

Missouri Department of Mental Health
FY 09 Budget Proposals for Serving Our Veterans

Homeless Veterans in Missouri.....

Addressing Immediate Mental Health Needs

Missouri ranks fourteenth nationally with 4800 homeless veterans. One out of every three homeless persons living on the streets is a veteran. Preliminary data indicates that veteran returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are becoming homeless at a faster rate attributed to a shortage of affordable housing, mental health and substance abuse problems. Approximately 45 percent of the homeless veterans have a mental illness and over 50% have substance abuse problems. Some studies suggest the suicide rate among veterans may be 7 to 8 times higher than for other Americans.

The Missouri Department of Mental Health, in collaboration with the Missouri Veteran's Commission, will apply for a Veterans Homeless Per Diem grant that will provide funding for supportive transitional housing and other support services in the St. Louis area. The Missouri Department of Mental Health will contract with non-profit agencies to provide transitional housing for 24 months and an array of support services including intake and assessment, intensive case management, mental health and substance abuse services, job skills training, independent living skills training, employment assistance, transportation and outreach.

Estimated cost of supportive housing for 100 veterans is \$1,100,000 (\$385,000 GR, \$715,000 FED)

Estimated cost of support services for 100 veterans is \$825,000 (\$288,750 GR, \$536,250 FED)

Total Funds requested \$1,925,000 (\$673,750 GR, \$1,251,250 FED)

Homes for Heroes

Following completion of the transitional assistance program, some veterans will require rental assistance as they move into permanent housing in the community. This is critical to ensure the veteran does not end up on the streets again. The statewide average hourly wage needed to rent a one bedroom apartment is \$9.62. Some veterans with mental illness cannot work a 40 hour week, making it impossible to maintain housing stability.

Rental assistance would provide funding for long-term permanent housing linked to mental health support services. One year of rental assistance for 30 veterans would be

\$180,000. Veterans would be asked to contribute 30% of their income towards rent consistent with other housing programs.

Total Funds Requested is \$180,000 GR.

Serving Families of Veterans

It is estimated that 50,000 Missouri men and women have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Mental health problems take a drastic toll on military families which include depression, substance abuse, job loss, unemployment, divorce and domestic violence.

Deployment length and family separation remain the top non-combat issues. Having a parent in a war zone is one of the most stressful events a child can experience in their family. Research suggests that children fare worse when a soldier-parent is deployed for a combat tour. For example, one study showed that rates of confirmed child abuse and neglect rose more than 40%, at the hands of the parent who stayed behind.

The Missouri Department of Mental Health is requesting \$617,760 in Fiscal Year 09 budget to work with the Missouri Veterans Commission in outreach to families during pre deployment, deployment, sustainment, re-deployment and post deployment. The Department of Mental Health proposes to contract with the Community Mental Health Centers to provide outreach to Missouri military units including regular service, guard and reserves. The funds will be used to conduct outreach and support to families and assure referral linkages to mental health services. In addition, mental health services will be funded for those ineligible for other benefits to cover mental health services and who cannot otherwise afford them.

Total funds requested is \$617,760 GR.

For additional information, please contact:

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