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CHAPTER 6. SPECIAL TOPICS

6.01 POLICY

It is VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) policy that Readjustment Counseling Service maintain program relevant focus on special veteran populations, research, and education.

6.02 SPECIAL POPULATIONS

a. Vet Center operations provide special focus on the service needs of certain special populations, including:

- a. Native American veterans,
- b. African-American veterans,
- c. Hispanic veterans,
- d. Asian-Pacific Islander veterans,
- e. Women veterans,
- f. Rural veterans,
- g. Physically disabled veterans, and
- h. The homeless.

b. For each population, there is a working group, each composed of several Vet Center field staff representatives of the respective veteran population.

(1) The Chairpersons for each working group form a coordinating body called SOG (Special Outreach Group).

(2) Each working group reports to management through an assigned Regional Manager.

(3) Working groups meet annually in person and periodically by conference call, to:

(a) Assess the outreach and counseling services available to the particular population;

(b) Prepare formal recommendations to management; and

(c) Carry out special projects pertaining to staff training and recruitment of staff from special populations.

6.03 RESEARCH

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a. Within the limits of staff time, resources, and client services needs, all Readjustment Counseling Service staff are encouraged to engage in original research, evaluation and study activities to improve the overall provision and delivery of readjustment counseling services.

b. Research conducted in Vet Centers is of value in that it may:

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(1) Systematically document clinical treatment and/or work which is currently being carried out by Vet Center staff.

(2) Promote and increase understanding and general knowledge among mental health professionals about the effects of exposure to combat and other traumatic events on individuals.

(3) Describe effectiveness, efficiency, and economy in service provision.

(4) Assess and evaluate the methods and techniques of readjustment counseling.

c. Collaborative administrative and clinical research activities between Vet Center staff and local VA and non-VA researchers should be encouraged, with the objectives of:

(1) Improving readjustment counseling service delivery; and

(2) Assessing the impact of readjustment counseling services being provided by Vet Center staff on local VA, community health care, and human services systems.

d. In general, research involving Readjustment Counseling Service staff will adhere to established VA and VA medical center policies and procedures governing research, evaluation and study activities. Research projects should be approved by the supporting facility research committee, by the Regional Manager, and by the Director, Readjustment Counseling Service, VA Central Office.

6.04 CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

a. Continuing Education

(1) Inasmuch as Readjustment Counseling Service plays a leading role in the understanding of and the treatment for war-related traumatic experiences, continuing education of staff members is essential for the quality of service to veterans and their families. Objectives are to:

(a) Achieve a deeper understanding of the dynamics underlying PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder);

(b) Broaden skills through exposure to and/or training in various therapeutic approaches;

(c) Promote awareness of current literature in the field and how it affects Vietnam era and post-Vietnam combat veterans; and

(d) Ensure that administrative procedures are understood and followed.

(2) Continuing education can be achieved in a variety of ways.

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(a) Each Region provides regular training that meets the needs of staff members in the Vet Center.

(b) Staff members are encouraged to:

1. Attend continuing education seminars, workshops, lectures, and conferences which relate to PTSD and its treatment, and

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2. Pursue course work and training at academic institutions or under professional supervision.

b. Training

(1) Vet Center staff play a crucial role in the clinical education and training of VA mental health professionals, with respect to services for PTSD and other readjustment problems of Vietnam and post-Vietnam era conflict veterans. This role may be implemented through participation by staff in various training exercises at the Vet Center, at VA medical centers, or in specially arranged programs including, but not limited to, those organized by VA RMECs (Regional Medical Education Centers).

(2) In addition, Vet Centers may serve as training placement sites for, but not limited to:

- (a) Social work students,
- (b) Psychiatry residents,
- (c) Psychology interns,
- (d) Counseling trainees, and
- (e) Nurses.

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