

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius on PTSD Awareness Month

[Posttraumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\)](#) is a severe anxiety disorder that can occur when people experience a traumatic event. PTSD can affect anyone – from service men and women returning from the horrors of war to abused children and the survivors of rape, domestic violence, or natural disasters.

June is PTSD Awareness Month, which serves as an important opportunity to recognize and pledge ourselves to year-round support for the millions of Americans who are working to overcome this challenging and debilitating condition.

PTSD can result in sleep problems, irritability, anger, recurrent dreams about the trauma, intense reactions to reminders of the trauma, disturbances in relationships, and isolation. The effects can last for months or even years, and the disorder may not surface until years after the traumatic events that triggered it.

Fortunately people can recover from PTSD – especially if they receive treatment and support from family, friends, and their communities. Effective treatments such as exposure therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, peer support programs and approved medications can help people manage and overcome PTSD, and go on to live healthy, productive lives.

Recognizing the seriousness of this problem, especially for military personnel and Veterans, President Obama signed an Executive Order last August directing the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs (VA) to collaborate and expand available treatments, and increase the number of trained mental health providers and counselors. Many of these efforts are supported by the Affordable Care Act.

HHS, Defense, and the VA are investing in new research to identify the underlying causes of PTSD and related conditions, developing ways of preventing it from occurring, and advancing more effective treatments. [A newly released study](#) supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), for example, reported that Vietnam veterans with PTSD were more than twice as likely as those without PTSD to develop heart disease. Additionally, the VA's [National Center for PTSD](#) provides research and education on the prevention, understanding, and treatment of PTSD. Future research will help guide the development of effective prevention and treatment strategies.

If you believe you or someone you care about may be experiencing PTSD, free confidential help is available at any time at 1-800-273-8255 (press “1” if you are a veteran, service member, or calling about one) or by visiting the [Veterans Crisis Line](#) , where a trained VA counselor can provide vital information and support.

The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Crisis Chat](#) is available from 2 pm to 2 am ET.

HHS, which includes the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), offers a variety of resources designed to help people who suffer from PTSD, as well as aid their families and friends in understanding and dealing with trauma's aftermath. These resources include:

- SAMHSA's [Mental Health Services Locator](#), which helps locate local treatment services and support, including for those with PTSD.
- [NIMH](#) and [NIH](#) fact sheets and information on clinical trials and scientific studies on PTSD.
- Information about bullying and other traumatic crises at www.StopBullying.gov.
- Information about mental health resources and services at www.MentalHealth.gov.
- The [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#), which provides tools and resources to assist health care providers, educators, and families.
- SAMHSA's [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care](#), which provides education and training for supporting recovery and identifying specific treatment practices. A list of military family resources can be found through SAMHSA's [Military Families Strategic Initiative](#) and [Veterans Chat](#) for veterans, family members or friends in crisis.

During PTSD Awareness Month, PTSD Awareness Day on June 27, and all year long, we are determined to help our fellow Americans and their families and friends dealing with this debilitating condition. Through continued support for research, education, and treatment, we can help provide the hope and reality of recovery for all for those living with PTSD.

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Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>.