

Mental Health ACCESS Act of 2012
July 2, 2012

The International Society for Ethical Psychology and Psychiatry (ISEPP) commends Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for her introduction of the Mental Health ACCESS Act of 2012.

The Act is designed to improve mental health treatment of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan by:

Providing enhanced oversight for Department of Defense (DOD) suicide prevention and resilience efforts;

Expanding services for the families of soldiers;

Improving the training and education of providers;

Increasing peer-to-peer counseling opportunities; and

Improving timely access to effective mental health services.

ISEPP has mounted an initiative to work with the DOD and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to improve the treatment of soldiers suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by stopping the use of psychotropic drugs as the primary modality of treatment and using non-drug approaches that have been proven to be safe and effective.

ISEPP is encouraged by recent moves by the DOD and VA to use non-drug approaches to helping soldiers suffering from PTSD. Steps such as the Army Surgeon General's recently released guidelines that discourage the use of psychotropic drugs and encourage non-drug approaches such as sensorimotor psychotherapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, cognitive processing therapy and other trauma-informed approaches, are especially important.

ISEPP strongly encourages the DOD and VA to continue to respond appropriately to the high rate of suicide and sudden cardiac arrest deaths of soldiers that have been linked to the use of psychotropic drugs. ISEPP believes the Health ACCESS Act of 2012 will be helpful in directing and supporting the DOD and the VA's efforts.