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World Conflicts Can Impact Veterans' Mental Health

Depression, anxiety, and PTSD are common mental health challenges for Veterans and members of the military. Research suggests that 11–20% of veterans experience PTSD each year—significantly higher than past-year estimates for the general population at less than 4%*

News coverage of current events in the Middle East and Ukraine are disturbing to many people. But for Veterans, members of the military and their families, they can have a significant impact on their mental health.

“We are ramping up our troops as we speak in anticipation of being involved in either Ukraine, Israel or Taiwan wars.” said Felice Krycia, director, Erie County Veterans Service Agency. “For many combat veterans, seeing the conflicts on television will trigger anxiety/stress etc. Some are reaching out for assistance, but many are self-medicating (alcohol or drugs).”

Sara Andrew, Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinator for suicide prevention at the VA said Veterans may be experiencing a wide range of emotions or increases in symptoms of mental health conditions. Some common reactions include anger, sadness, helplessness, and grief. She also mentions that in response, Veterans may cope through avoidant strategies such as alcohol/substance use or isolation.

“Veterans might have unanswered questions or feel vigilant or guarded,” she said. “These are normal reactions to negative events, however, if these reactions become overwhelming, continue for an extended period of time or negatively affect an individual’s functioning, they may need help through this challenging time.”

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According to Dan Arnold, a Veteran who served in the U.S. Air Force, current world events can trigger emotions in some veterans who experienced stressful situations in their past deployments while in the military. Seeing these events unfold on the news can bring back the stress some Veterans went through in their past, just thinking about what current military members are thinking about with the military buildup happening.

“It is funny how the mind works like that,” he said. “It can be like they are right back to those dark days they experienced when they were in.”

Arnold shared how family and friends can support Veterans in their mental health journey.

“I want to say by understanding. But can they really understand? Probably not. But they need to be aware of what they might be going through,” he said “If they notice changes in the way they normally act, not get on them, don’t make them feel worse for feeling the way they do.”

He suggests contacting a fellow Veteran that they keep in touch with, to talk to them, someone who can understand what they are going through.



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DAN ARNOLD

**DIRECTOR OF VETERAN ENGAGEMENT,
VETERANS ONE-STOP CENTER OF WNY, INC.**

U.S. AIR FORCE VETERAN



The Anti-Stigma Coalition presented its monthly Facebook Live on November 9 discussing how current world events are impacting Veterans and their families.

Panelists included Daniel Arnold, director of Veteran engagement, Veterans One-stop Center of WNY, Inc., Felice Krycia, director, Erie County Veterans Service Agency, and Kathy Snyder, director, Beaver Hollow Therapeutic Recreation for Military and First Responders.

For Help:

THE ERIE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICES OFFICE

(716) 858-6363

VETERANS CRISIS LINE

Confidential crisis support for Veterans and their loved ones 24/7- dial 988 then Press 1, text 838255 or chat VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat.

VA MEDICAL CENTER ON BAILEY AVE

VA VET CENTER ON SWEET HOME ROAD

Call (716) 862-7350. Offering counseling and assistance to veterans in need. The Vet Center is dedicated to assisting combat veterans and military sexual trauma veterans. ■



jewish family services | wny

We recently spoke to Jewish Family Services about stigma and mental health.

As an agency that offers mental health services, JFS also recognizes its responsibility for leading and encouraging conversations about stigma, so people feel more comfortable accessing not just our services, but other available mental health services.

Why did your organization become a member of The Anti-Stigma Coalition?

JFS is a founding member of The Anti-Stigma Coalition. Former CEO, Marlene Schillinger, recognized the importance of being a leader in addressing stigma surrounding mental health and accessing services in the community and in response partnered with other agencies to create the coalition. As an agency that offers mental health services, JFS also recognizes its responsibility for leading and encouraging conversations about stigma, so people feel more comfortable accessing not just our services, but other available mental health services.

How are your clients with mental health challenges impacted by stigma?

Stigma causes people to suffer in silence and makes it hard to talk about issues that need to be talked about to be helped. Frankly, stigma is also a root cause for the lack of adequate funding that the addictions and mental health fields have dealt with for decades.

What is your organization doing to address stigma and enhance mental wellness for the people you serve as well as employees and volunteers?

JFS continues to be a member of The Anti-Stigma Coalition and actively seeks out opportunities to discuss stigma through community psychoeducation, focus groups, and listening sessions with the community through our mental health-based programs in our clinic and our Refugee and Immigrant Center for Healing (RICH). RICH also provides training to mental health providers on working with refugee and immigrant populations. Our Trauma Systems Therapy for Refugee Youth program in RICH will be hosting a conference on November 18th: "Mental Health Stigma Across Cultures, Healing through Community Conversations". More information to come. JFS also regularly communicates with staff and volunteers about mental health, self-care, and emotional wellbeing and offers services through the Employee Assistance Program for anyone in need of support. All staff are supported through individual supervision for additional one on one support. ■

SHARE THE CONVERSATION

1

SHARE EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

Share the monthly newsletter to your team via email or print the PDF.

2

SHARE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Share posts to your professional and personal networks and help promote Facebook Live events.

@talkstigma

3

REQUEST MATERIALS TO DISTRIBUTE

Brochures, Conversation Starter Cards, Counter Displays, Pop-up Banners, Add logos and graphics to your website or other collateral.

✉ karen@LetsTalkStigma.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

Suicide Loss Grief Support Group for adults who have lost loved ones to suicide

Tuesday, November 14 | Tosh Collins Community Center

Youth Suicide Loss Grief Support Group for youth who have lost loved ones to suicide for ages 13-18

Tuesday, November 14 | Tosh Collins Community Center

Blended Open Community Mental Health First Aid Trainings

Wednesday, November 15 | Compeer Buffalo

This 8-hour evidence-based training will teach a 5-step action plan (ALGEE) and enhance your skills on talking about mental health, approaching a crisis or non-crisis situation, and connecting individuals to appropriate resources.

Mindfulness, Stress Management (Live Streaming Available)

Wednesday, November 15 | WNY Life Coaching Center

This class will explore the various elements of stress, how to identify and recognize when we are under stress, and practice techniques to restore, manage and heal from stress.

Mental Health Stigma Across Cultures: Healing through Community Conversations

Saturday, November 18 | Lafayette High School

The day will feature community learning about the impact of trauma and available support services.

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

Saturday, November 18 | Daemen University

An event in which survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding, and hope through their shared experience.

Mindful Music airing weekly on WBFO

Saturdays: 4 PM - Sundays: 8 PM | Buffalo Toronto Public Media

Visit letstalkstigma.org/events for more.

ERIE COUNTY
ANTI-STIGMA
COALITION

ERIE COUNTY ANTI-STIGMA COALITION FOUNDING MEMBERS

BryLin Hospital • Children's Mental Health Coalition of Western New York, Inc.
Community Partners of Western New York • Compeer • Crisis Services of Erie County
Erie County Department of Mental Health • Erie County Office for People with Disabilities
Fellows Action Network • Fuerst Consulting Corporation • Jewish Family Service of Buffalo & Erie County
The Mental Health Advocates of WNY • Millennium Collaborative Care • Patrick P. Lee Foundation
Preventionfocus, Inc. • Telesco Creative Group • The Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation