homepage and enter "veterans" or "family counseling" under "Need" and "Austin" under "Location" to gain access to local services.

► **TherapistLocator.net**

Sponsored by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), TherapistLocator.net is a database that lists more than 15,000 marriage and family therapists in the U.S. *This service is especially helpful for those service members and veterans who would like to seek marital or family counseling outside of the VA/governmental network.* All of the therapists are members of the AAMFT and must meet stringent education and training requirements established by the AAMFT. AAMFT therapists provide counseling for and information on domestic violence, PTSD, adolescent behavior, children and divorce, children's attachment, depression, anger, infidelity, marital distress, marriage preparation, and much more. The website also lists the specializations of each therapist.

► **National Resource Directory (NRD)**

The NRD is a comprehensive web portal that provides a listing of family counseling services in the United States. Users can search for family counseling services in their local area by entering key words (i.e. "family counseling") and a location. *This site is especially helpful for those service members and veterans who would like to seek counseling outside of the VA/governmental network.* For more information, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

► **Military OneSource**

Military OneSource provides short-term, non-medical family counseling options to NGR members and their families. Counseling services are designed to provide help with short-term issues such as adjustment to situational stressors, stress management, decision making, communication grief, family issues, and parenting skills issues. Military OneSource can arrange for individuals or family members to meet face-to-face with a professional counselor in the local community as well as telephone and online (instant-messaging) consultations. Each eligible service member or family member may receive up to twelve sessions, per issue, per counselor at no cost. For more information on Military OneSource services, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>.

► **Texas Joint Forces Support Services**

The Texas Joint Forces Support Services unit provides Military Family Life Consultants (MFLCs) that offer family counseling to all National Guard (Army & Air) members and their families. MFLCs are able to assist individuals and families with deployment and reintegration issues; marriage and relationship issues; parenting/sibling & family issues; communication; stress and anxiety; and depression. Consultations are free and anonymous and no records are kept. After-hours and weekend appointments are available, and group or off-site meetings can be arranged. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/> (or call toll-free 1-800-252-

8032).

► **Chaplaincy of the Texas Army National Guard**

The Chaplaincy of the Texas Army National Guard provides counseling for Army National Guard members and their families. This unit offers a Strong Bonds program which focuses on strengthening the family. Additionally, the Chaplaincy provides multiple training programs for suicide awareness/prevention, battlemind²⁰ (pre/post deployment), soldier and spouse modules, anger management, marriage enrichment events, and single soldier events. To contact chaplain services 24/7, call **1-866-822-7685 Option 8#** or e-mail TexasChaplain@ng.army.mil.

► **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program provides family counseling, briefings, workshops and seminars to assist members and their families throughout the deployment process. During Yellow Ribbon events, members receive briefings on: family separation, coping with deployment, the effects of combat operational stress, reintegration issues, marriage and single family workshops, and reconnecting with children. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free **1-800-252-8032**.

Parenting Intervention and Education

► **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program offers parenting support and education through its events, in an effort to support NGR members and their families throughout the deployment process. Yellow Ribbon events focus on helping members reconnect with their children. The program also provides youth programs for children. Childcare is provided for children ages 0-5 and the Texas National Guard Youth Program sponsors activities for children ages 6-17, focusing on the effects of the deployment cycle. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free **1-800-252-8032**.

► **Military OneSource**

Military OneSource provides online parenting education and support for all military members. Under the subcategory, “Family and Recreation,” there is a link to “Parenting and Child Care.” Here, parents can learn about the following topics: adoption, becoming a parent, child care, parenting skills, and stages of development. Each topic is subdivided into separate links for more detailed information. The parenting and child care page also provides links to other organizations that offer parenting education and support. In addition, Military

²⁰ “Battlemind” is a term that refers to being mentally prepared for military combat.

OneSource features a link to the **Sittercity Childcare Program**, an online database funded by the DoD that can be used to find local sitters and military subsidized care providers. For more information on Military OneSource services, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>.

► **National Resource Directory (NRD)**

The NRD is a comprehensive web portal that connects service members, veterans and their families with local parenting intervention, education and childcare services. Under Family and Caregiver Support, users can search for resources in their community that provide parenting intervention and education. The website also organizes searches based on parenting topics such as child care, talking to children, and children with special needs. For more information, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

► **Texas 2-1-1 Help in Texas Information Program**

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with child care and parenting intervention services in Texas. Callers can speak with a skilled multilingual resource specialist who can provide information and referrals 24/7. An alternate toll-free number is **1-877-541-7905**.

211Texas.org is a database that can connect citizens with child care and parenting education/intervention services. Users can search for child care and parenting education services by entering a need and a location. For example, if a service member/veteran or family member is looking for parenting classes in Austin, simply click “Search” on the website’s homepage and enter “parenting classes” under “Need” and “Austin” under “Location” to gain access to local parenting classes.

► **ChildHelp**

ChildHelp provides a toll free, anonymous and confidential 24/7 hotline for parents who need assistance or parenting advice. The hotline is staffed with professional crisis counselors who offer crisis intervention and information on thousands of support services. When calling **1-800-4-A-CHILD (-800-422-4453)**, a qualified counselor can assist veterans/service members or family members if they need help and want to talk to a counselor, are in physical or emotional crisis and need support, or would like literature or access to child care or parenting services.

Child Support and Noncustodial Parent Support

► **HEROES**

In Texas, the Help Establishing Responsible Orders and Ensuring Support (HEROES) for Children in Military Families Program is a pilot program of the Texas Office of the Attorney General intended to address child support issues among current service members, veterans and their dependents. The goal of HEROES is to offer personalized assistance in dealing with paternity establishment, child support and parenting time (custody visitation) matters; grant

suitable relief in Texas child support cases where military service/combat related injuries have attributed to non-compliance with court orders; and to encourage positive co-parenting solutions. For more information, visit <https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/ofc/index.shtml#heroes>.

Formal Family Support

► Texas Joint Family Support Services (TJFSS)

TJFSS is a unit within the Texas Military Forces that provides family support services for all Texas National Guard members and their families. TJFSS offers resources for family support, including Family Readiness Teams, Family Readiness Support Assistants, Family Assistance Specialists, Family Readiness Groups, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, and the Strong Bonds Program. **Family Readiness Groups (FRG)** are guard members, civilians, family members, volunteers, and unit commanders that come together to provide mutual social and emotional support within units, as well as outreach services and information. FRGs are vital to the military as they often provide firsthand information to families about their Soldiers/Airmen, including deployment updates when their Soldiers/Airmen cannot be contacted directly.²¹ Family members can join a FRG at any time. Service members and their families can also download a **Family Readiness Smartbook** which provides information and contact numbers for each service. *This handbook is recommended for all Texas National Guard members and their families.* For more information and to download the TJFSS Family Readiness Smartbook, visit <http://www.txfss.com/> (call toll-free **1-800-252-8032**).

► Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is a DoD-wide initiative to support and strengthen NGR members and their families by connecting them with resources and services throughout the deployment cycle. Through Yellow Ribbon events, NGR members and their families are able to engage in family-strengthening activities, including seminars focusing on topics such as family separation, coping with deployment, member and spouse employment, reintegration issues, marriage, single soldiers, reconnecting with children, assistance with personnel issues, and financial counseling for families. The 2-day post-deployment events are held at hotels, resorts, and conference centers. These events are designed for the service member and his or her family to relax, reconnect and receive information together. Childcare is provided for children ages 0-5 and the Texas National Guard Youth program sponsors activities for children ages 6-17, focusing on the effects of the deployment cycle. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, or www.yellowribbon.mil.

²¹ During combat deployment, direct communication between a Soldier/Airman and his or her family may be limited.

► **National Resource Directory (NRD)**

The NRD is a comprehensive web portal that connects service members, veterans and their families with local and national family support services. Users can search for family support programs throughout the nation. Under the folder “Family & Caregiver Support,” users can search for information on family support services including service member and veteran support organizations, branch-specific resources, organizations that help families cope with deployment, family recreation services, caregiver support resources, and domestic violence and sexual assault resources. Additionally, the database offers information on organizations that give financial information and assistance to families. To search for local family support services, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

► **Military OneSource**

Military OneSource is a free online service, sponsored by the DoD, that provides booklets, articles, recordings, and other resources to help support military families. Under “Family and Recreation,” NGR families can search for family support information on elder care, recreation, parenting, child care, home maintenance, and money management. Under “Recreation,” the site features free online libraries and audio books, as well as tools to help plan a vacation. To access family support resources provided by Military OneSource, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>.

► **Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs website**

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs website is a site that provides information on Reserve family support services and resources. Under “Family Readiness,” there is information on family and employer programs and policy, a family toolkit (handbook for Reserve families), a soldier’s parent guide, and numerous links to other resources including the Army Family Liaison Office and Military Homefront, a DoD website for official military community and family policy. Under “Mobilization,” service members and their families can access a Demobilization Guide that outlines Reserve demobilization and transition benefits. For more information, visit <http://ra.defense.gov/programs/fepp/>.

► **TexVet: Partners Across Texas**

The TexVet: Partners Across Texas website is a hub for network and event-based activities for military members, veterans and their families. The community calendar provides information on local family services and activities, including workshops and peer-to-peer support groups. The website also provides information on specialized support groups including military mothers, spouses, children, and homeless veterans’ support groups. For more information, visit <https://www.texvet.org/>.

► **American Red Cross**

The American Red Cross connects military members with their families during an

emergency or crisis. For NGR members, the Red Cross offers: emergency communication, access to emergency financial assistance, counseling, and veterans services. Financial assistance is available for emergency travel, burial of a loved one, assistance to avoid privation, etc. Assistance includes funding for roundtrip airfare, lodging costs, food and incidentals. For example, if a service member is deployed and a family member has an emergency back home (e.g., spouse, child or parent is severely injured, sick or dies), a family member can call Red Cross to notify the deployed Soldier/Airman. Likewise, if a member is not deployed and a crisis occurs away from his or her current location, he or she can contact Red Cross for assistance. Call the Military Call Center at **(877) 272-7337** or visit <http://www.redcross.org/where> to locate a local Red Cross Chapter.

► **Texas Workforce Commission**

The Texas Workforce Commission website provides numerous links to military family support groups and services. Some of these groups include Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., Marine Moms Online, Military Connections, Veterans' Families United, and other military family support organizations. For more information, visit http://www.twc.state.tx.us/tvlp/tvlp_family.html.

Informal Family Support

► **Facebook**

Facebook is a social networking service and website that connects more than 845 million active users. Here, service members, veterans and their families can connect with other military members and families. The website allows users to connect with and to create military family and veterans support groups and pages. NGR families can locate open groups or public pages to establish connections with military support groups. For example, the Fort Hood Area Events²² page allows users to post questions on a streaming wall and other members can respond to inquiries. So, if a military spouse near Fort Hood would like information on where she could access child care in the Fort Hood/Killeen area, all she would have to do is post the question and members of the page would respond. Likewise, the Chamorro²³ Military Families Group allows Chamorro military families to communicate and connect at military installations all over the world. The group's description states: "It is hard enough being away from the island, but then you start to miss the music, culture, language and people. Use this group to find other locals (Chamorros) in your area who can relate to being away from home and being a part of military life." To start a Facebook account and to locate similar groups, visit <http://www.facebook.com>.

²² See www.facebook.com/FHWWWE.

²³ Chamorro refers to a native of the island of Guam, a U.S. territory in the Pacific.

► Skype

Skype is an Internet service that allows users to communicate with friends and family by voice, video and instant messaging. Videoconferencing allows military families to see and hear their loved ones in real-time. For example, a Soldier can witness the birth of his baby while deployed, and a Marine can see and hear her mother located thousands of miles away in real-time. This service allows military members and their families to visually interact with their families and friends, no matter how far away they may be. To utilize videoconferencing, all that is required is Internet service²⁴ and a web camera. To download Skype, visit www.skype.com.

²⁴ See www.skype.com to see system requirements.

Unemployment

The following table lists services for NGR members and veterans experiencing unemployment; the federal, state and private organizations and programs that provide the identified services; and contact information for these resources.

Unemployment	Federal, State and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources
Employment Counseling	<p>Texas Veterans Commission http://www.tvc.texas.gov/Home.aspx (1-800-VETS (8387))</p> <p>FedsHire Vets http://www.fedshirevets.gov/</p> <p>Texas Workforce Commission http://www.twc.state.tx.us/ (512-463-2222)</p> <p>TexVet: Partners Across Texas https://www.texvet.org/support-services</p> <p>Texas 211 Information Hotline https://www.211texas.org/211/ (2-1-1 or 1-877-541-7905)</p> <p>211Texas.org https://www.211texas.org/211/</p> <p>National Resource Directory https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/</p> <p>National Guard Job Connection Program (JCEP) http://www.jcep.info</p> <p>DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) www.turbotap.org</p>
Education Assistance	<p>G.I. Bill http://www.gibill.va.gov/ (1-866-496-8838)</p> <p>Hazlewood Act http://www.tvc.texas.gov/Hazlewood-Act.aspx (1-800-VETS (8387))</p> <p>Texas Veterans Commission http://www.tvc.texas.gov/Home.aspx (1-800-VETS (8387))</p> <p>Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program www.yellowribbon.mil (1-800-252-8032)</p> <p>National Resource Directory https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/</p> <p>Military OneSource http://www.militaryonesource.mil (1-800-342-9647)</p> <p>National Guard and Reserve Reintegration Support http://ra.defense.gov/programs/fepp/</p>

Employment Counseling

► Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)

TVC offers employment counseling services to Texas veterans and aids employers in finding qualified veteran job applicants. TVC offers one-on-one assistance to veterans with job applications, résumé preparation, as well as job matching and searches. The agency has staff in workforce centers who offer intensive employment counseling services to disabled veterans, economically or educationally disadvantaged veterans, and veterans with other barriers to employment, particularly homeless veterans. TVC also has staff assigned to VA facilities to help disabled veterans with intensive vocational rehabilitation and employment. The agency provides online information to assist veterans and service members with finding a job, drafting résumés, completing employment applications, finding information on how to translate their military occupational skills into civilian occupational skills, and information on job fairs and active duty transition assistance programs. The website features a job board, information on veterans' preference, reemployment, on-the-job training, employment for spouses and caregivers, as well as multiple job search links. For more information, visit <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/> or call **1-800-VETS (8387)**.

► FedshireVets

FedshireVets website is a one-stop resource for federal veteran employment information, transitioning service members, and their families. A goal of the organization is to provide reliable and accurate information and valuable training in an approach that will benefit both the applicant and hiring agency. The site features information on topics such as veterans' preference, special hiring authorities for veterans, federal hiring practices, education and training resources, and other pertinent information for veterans and transitioning service members who would like to work for the federal government. Additionally, the site has a direct link to **USAJOBS**, a one-stop source for federal jobs and employment information and is the primary website for those seeking federal employment. For more information, visit <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>.

► Texas Workforce Commission

TWC offers priority service for veterans at all Workforce Solutions Offices. TWC provides services such as career counseling, job placement, job search resources, training programs, résumé and application assistance, career development assistance, and unemployment benefits. Many TWC offices also have Veterans Representatives. Additionally, TWC provides a Veterans Leadership Program, a referral service that links veterans with federal and local services to help facilitate a successful transition to civilian life. The program connects veterans to employers for potential hiring. Furthermore, the TWC website features the state's largest online job matching system, WorkinTexas.com, as well as information on how to apply for Unemployment Benefits. *Many service members are eligible for Unemployment Benefits.*²⁵

²⁵ Eligibility may vary; contact the unemployment benefits line to apply for benefits.

To apply for Unemployment Benefits, visit the TWC website or call 1-800-939-6631. TWC provides computers, Internet access, telephones, copiers, job workshops and seminars. For more information and to locate a TWC office, visit <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>.

► **TexVet Partner Across Texas**

The TexVet Partner Across Texas website is a vast networking and referral services database for Texas veterans and transitioning service members searching for employment. By collecting federal, state, and local VSO information, TexVet has created an online Veterans Services Provider Network (VSPN). The employment section of the website features information on job preparation, transitioning, job leads, financial assistance, and other resources. For example, under “Job Preparation,” job fairs, career advising events, training opportunities, and other employment preparation events throughout Texas are listed. For more information, visit <https://www.texvet.org/>.

► **Texas 2-1-1 Help in Texas Information Program**

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas, including employment counseling services for veterans and their families. Callers can speak with a skilled resource specialist who can provide information and referrals 24/7 throughout the year. An alternate toll-free number is **1-877-541-7905**.

211Texas.org is a website provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission that connects citizens with employment support services, including agencies and programs that provide employment counseling. The website serves as a database for over 60,000 state and local human services programs. Users can search for employment services by entering a need and a location. For example, if a veteran is looking for a job in Austin, he can simply click on “Search” on the website’s homepage and enter “employment” under “Need” and “Austin” under “Location” to gain access to local services.

► **National Resource Directory (NRD)**

The NRD is a comprehensive database that connects veterans with helpful employment support tools, resources and programs, including organizations that provide employment counseling to transitioning service members and veterans. The database features career exploration tools, transition assistance, information on working for the government, self-employment and business ownership, military to civilian skill translators, job listings, placement assistance, mentoring, employment laws and veterans preference, unemployment benefits, and employment support programs. The NRD is also home to the Veterans Job Bank, a central database that allows veterans access to jobs specifically for them. A veteran can search for employment by entering key words (e.g., job title), their military occupation specialty (MOS or AFSC), and a location. To access the NRD, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

► **National Guard Job Connection Education Program (JCEP)**

JCEP is an employment partnership initiative designed to provide one-on-one employment counseling and job-placement assistance for NGR service members, veterans and their spouses. The program helps participants identify skills honed in the military and creates a plan for transferring them to a civilian job setting. Program training and career counseling are provided at multiple National Guard Armories and community facilities. JCEP also provides education assistance for service members who are interested in earning their degrees or trade certifications, résumé review and mock interviews, applicable workforce training, online job search training, and personal assistance from a business advisor working with local employers to hire JCEP participants. JCEP works with local businesses and explains to these companies the program and the benefits of hiring a service member/veteran. For more information, visit <http://www.jcep.info>.

► **DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP)**

TAP was developed to assist in the transitioning of military personnel and family members leaving active duty service. After serving 180 or more days of continuous active duty, and prior to a member's separation or release from active duty, NGR members are required to receive transition counseling from a member of a military installation Transition Assistance Staff, Command Career Counselor (Navy), or Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) staff. During the transition counseling session, the member will be given an overview of all the topics contained in DD Form 2468-1, "Pre-separation Counseling Checklist for Reserve Component Service Members Released from Active Duty." NGR members are entitled to receive transition assistance for up to six months after they have been released from active duty and return home. To access this help, the member must contact the nearest military installation or Command Career Counselor where he or she lives. Personnel office staff, relocation specialists, education counselors, and many others can help. Professional guidance and counseling are available at local Transition Assistance Offices, in addition to workshops, publications, information resources, automated resources, and government programs.

The first step in this process is to access the TAP website created for NGR members: www.TurboTAP.org. Once there, members should review the *Transition Guide for Guard and Reserve*. Listed below are the names of each service's TAP:

- **Army:** Army Career and Alumni Program - The Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) is a military personnel function and the Centers are found under the Director of Human Resources (DHR) or the Military Personnel Office (MILPO). <http://www.acap.army.mil/>
- **Army National Guard:** The National Guard has placed a transition assistance advisor (TAAs) at each of the State Joint Forces Headquarters to serve as the statewide point of contact and coordinator for easy access to Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and to provide assistance in access to entitlements through the Military Health System (TRICARE). A directory of state offices can be found at: <http://www.ngb.army.mil/resources/states.aspx>. For more information on TAAs, visit: www.taapmo.com.
- **Navy:** Fleet and Family Support Center. Navy personnel should make an appointment with their Command Career Counselor for a Pre-separation counseling interview and the Navy CONSEP (Career Options and Skills Evaluation Program) self-assessment at least 180 days prior to separation. <https://www.nffsp.org/>
- **Marines:** Career Resource Management Center (CRMC)/Transition & Employment Assistance Program Center. <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/tamp/index.cfm>

- **Air Force:** Airman and Family Readiness Center. Members can find the nearest office using the military installation finder at: www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil
- **Coast Guard:** Worklife Division – Transition Assistance. Coast Guard Worklife staffs can be found at your nearest Integrated Support Command. <http://www.uscg.mil/worklife/>

► **TurboTAP.org**

TurboTAP.org is a website for NGR members that contains information on NGR-specific reintegration assistance, to include information on employment assistance, entrepreneurship, education and training, veterans benefits, disabled veterans, retirees, employment restrictions, and leaving the service. The site features an Online Career Decision Toolkit which consists of online career transition courses to help members transition to the civilian workforce. The website also provides access to online learning events and webinars (live online seminars) for demobilizing NGR members and their families. Through these live webinars, members have the opportunity to learn how to translate their military experience into civilian terms, to create a new financial plan and to understand the federal employment system. Members are also able to connect with those who are going through similar experiences and to learn from one another. Live trainers facilitate these highly interactive sessions, which are designed to give the member practical information that can be put to use immediately. These live webinars are accessible from any location where broadband Internet and phone are available. To access the site, visit www.turbotap.org.

Education Assistance

► **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**

The VA administers a variety of education benefit programs. Many veterans and service members can qualify for more than one education benefits program. The education benefits programs administered by the VA include:

- Post-9/11 GI Bill
- Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD)
- Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR)
- Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)
- Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)
- Educational Assistance Test Program (Section 901)
- Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (DEA)
- National Call to Service Program
- Veterans Retraining Program

The VA website provides an easy-to-navigate portal for veterans and service members to apply for benefits (available through the Veterans Online Application [VONAPP]) and to choose a school (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/>). To apply for free education and vocational

counseling services, members and veterans should complete the application available on the VA website (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/support/counseling-services/>).

► Hazlewood Act

The Hazlewood Act provides qualified veterans, spouses, and their children with an education benefit of up to 150 hours of tuition and fee exemptions at state-supported colleges or universities. Effective Fall 2009 term/semester, in order to be eligible to receive a Hazlewood Act Exemption, a veteran must:

- Have been a Texas resident upon entry into the military, entered into active federal duty in the State of Texas, or declared Texas as his or her home of record at the time of entry into the armed forces as documented on his or her DD Form 214;
- Have a military discharge of honorable or general, under honorable conditions;
- Served at least 181 days of active duty service (excluding training);
- Not be in default on an education loan made or guaranteed by the State of Texas and not in default on a federal loan if that default is the reason the student cannot use his or her federal veterans' benefits.

The Hazlewood Act benefit is also extended to the *dependent children and spouses of eligible veterans* who died in the line of duty or as a result of injury or illness directly related to military service, are missing in action, or who became totally disabled for purposes of employability as a result of a service-related injury or illness. This benefit also applies to the dependent children and spouses of members of Texas National Guard or Air National Guard units who were killed while on active duty while serving either the State of Texas or the United States or are totally disabled for purposes of employability.²⁶ To find out if a veteran or family member is eligible for this exemption, visit <http://texas-veterans.com/education/hazlewood>.

► Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)

TVC provides education assistance to all veterans in Texas. A goal of the organization is to ensure that every veteran and family member eligible for federal or state veterans' education benefits has the opportunity to pursue whatever educational endeavor they choose. TVC provides education counseling to veterans and investigates VA educational and benefit complaints from veterans and other eligible family members. The agency has more than 75 claims counselors throughout the state, accredited by the VA, to provide assistance with filing claims for VA and state education benefits, including the G.I. Bill and Hazlewood Act. The TVC directory provides contact information to every TVC site in Texas. For more information, visit <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/>.

²⁶ Make note that service in the Texas National Guard *alone* does not qualify an individual for Hazlewood Act benefits. The Hazlewood Act benefit is for veterans who served in the armed forces of the United States. The National Guard is a state unit. However, an individual in the National Guard who is called into active duty by a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces who served at least 181 days (excluding training) and meets all other program requirements may qualify for Hazlewood Act benefits.

► **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program provides reintegration events exclusively for National Guard and Reserve members that feature information on federal and state education benefits. NGR service members and their families have the opportunity to attend seminars that discuss education benefits such as the G.I. Bill and Hazlewood Act. For more information, visit <http://www.txfss.com/>, <http://www.afrc.af.mil/library/yellowribbon/process.asp>, www.yellowribbon.mil, or call toll-free **1-800-252-8032**.

► **National Resource Directory (NRD)**

The National Resource Directory (NRD) is a comprehensive web portal that connects service members and veterans with education and training support services. The web portal provides information on education benefits and programs including Post-911 GI Bill benefits, other VA education programs (including the Montgomery GI Bill), as well as other DoD programs. Users can search for scholarships and grants for service members, veterans, spouses, and dependents, as well as other general scholarships. The NRD also offers guidance on how to get federal and state financial aid, how to choose a career path, assistance with finding programs and applying to schools, as well as guidance on apprenticeship, licensing and credentials. For more information, visit <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>.

► **Military OneSource**

Military OneSource provides online education support to service members and veterans by connecting them with career and education information and resources. The website features information on preparing for, applying to, and paying for college as well as a wide array of materials and resources to help plan a career. Military OneSource also offers Spouse Education and Career Opportunities, a network of comprehensive spouse education and career opportunity resources, including portable careers. For more information on Military OneSource education support sources, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

The following table lists services for NGR members and veterans suffering from alcohol and/or substance abuse; the federal, state and private organizations and programs that provide the identified services; and contact information for these resources.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse	Federal, State and Non-Governmental Post-Deployment & Reintegration Services and Resources
Traditional Substance Abuse and Mental Health Programs	<p>Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/TreatmentLocator/faces/quickSearch.jspx</p> <p>U.S. Veterans Affairs Substance Abuse Treatment http://www.va.gov/ (1-800-827-1000)</p> <p>Veterans Affairs Facility Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1</p> <p>Texas 211 Information Hotline https://www.211texas.org/211/ (2-1-1 or 1-877-541-7905)</p> <p>211Texas.org https://www.211texas.org/211/</p> <p>Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) www.aa.org/en_find_meeting.cfm?PageID=29 (E-mail: SouthwestRegion@aa.org)</p> <p>Narcotics Anonymous (NA) www.na.org/?ID=phoneline</p>
Integrated PTSD and SUD Treatment Programs	<p>U.S. Veterans Affairs Substance Abuse Treatment http://www.va.gov/ (1-800-827-1000)</p> <p>Veterans Affairs Facility Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1</p> <p>Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD_flash.asp?isFlash=1</p>

Traditional Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Programs

► Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

The Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is an online search engine that provides users with information on substance abuse and mental health services useful to military members, veterans, and their families. *This database may be extremely helpful to those troops and veterans who do not want to seek substance abuse treatment within the VA or federal system, as it locates public services beyond the VA/federal system.* To access the locator, visit <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/TreatmentLocator/faces/quickSearch.jspx>.

► U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The VA provides effective, scientifically proven substance abuse treatment for all eligible veterans. Different treatment options include individual, couple, family and group therapies, as well as medications to assist veterans in reducing their use of alcohol, tobacco and drug use. A patient coming to the VA can expect to find the following types of care: first-time screening for alcohol or tobacco use in all care facilities, short outpatient therapy, intensive outpatient treatment, residential (live-in) care, medically managed detoxification (stopping substance use safely), continuing care and relapse prevention, marriage and family counseling, self-help groups, drug substitution therapies, and newer medicines to reduce craving. To access these services, veterans and service members should speak with an existing VA health care provider or contact a local VA medical center or Vet Center. For more information, service members and veterans can call toll free **1-800-827-1000** or visit <http://www.va.gov>. Also, to locate the nearest VA facility, visit <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1>.

► Texas 2-1-1 Help in Texas Information Program

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember phone number, connecting callers with health and human service providers in Texas, including substance abuse treatment services and programs. Callers can speak with a skilled resource specialist who can provide information and referrals 24/7 throughout the year. An alternate toll-free number is **1-877-541-7905**.

211Texas.org is a website provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission that connects citizens with the information and/or services they need (including substance abuse treatment). The website serves as a database for over 60,000 state and local human services programs. Users can search for substance abuse treatment by entering a need and a location. For example, if a service member/veteran or family member is looking for substance abuse treatment in Austin, simply click “Search” on the website’s homepage and enter “substance abuse treatment facilities” under “Need” and “Austin” under “Location” to gain access to local substance abuse treatment programs.

► **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)**

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a voluntary fellowship of men and women who come together with the shared intent of attaining and maintaining sobriety. The only requirement for membership is a desire to quit drinking. There are no membership fees or dues to join AA. The philosophy behind AA is total abstinence—members simply stay away from one drink, one day at a time. Sobriety is maintained through sharing experiences, strength and hope at group meetings and through the suggested Twelve Steps for recovery from alcoholism. For more information, visit www.aa.org/en_information_aa.cfm?PageID=11. To find a local meeting, visit www.aa.org/en_find_meeting.cfm?PageID=29.

► **Narcotics Anonymous (NA)**

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) is a non-profit voluntary fellowship of men and women who come together with the shared intent of attaining and maintaining sobriety. Membership is open to all drug addicts, regardless of the type of drug or combination of drugs used. Founded in the same philosophy of the Alcoholics Anonymous program, sobriety is maintained through sharing successes and challenges in overcoming drug addiction and living drug-free lives through the application of the principles contained within the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA. For more information or to find a local meeting, call **1-818-773-9999** extension 771 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. or visit www.na.org/?ID=phoneline.

Integrated PTSD and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Programs

► **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**

The VA provides effective integrative PTSD and substance abuse treatment for all eligible veterans, including National Guard members and Reservists who have completed a federal deployment to a combat zone. Substance Use PTSD Teams (SUPTs) treat the combined problems of PTSD and substance abuse in outpatient clinics and can meet with patients on a regular basis. Every VA Medical Center has providers that have been trained to offer PTSD treatment. Note that while not all VA Medical Centers offer *integrative* PTSD and substance abuse treatment services, service members and veterans can still get effective PTSD and substance abuse treatment through traditional programs. A doctor can refer you to a mental health provider who is a PTSD specialist. To access these services, speak with an existing VA health care provider or contact a local VA Medical Center or Vet Center. A referral is usually needed to access specialty programs. To locate a VA facility, search the **Veterans Affairs Facility Locator** at <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1> or the **Veterans Affairs PTSD Program Locator** at http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD_flash.asp?isFlash=1. Also, service members and veterans can call the VA general hotline at **1-800-827-1000**.