

ABBREVIATED CONSENT CALENDAR FORMAT

W. G. A.

Memorandum Date: August 12, 2009
Order Date: August 26, 2009

TO: Board of County Commissioners

DEPARTMENT: Health & Human Services

PRESENTED BY: Rob Rockstroh

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: ORDER _____ / IN THE MATTER OF PROCLAIMING
SEPTEMBER 2009 AS NATIONAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG
ADDICTION RECOVERY MONTH

I. MOTION

In the Matter of Proclaiming September 2009 as National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Background / Analysis

The 20th annual National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month is observed during September 2009. Lane County has joined with the state and national celebrations of Recovery Month in past years. Each year we have chosen to focus on an emerging issue or program in Lane County that connects with the national theme. This year our Lane County focus is on addiction, our military members, their families and a new program, the *Oregon Community Circles of Support*.

The national 2009 theme emphasizes the need to use all available resources, both in our communities and on the Internet, to educate people about the disease of addiction, seek help, and heal. This year the national theme is "Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Learn, Together We Heal."

Our Lane County addiction treatment system continues to learn about tools that work to prevent and treat addiction, helping individuals and families onto the road to recovery. The system has been incorporating evidence-based practices that address the impact of trauma in the development of the disease of addiction. One of the groups most vulnerable to this dynamic is veterans and their families.

The Scope of the Issue -

Lane County has the largest number of registered veterans in the region between Sacramento and Portland (1). According to US Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) population estimates, there are 37,769 veterans (2) in Lane County. Furthermore, of the 2700 members of the 41st Brigade Combat Team (BCT) which the Oregon National Guard recently deployed to Iraq, approximately 400 are from Lane County. Finally, there are other National Guard, Navy, Marines, and Air Force Reserve personnel who have recently, are currently, or are scheduled to deploy to either Iraq or Afghanistan. Some sobering details about the military/vets experience include:

- ⇒ About two in five Iraq or Afghanistan veterans have post-traumatic stress disorder or depression, abuse alcohol or have other serious problems, such as homelessness (4);
- ⇒ Army soldiers and Marines younger than 25 have the highest rates of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and drinking (4);
- ⇒ National Guardsmen and reservists (soldiers older than 30) suffer regardless of the combat they saw because of the disruption and disparity between their lives in home communities and military service (4);
- ⇒ For active-duty military, the risk of being diagnosed with PTSD increased four times after the invasion of Iraq, while for National Guard and Reserve members, the risk increased sevenfold (4).

One way that veterans cope with the increased stress and hypervigilance associated with their military experience is by drinking and/or using drugs. Acknowledging the debilitating effects of war trauma is taboo for many soldiers. So, help is seldom sought and trauma continues to impact the quality of their life long after combat has ended. Alcohol and other drug use can be a strategy of self-medication.

This “self-medicating” can lead to other problems including relationship/family dysfunction, lost productivity, DUII (Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants), increased incidents of accidents with injury and increased medical costs, domestic violence, child abuse, and in extreme cases, death. Furthermore, according to local addiction treatment specialists, after about 10 years of abusive drinking, that coping mechanism often becomes an addiction disorder. In addition to these impacts upon the individual military member, families are also dramatically impacted.

Military families live in an ongoing state of anxiety and tension with deployment and homecoming of military family members being times of highly emotional events that impact every family member (3). For infants and toddlers who rely on their caregivers to serve as emotional regulators, healthy development may be put at-risk (5). While homecoming may be joyous, families may experience secondary trauma in tandem with their returned military member, according to Lucy Zammarelli a local specialist in trauma treatment for families.

This emotional charge becomes much greater in the isolation experienced by most of our vets and families and help is hard to find. If families are not provided with tools and support to transition into healthy relationships and functionality, alcohol and other drug use, as a coping style, can become a family legacy leading to generations of alcohol and other drug addiction.

Availability of Help and Gaps –

Oregon is one of only five states that have no military treatment center and one of only two (Idaho being the other) that has no connection with a military treatment center (1).

Insurance coverage for active-duty Guardsmen, Reserve Members and their families is provided through TRICARE. However, the process to obtain reimbursement for services provided is so arduous and the time lag in receiving payment so long that many counselors and mental health professionals will not accept the coverage according to Dr. Michael Leeds, noted family and marriage counselor.

Once the military member leaves active service, they may be eligible for health care coverage under the Veterans Administration though their family members are not.

In order to access VA Health Care, a veteran must meet at least one of about 12 different eligibility criteria. Most veterans who have recently left military service are automatically eligible for five years of coverage since they served in a combat theater. However, if they did not see that kind of service, they have to meet one of the other criteria. Due to the nature of the criteria, this often requires that they be found to have a “service connected” condition by the Veterans Administration (VA). According to Joseph Reiley, Lane County Veterans’ Services Coordinator, this is a process which can typically take 6-12 months – if no appeal is necessary.

The Roseburg VA Healthcare System (which administers VA health care facilities in southwest Oregon) does not currently have a waiting list for initial primary care appointments. Veterans are usually able to receive their initial appointment within 30-60 days of application and, once a vet is enrolled in the system, coverage is very good, especially for mental health services. VA emergency medical care is less accessible – a vet must travel to Roseburg for Urgent Care or Portland for true Emergency Room (ER) care. There is some potential that VA will pay for ER care at a local hospital, but it is not guaranteed.

Other Efforts to Provide Help –

Oregon is leading the nation in providing benefits to veterans. According to recent VA data which ranks the states in terms of average monthly payments to benefit recipients, Oregon is first in the nation in pension benefits and sixth in the nation in compensation awards. Pension benefits are available to any veteran who served during a wartime era and who, if under age 65, has disabilities which prevent them from working. For older veterans, this benefit often assists them in paying for long-term care. There is also a

pension benefit for the surviving spouse of a wartime era veteran.

VA service connected compensation is awarded to veterans who have current, chronic health conditions which are directly related to their military service. These benefits can range in amount from \$123 to nearly \$3000 per month, depending on the severity of the condition. Veterans from any era – peacetime or wartime – are eligible for this benefit.

Lane County assists veterans in applying for these benefits as well as accessing VA health care. The Lane County Veteran Service Office, which also receives funds from the Cities of Eugene and Springfield through the Human Services Commission, has assisted over 1050 clients this past fiscal year successfully navigate the VA claims process. The benefits obtained by these veterans are among the highest awarded to any Service Office's clients in the state.

While there are some resources for our military personnel and veterans, more support and help is needed in our communities for their families.

One group of concerned individuals came together in Lane County into the OEF/OIF Response Team (Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan War Theater; Operation Iraqi Freedom – Iraq War Theater) to find ways to help. Out of that effort emerged a new resource available in Eugene, the Community Circles of Support for Veteran's Families. This project has been made possible through a one-year grant awarded to Willamette Family Treatment by the National Center on Family Homelessness and funded by the Wal-Mart Foundation.

The project targets families in several ways with several levels of services:

- Basic education classes focus on healthy coping skills, addressing family stress, tending to the developmental needs of children and positive family management as well as special issues for families with deployed service members;
- Crisis response services for family members;
- Referrals to appropriate resources such as emergency housing and food, debt management, substance abuse intervention and treatment, mental health treatment;
- Peer support;
- Individual and group counseling in a clinical setting with therapists trained and experienced in working with military families.

The peer support service focuses on weekly "Coffee Hours" with a drop-in approach. There are three distinct groups that meet every Sunday from 1:00 to 3:00 pm at 687 Cheshire Avenue in Eugene. The groups are defined by category and age; one for spouses, one for teens from age 13 to 18, and one for children ages 8 to 12. Free licensed childcare is provided on-site for participants. These groups provide an opportunity for anyone connected to a military service member to share experiences, gather information, learn about resources available and find support.

One additional component of the program is to provide the community with education to help inform us of the stresses and needs of military families and families of veterans. In this way "Together We Learn; Together We Heal."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment; the Office of National Drug Control Policy; and, the State of Oregon invite all residents of Lane County to participate in ***National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month***.

B. Recommendation

The Board of County Commissioners declares September 2009 as National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month.

III. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Bibliography

Attachment B – Board Order

Attachment A
Bibliography

1. Minutes, OEF/OIF Response Team Meeting, (Date).
2. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, Census 2000 Veteran Data, Data Tables, Veteran Population by County, www1.va.gov/vetdata/page.cfm?pg=1
3. ORNG PA data, 4/2009.
4. The Oregonian, Striking jump in mental illness found in Iraq, Afghanistan veterans; July 16, 2009.
5. Zero to Three; National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, Deployment And Coming Home: The Realities For Infants And Toddlers In Military Families, Baby Monitor Newsletter, July 27, 2009.

THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, LANE COUNTY, OREGON

RESOLUTION:) IN THE MATTER OF PROCLAIMING SEPTEMBER 2009 AS NATIONAL
) ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION RECOVERY MONTH

WHEREAS, September 2009 is celebrated across the country as National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month; and

WHEREAS, all of us know someone with a substance use disorder, whether that person is a family member, friend, colleague, or neighbor and, as many as 63 percent of Americans say that addiction to alcohol or other drugs has had an impact on them at some point in their lives, whether it was the addiction of a friend or family member or another experience, such as their own personal addition; and

WHEREAS, the disease of addiction is disruptive to families and can have long-term effects upon the children; and,

WHEREAS, research is finding that many of the problems are treatable and can be addressed with a variety of interventions and has identified evidence-based strategies with proven effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, one of the evidence-based practices focuses on trauma treatment and, military members and veterans are especially impacted by trauma, leading to higher usage of alcohol and other drugs to "self-medicate" for trauma; and,

WHEREAS, military families often experience secondary trauma in relationship to the active duty member or vet and need specialized resources, tools and support to help them cope and incorporate useful skills so that alcohol and other drug use does not become a crutch leading to addiction; and

WHEREAS, the *Oregon Circles of Support* provide education, information, therapeutic services and support to military families to break the cycle of alcohol and other drug abuse and addiction; and,

WHEREAS, it is critical that we educate our community members that substance use disorders are treatable and preventable, and by educating ourselves and providing needed support, we can improve the quality of life for the entire community; and

WHEREAS, to help achieve this goal, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the State of Oregon, and Lane County invite all residents of Lane County to participate in National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month;

NOW THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED AND ORDERED, that the Lane County Board of County Commissioners proclaim the month of September 2009 as **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month** and call upon all citizens to observe this month by educating themselves about the disease of addiction and its prevention, helping those with substance use disorders and those close to them including our military members and their families to get support in accordance with this year's theme, "**Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Learn, Together We Heal.**"

DATED this 26th day of August, 2008.

Peter Sorenson, Chair
Board of Commissioners

APPROVED AS TO FORM
Date 8/17/09 Lane County
[Signature]
OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL