

(e) The authority of the Secretary to enter into contracts under this section shall be effective for any fiscal year only to the extent that appropriations are available.

(Added Pub. L. 101-366, title II, §201(a)(1), Aug. 15, 1990, 104 Stat. 437, §620C; renumbered §1720C and amended Pub. L. 102-83, §5(a), (c)(1), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 406; Pub. L. 103-452, title I, §103(c), Nov. 2, 1994, 108 Stat. 4786; Pub. L. 104-110, title I, §101(c), Feb. 13, 1996, 110 Stat. 768; Pub. L. 105-114, title II, §206(a)-(b)(2), Nov. 21, 1997, 111 Stat. 2289.)

AMENDMENTS

1997—Pub. L. 105-114, §206(b)(2), struck out “: pilot program” after “home care” in section catchline.

Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 105-114, §206(a), substituted “The Secretary may furnish” for “During the period through December 31, 1997, the Secretary may conduct a pilot program for the furnishing of”.

Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 105-114, §206(b)(1), substituted “Under the program” for “Under the pilot program”.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 105-114, §206(b)(1), substituted “under the program” for “under the pilot program”.

1996—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 104-110 substituted “December 31, 1997” for “September 30, 1995” in introductory provisions.

1994—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 103-452, in introductory provisions, substituted “During the period through September 30, 1995,” for “During the four-year period beginning on October 1, 1990,” and “care. The Secretary shall give priority for participation in such program to veterans who” for “care and who”.

1991—Pub. L. 102-83, §5(a), renumbered section 620C of this title as this section.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 102-83, §5(c)(1), substituted “1710” for “610”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1994 AMENDMENT

Section 103(c)(1) of Pub. L. 103-452 provided that the amendment made by that section is effective Oct. 1, 1994.

RATIFICATION OF ACTIONS DURING PERIOD OF EXPIRED AUTHORITY

Any action taken by Secretary of Veterans Affairs before Feb. 13, 1996, under provision of law amended by title I of Pub. L. 104-110 that was taken during period beginning on date on which authority of Secretary under such provision of law expired and ending on Feb. 13, 1996, considered to have same force and effect as if such amendment had been in effect at time of that action, see section 103 of Pub. L. 104-110, set out as a note under section 1710 of this title.

REPORT TO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES

Section 201(b) of Pub. L. 101-366, as amended by Pub. L. 102-83, §5(c)(2), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 406; Pub. L. 103-452, title I, §103(g), Nov. 2, 1994, 108 Stat. 4787, provided that: “Not later than February 1, 1995, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report setting forth the Secretary's evaluation, findings, and conclusions regarding the conduct, through September 30, 1993, of the pilot program required by section 1720C [formerly 620C] of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)), and the results of the furnishing of care under such pilot program for the participating veterans. The report shall include a description of the conduct of the pilot program (including a description of the veterans furnished services and of the services furnished under the pilot program), and any plans for administrative action, and any recommendations for legislation, that the Secretary considers appropriate to include in the report.”

§ 1720D. Counseling and treatment for sexual trauma

(a)(1) The Secretary shall operate a program under which the Secretary provides counseling and appropriate care and services to veterans who the Secretary determines require such counseling and care and services to overcome psychological trauma, which in the judgment of a mental health professional employed by the Department, resulted from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred while the veteran was serving on active duty or active duty for training.

(2) In furnishing counseling to a veteran under this subsection, the Secretary may provide such counseling pursuant to a contract with a qualified mental health professional if (A) in the judgment of a mental health professional employed by the Department, the receipt of counseling by that veteran in facilities of the Department would be clinically inadvisable, or (B) Department facilities are not capable of furnishing such counseling to that veteran economically because of geographical inaccessibility.

(b)(1) The Secretary shall give priority to the establishment and operation of the program to provide counseling and care and services under subsection (a). In the case of a veteran eligible for counseling and care and services under subsection (a), the Secretary shall ensure that the veteran is furnished counseling and care and services under this section in a way that is coordinated with the furnishing of such care and services under this chapter.

(2) In establishing a program to provide counseling under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

(A) provide for appropriate training of mental health professionals and such other health care personnel as the Secretary determines necessary to carry out the program effectively;

(B) seek to ensure that such counseling is furnished in a setting that is therapeutically appropriate, taking into account the circumstances that resulted in the need for such counseling; and

(C) provide referral services to assist veterans who are not eligible for services under this chapter to obtain those from sources outside the Department.

(c) The Secretary shall provide information on the counseling and treatment available to veterans under this section. Efforts by the Secretary to provide such information—

(1) shall include availability of a toll-free telephone number (commonly referred to as an 800 number);

(2) shall ensure that information about the counseling and treatment available to veterans under this section—

(A) is revised and updated as appropriate;

(B) is made available and visibly posted at appropriate facilities of the Department; and

(C) is made available through appropriate public information services; and

(3) shall include coordination with the Secretary of Defense seeking to ensure that individuals who are being separated from active

military, naval, or air service are provided appropriate information about programs, requirements, and procedures for applying for counseling and treatment under this section.

(d) In this section, the term “sexual harassment” means repeated, unsolicited verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which is threatening in character.

(Added Pub. L. 102-585, title I, §102(a)(1), Nov. 4, 1992, 106 Stat. 4945; amended Pub. L. 103-452, title I, §101(a)-(d), (f)(1), (2)(A), (g)(1), Nov. 2, 1994, 108 Stat. 4783, 4784; Pub. L. 105-368, title IX, §902, Nov. 11, 1998, 112 Stat. 3360; Pub. L. 106-117, title I, §115(a)-(c), Nov. 30, 1999, 113 Stat. 1558; Pub. L. 108-422, title III, §301, Nov. 30, 2004, 118 Stat. 2382.)

AMENDMENTS

2004—Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 108-422, §301(a)(1), (b), substituted “The” for “During the period through December 31, 2004, the” and inserted “or active duty for training” before period at end.

Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 108-422, §301(a)(2), struck out “, during the period through December 31, 2004,” after “the Secretary may”.

1999—Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 106-117, §115(a)(1), (b)(1), substituted “December 31, 2004” for “December 31, 2001” and “shall operate a program under which the Secretary provides counseling and appropriate care and services to veterans who the Secretary determines require such counseling and care and services” for “may provide counseling to a veteran who the Secretary determines requires such counseling”.

Subsec. (a)(2), (3). Pub. L. 106-117, §115(a)(2), (b)(2), redesignated par. (3) as (2), substituted “December 31, 2004” for “December 31, 2001”, and struck out former par. (2) which read as follows: “During the period referred to in paragraph (1), the Secretary may provide appropriate care and services to a veteran for an injury, illness, or other psychological condition that the Secretary determines to be the result of a physical assault, battery, or harassment referred to in that paragraph.”

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 106-117, §115(c)(1), inserted “and treatment” after “counseling” in first sentence.

Subsec. (c)(2), (3). Pub. L. 106-117, §115(c), added par. (2), redesignated former par. (2) as (3), and inserted “and treatment” after “counseling”.

1998—Subsec. (a)(1), (3). Pub. L. 105-368 substituted “December 31, 2001” for “December 31, 1998”.

1994—Pub. L. 103-452, §101(f)(2)(A), substituted “and treatment” for “to women veterans” in section catchline.

Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(b)(1), (f)(1)(A), substituted “December 31, 1998,” for “December 31, 1995,” and struck out “woman” after “counseling to a”.

Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(a), added par. (2) and struck out former par. (2) which read as follows: “To be eligible to receive counseling under this subsection, a veteran must seek such counseling from the Secretary within two years after the date of the veteran’s discharge or release from active military, naval, or air service.”

Subsec. (a)(3). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(b)(2), substituted “December 31, 1998,” for “December 31, 1994,”.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(c), redesignated subsec. (c) as (b) and struck out former subsec. (b) which read as follows: “In providing services to a veteran under subsection (a), the period for which counseling is provided may not exceed one year from the date of the commencement of the furnishing of such counseling to the veteran. However, the Secretary may authorize a longer period in any case if, in the judgment of the Secretary, a longer period of counseling is required.”

Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(d), amended par. (1) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (1) read as follows: “The Secretary shall give priority to the estab-

lishment and operation of the program to provide counseling under subsection (a). In the case of a veteran eligible for such counseling who requires other care or services under this chapter for trauma described in subsection (a)(1), the Secretary shall ensure that the veteran is furnished counseling under this section in a way that is coordinated with the furnishing of such other care and services under this chapter.”

Subsec. (b)(2)(C). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(f)(1)(B), struck out “women” after “assist”.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(f)(1)(B), struck out “women” after “available to” in introductory provisions.

Pub. L. 103-452, §101(c)(2), redesignated subsec. (d) as (c). Former subsec. (c) redesignated (b).

Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(g)(1), amended par. (1) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (1) read as follows: “may include establishment of an information system involving the use of a toll-free telephone number (commonly referred to as an 800 number), and”.

Subsec. (c)(2). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(f)(1)(C), substituted “individuals” for “women”.

Subsecs. (d), (e). Pub. L. 103-452, §101(c)(2), redesignated subsec. (e) as (d). Former subsec. (d) redesignated (c).

INFORMATION ON TELEPHONE COUNSELING AVAILABILITY; PERSONNEL TRAINING; CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY; PUBLICITY; REPORT

Section 101(g)(2) to (5) of Pub. L. 103-452 provided that:

“(2) In providing information on counseling available to veterans as required under section 1720D(c)(1) of title 38, United States Code (as amended by paragraph (1)), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs personnel who provide assistance under such section are trained in the provision to persons who have experienced sexual trauma of information about the care and services relating to sexual trauma that are available to veterans in the communities in which such veterans reside, including care and services available under programs of the Department (including the care and services available under section 1720D of such title) and from non-Department agencies or organizations.

“(3) The telephone assistance service shall be operated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of persons who place calls to the system.

“(4) The Secretary shall ensure that information about the availability of the telephone assistance service is visibly posted in Department medical facilities and is advertised through public service announcements, pamphlets, and other means.

“(5) Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act [Nov. 2, 1994], the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the operation of the telephone assistance service required under section 1720D(c)(1) of title 38, United States Code (as amended by paragraph (1)). The report shall set forth the following:

“(A) The number of persons who sought information during the period covered by the report through a toll-free telephone number regarding services available to veterans relating to sexual trauma, with a separate display of the number of such persons arrayed by State (as such term is defined in section 101(20) of title 38, United States Code).

“(B) A description of the training provided to the personnel who provide such assistance.

“(C) The recommendations and plans of the Secretary for the improvement of the service.”

TRANSITION PERIOD FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR COUNSELING

Section 102(b) of Pub. L. 102-585, as amended by Pub. L. 103-210, §2(b), Dec. 20, 1993, 107 Stat. 2497, provided that in the case of a veteran who was discharged or released from active military, naval, or air service before Dec. 31, 1992, the two-year period specified in 38 U.S.C. 1720D(a)(2) was to be treated as ending on Dec. 31, 1994,

prior to repeal by Pub. L. 103-452, title I, §101(h), Nov. 2, 1994, 108 Stat. 4785.

COMMENCEMENT OF PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON SERVICES

Section 104 of Pub. L. 102-585 directed Secretary of Veterans Affairs, not later than 90 days after Nov. 4, 1992, to commence the provision of information on the counseling relating to sexual trauma that is available to women veterans under 38 U.S.C. 1720D.

REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF SEXUAL TRAUMA COUNSELING PROGRAM

Section 105 of Pub. L. 102-585 directed Secretary of Veterans Affairs, not later than Mar. 31, 1994, to submit to Congress a comprehensive report on the Secretary's actions under 38 U.S.C. 1720D.

§ 1720E. Nasopharyngeal radium irradiation

(a) The Secretary may provide any veteran a medical examination, and hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care, which the Secretary determines is needed for the treatment of any cancer of the head or neck which the Secretary finds may be associated with the veteran's receipt of nasopharyngeal radium irradiation treatments in active military, naval, or air service.

(b) The Secretary shall provide care and services to a veteran under subsection (a) only on the basis of evidence in the service records of the veteran which document nasopharyngeal radium irradiation treatment in service, except that, notwithstanding the absence of such documentation, the Secretary may provide such care to a veteran who—

- (1) served as an aviator in the active military, naval, or air service before the end of the Korean conflict; or
- (2) underwent submarine training in active naval service before January 1, 1965.

(Added Pub. L. 105-368, title IX, §901(a), Nov. 11, 1998, 112 Stat. 3360.)

§ 1720F. Comprehensive program for suicide prevention among veterans

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall develop and carry out a comprehensive program designed to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans incorporating the components described in this section.

(b) STAFF EDUCATION.—In carrying out the comprehensive program under this section, the Secretary shall provide for mandatory training for appropriate staff and contractors (including all medical personnel) of the Department who interact with veterans. This training shall cover information appropriate to the duties being performed by such staff and contractors. The training shall include information on—

- (1) recognizing risk factors for suicide;
- (2) proper protocols for responding to crisis situations involving veterans who may be at high risk for suicide; and
- (3) best practices for suicide prevention.

(c) HEALTH ASSESSMENTS OF VETERANS.—In carrying out the comprehensive program, the Secretary shall direct that medical staff offer mental health in their overall health assessment when veterans seek medical care at a Department medical facility (including a center estab-

lished under section 1712A of this title) and make referrals, at the request of the veteran concerned, to appropriate counseling and treatment programs for veterans who show signs or symptoms of mental health problems.

(d) DESIGNATION OF SUICIDE PREVENTION COUNSELORS.—In carrying out the comprehensive program, the Secretary shall designate a suicide prevention counselor at each Department medical facility other than centers established under section 1712A of this title. Each counselor shall work with local emergency rooms, police departments, mental health organizations, and veterans service organizations to engage in outreach to veterans and improve the coordination of mental health care to veterans.

(e) BEST PRACTICES RESEARCH.—In carrying out the comprehensive program, the Secretary shall provide for research on best practices for suicide prevention among veterans. Research shall be conducted under this subsection in consultation with the heads of the following entities:

- (1) The Department of Health and Human Services.
- (2) The National Institute of Mental Health.
- (3) The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- (4) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

(f) SEXUAL TRAUMA RESEARCH.—In carrying out the comprehensive program, the Secretary shall provide for research on mental health care for veterans who have experienced sexual trauma while in military service. The research design shall include consideration of veterans of a reserve component.

(g) 24-HOUR MENTAL HEALTH CARE.—In carrying out the comprehensive program, the Secretary shall provide for mental health care availability to veterans on a 24-hour basis.

(h) HOTLINE.—In carrying out the comprehensive program, the Secretary may provide for a toll-free hotline for veterans to be staffed by appropriately trained mental health personnel and available at all times.

(i) OUTREACH AND EDUCATION FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES.—In carrying out the comprehensive program, the Secretary shall provide for outreach to and education for veterans and the families of veterans, with special emphasis on providing information to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and the families of such veterans. Education to promote mental health shall include information designed to—

- (1) remove the stigma associated with mental illness;
- (2) encourage veterans to seek treatment and assistance for mental illness;
- (3) promote skills for coping with mental illness; and
- (4) help families of veterans with—
 - (A) understanding issues arising from the readjustment of veterans to civilian life;
 - (B) identifying signs and symptoms of mental illness; and
 - (C) encouraging veterans to seek assistance for mental illness.

(j) PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAM.—(1) In carrying out the comprehensive program, the