

Substance Use Disorder in the Military Community

In Missouri during 2013, over 5,200 servicemembers and veterans received services for substance use disorder through the MO Department of Mental Health and the VA. The 2010 report of the Army Suicide Prevention Task Force found that 29 percent of active duty Army suicides from fiscal year (FY) 2005 to FY 2009 involved alcohol or drug use; and in 2009, prescription drugs were involved in almost one third of them.

▼ Symptoms.

Problems with drinking or drug use may occur in response to stress, or in combination with posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, or other medical conditions. Symptoms include:

- **physical signs:** bloodshot eyes, changes in appetite and sleep patterns, poor grooming habits, unusual smells (on breath, body or clothing), slurred speech or impaired conditions, tolerance (the ability to drink or use greater quantities over time), and withdrawal
- **behavioral signs:** drop in attendance/performance at work or school, financial problems, sudden changes in friends/hobbies (losing interest in activities that were once enjoyable), frequently in trouble (fights, accidents), compulsive behavior (the inability to stop drinking or using in spite of negative life consequences), craving to use substances, often taking in larger amounts or over longer periods of time than was intended
- **psychological signs:** changes in personality/attitude, irritability, periods of hyperactivity, agitation or giddiness, lethargic or paranoid

▼ Causes.

For the military community, the stressors of war or the hazardous nature of military life combined with the stigma of seeking assistance can contribute to self-medicating behavior. Veterans sometimes use drugs or alcohol as a way to numb the difficult feelings and erase the memories related to their military experiences.

▼ Diagnosis.

For a diagnosis, visit a behavioral health professional.

▼ Treatment.

There are several types of services used to treat substance use disorders, including:

- Individual and group counseling
- Detoxification
- Outpatient treatment
- Medication
- Recovery support services
- 12-Step fellowship
- Peer supports

The types of treatment you receive are determined by the provider's screening and assessment.

For your convenience in finding behavioral health resources, The Missouri Department of Mental Health (DMH), in partnership with the Missouri Behavioral Health Alliance (MOBHA), has compiled this list. These links will take you out of the DMH website. DMH and MOBHA do not endorse or take responsibility for the content of other organizations' websites.

Are you a combat Veteran looking for confidential counseling services? Vet Centers provide services for bereavement, military sexual trauma, substance abuse, screening and referral for medical issues including Traumatic Brain Injury, depression, etc. For more information or to find the nearest Vet Center visit <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/index.asp>.

▼ Resources.

Are you a **Missouri National Guard** servicemember seeking substance abuse assistance? There is a partnership program between the Missouri Department of Mental Health and the Missouri National Guard to offer consultation, evaluation, assessments and treatment services at no cost to Missouri National Guard soldiers. The evaluation, consultation and subsequent services delivered are confidential. Contact the Missouri Department of Mental Health's Veterans Services Director for assistance (573) 751-2368. *Information about your participation will only be released to the National Guard if you sign a written consent.*

Make the Connection is a one-stop resource where Veterans, families and their friends can privately explore information about behavioral health conditions ranging from transitioning from service, injury, death of family or friends, PTSD and substance abuse. This site provides personal testimonies and resources to help discover ways to improve their lives.

<http://maketheconnection.net/>

After Deployment.org is an online resource supporting common post-deployment concerns. The site provides assistance targeting substance abuse. The site provides an assessment, workshops and more.

<http://www.afterdeployment.org/topics-alcohol-drugs>

The **Veterans Administration** can offer a variety of care to eligible Service Members and Veterans: screening, counseling, medically managed detoxification and more. To learn more about the VA's Substance Abuse Services visit the VA website.

<http://www.oefoif.va.gov/substanceabuseprograms.asp>

Involved in legal trouble? **Missouri Veteran Treatment Courts** are a hybrid of drug and mental health courts that serve Veterans. They place Veterans on probation while the court provides case management for treatment. The program takes 18-24 months. For assistance contact your local Veteran Justice Outreach Specialist:

<http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO.asp#contacts> (look under "Missouri")



For more information,
contact the nearest
community mental health
center or the
Missouri Department of
Mental Health, Division of
Behavioral Health
P.O. Box 687
1706 East Elm Jefferson City,
MO 65101 573-751-8017
dmh.mo.gov



This document was created in partnership with the *Missouri Behavioral Health Alliance (MOBHA)*