

VETERANS TACTICAL RESPONSE: Keeping Law Enforcement & Veterans Safe



Law enforcement frequently responds to crisis situations that involve mental health issues, which has garnered national attention for specialized training.

Texas House Bill 1338 (2015) states "...in collaboration with the Texas Veterans Commission, shall establish and maintain a training program for peace officers that provides information on veterans with combat-related trauma, posttraumatic stress, posttraumatic stress disorder, or a traumatic brain injury." This new law has prompted VISN

Center of Excellence for Research on Returning War Veterans staff (VISN 17 COE; Dr. Lianna Evans) to participate in a workgroup comprised of specialists across the state to develop a Veteran specific training program that complies with this new law, participate in the development of brain injury education for statewide distribution.

Although not unique, combat Veterans can have elevated rates of mental health difficulties, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or traumatic brain injury (TBI). Whether responding to routine traffic violations or more serious situations, law enforcement personnel can benefit from training to understand mental health conditions to help manage these situations in a way that increases safety for all involved.

The VISN 17 COE partnered with local agencies in Texas, including the Austin Police Department, Office of Acquired Brain Injury, and Central Texas Veterans Health Care System, to develop training for law enforcement personnel on military culture and Veteran mental health issues. This training has been provided multiple times to agencies including local law enforcement in Texas, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF&E) and has been well received. Participants said that much of the information in the training was new to them and believed it would be very helpful when responding to calls. This program has served to reduce stigma regarding Veteran mental health issues. A training manual and video-training package have been developed, with an online learning platform in process of development.

Team Veterans Tactical Response (VTR) is currently in the process of preparing an E-learning program available for national distribution. Future plans include conducting research studies to examine the usefulness and effectiveness of the training program in everyday law enforcement practice.

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