



Lake County Illinois

Legislation Text

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Presentation concerning the new Veteran and Family Services Program.

Ted Testa, Director of Behavioral Health Services, will provide the committee with an overview of the new Veterans and Family Services (VFS) program.

The Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center has received a transformation grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in the amount of \$3.75 million over a 5-year period to transform our community mental health system in Lake and McHenry Counties to better care for veterans and their families. This program will focus especially on, but not limited to, those involved with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This program will focus on three areas:

First, through collaboration with the VA, the Department of Veteran Affairs, the Illinois Institute of Technology, the McHenry County Mental Health Board and its provider members and other resources, we will address the behavioral health needs of veterans, including Guardsmen and Reservists. Emphasis will be placed on reducing veteran homelessness, preventing suicide and reducing hospitalizations. Integrated in these veteran services will be attention to veterans in trauma (including mild traumatic brain injury), military sexual abuse, the reduction of military stigma in the pursuit of behavioral health services, and the establishment of a veteran's court to deflect incarceration. The program will be based on training veterans to help veterans.

Secondly, a primary focus of behavioral health treatment will be toward the families of our veterans (siblings, parents, spouses and children). Many, if not most, of these families are challenged to make adjustments when a parent/spouse is deployed and are often forced to accommodate a changed person upon their return.

Lastly, a focused effort will be made to train community providers on the latest and most effective methods of treatment for trauma, especially the trauma caused by war. To facilitate and enhance the adaptation of this "trauma-informed treatment," a series of quarterly workshops will be provided across the two counties to train our professionals to better respond to our veterans and our veterans' families in need.