

VA Support for Veteran Parents

Veteran parents often experience unique challenges in parenting. For example, separations required during military deployments can disrupt the parent-child relationship and cause changes in established parenting routines. In addition, combat-related mental health problems in parents, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, and substance use disorders, have been associated with an increased incidence of mental health problems in children.

In an effort to support Veteran parents and foster improved developmental outcomes for Veterans' children, the Veterans Health Administration initiated efforts nationally to provide parenting education for Veterans and their spouses, co-parenting partners and family members.

Recently, the Austin VA Outpatient Clinic, part of the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System (CTVHCS), was selected by VA National Family Services as the Lead Site within our larger VA region (known as VISN 17) to pilot a parenting intervention. The pilot was developed by Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Previously, MCEC primarily conducted their workshops with active duty personnel, but this new pilot collaboration represents an effort to extend their work to the Veteran population.

CTVHCS clinicians attended an intensive multi-day training and are equipped to offer a series of ten different 90-minute Parent Workshops. Clinicians attended from a variety of disciplines, including Mental Health Clinic, Post-Traumatic Stress Clinical Team, Substance Abuse Treatment Program, Primary Care Behavioral Health (Austin and Cedar Park), Homeless Veterans Program, as well as Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Case Managers (Austin and Temple).

The educational parenting workshops, designed to be enjoyable and quite interactive, typically address basic parenting issues such as facilitating adaptability to change, coping with stress, dealing with challenging behaviors, and supporting school success. In addition to providing Veteran parents with helpful information and guidance, we expect workshops will provide Veteran parents a unique and much-needed opportunity to connect with other Veteran parents who share similar parenting challenges. VA clinicians co-facilitating each workshop will be prepared to address parenting issues unique to Veterans.

Parenting workshops are free and open to all Veterans who are parents as well as their partners regardless of service era. Single parents are welcome as are unmarried parents, same-sex parents, grandparents or other relatives who co-parent Veterans' children.

Beginning in August, workshops are set to be offered on Tuesday evenings from 5:30 to 7:00 pm at the Austin VA Outpatient Clinic, 7901 Metropolis Drive. Additional MCEC/VA Parent

Workshops will be offered at other locations including the Cedar Park Community Based Outpatient Clinic.

For more information about these workshops, or to register, please contact:

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