

A Community Responding: Meeting the Behavioral Health Needs of Fort Drum

The Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization, initiated and supported by Congressman John M. McHugh, originated out of a Department of Defense (DoD) 721 pilot program for healthcare delivery. The Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO) has provided a platform to analyze the existing healthcare delivery options and to seek new opportunities for leveraging healthcare resources to carry out a regional health care approach and meet the needs of the expanding military population, significantly strengthening the healthcare system serving the more than 38,000 DoD beneficiaries in the Fort Drum health service area.

The FDRHPO conducted a comprehensive behavioral health needs assessment of the Fort Drum health service area. Following the needs assessment, the FDRHPO membership actively pursued the development of the following resources to fill identified gaps:

★ Outpatient Mental Health Clinics –

Two additional outpatient mental health clinics were aggressively supported by the FDRHPO and the Jefferson County Community Services Board. Samaritan Medical Center and Carthage Area Hospital each have obtained NYS licensure and began operating outpatient clinics.

★ Increased In-patient Mental Health Capacity –

In April 2007, Samaritan Medical Center added eight additional inpatient mental health beds bringing the total beds available to 32.

★ Provider Recruitment and Credentialing –

Twelve additional TRICARE credentialed behavioral health providers were added in the Fort Drum service area through recruitment efforts of the FDRHPO and expedited application and credentialing by Health Net Federal Services. Currently, of 49 community behavioral health providers in the region, 41 are TRICARE credentialed.

★ Annual New York State Funding for Behavioral Health Services –

\$500,000 in annual funding was secured from New York State to provide behavioral health support for Fort Drum soldiers and families, including additional supportive services for spouses and children.

★ Additional Supportive Services for Family Members –

Three additional student support counselors were placed in the schools that serve the installation. An additional intensive child and adolescent case manager was added to the Jefferson County case management program, and an additional peer support counselor with deployment experience was engaged.

★ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Training for Community Mental Health & Healthcare Professionals –

Over 160 community mental health providers, supportive service professionals, and local physicians have participated in training provided by the Dr. Todd Benham, Chief of Fort Drum Behavioral Health. The community providers were able to gain an understanding of the stresses placed on soldiers and their families; be trained on recognizing and referring PTSD and traumatic brain injury (TBI); and receive Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits obtained by the FDRHPO.

★ **Telemedicine Initiative –**

In November 2007, the FDRHPO was notified of the award of \$1.9 million FCC grant for telecommunications infrastructure to provide the basis to launch other telemedicine applications. The FDRHPO will be submitting a grant application in April to provide telemedicine connectivity and telemedicine equipment to increase access to care.

★ **Mountain Community Behavioral Health Clinic –**

The first ever TRICARE network provider clinic on a military installation came into existence when Health Net Federal Services' Mountain Community Behavioral Health Clinic opened its doors on Fort Drum. Since that time, it and has offered access to both active duty service members and their families.

★ **Referral Coordination Process –**

In collaboration with the Fort Drum Military Treatment Facility (MTF), Health Net Federal Services developed a Referral Coordination Process to assist with behavioral health appointments. This process offers appointment assistance to any patient experiencing difficulties with obtaining a behavioral health appointment.

★ **Military Family Life Counselors –**

Seven Military Family Life Counselors (MFLCs) currently support Fort Drum. MFLCs provide short-term, non-medical assistance to help service members and families cope with reintegration and other military life challenges. MFLCs provide hundreds of consultations, presentations and outreach programs every month to Fort Drum families.

★ **Recruiting Behavioral Health Providers –**

The FDRHPO and partners have created a video recruiting tool for Behavioral Health Providers and an incentive program to increase LCSWs in the region. In less than two months, seven applicants are in the region either practicing or getting credentialing to practice.

★ **Fort Drum/Samaritan Behavioral Health Clinic –**

The Fort Drum/Samaritan Behavioral Health Clinic opened its doors on June 9, 2008 to treat soldiers behavioral health needs in a stand-alone community clinic. This is a truly unique model built on a partnership between Samaritan Medical Center, Health Net Federal Services and the Army to meet the growing needs for behavioral health services for soldiers. One more example of how Fort Drum's unique community based healthcare model enables local healthcare providers to create innovative solutions to address the needs of the military community.

The Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization will continue to work aggressively to create innovative local, state and federal partnerships to fill identified gaps and increase the range, cost-efficiency and quality of care available to Department of Defense (DoD) beneficiaries in the Fort Drum region.



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