



**VA**  
**HEALTH**  
**CARE** | Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

VA Caribbean Healthcare System  
Public Affairs Office  
Contact: Axel Roman (787) 409-0374  
10 Casia St. San Juan, PR 00921  
[axel.roman@va.gov](mailto:axel.roman@va.gov)

**June 11, 2013**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**June 12, 2013**

**VA Hires Over 1,600 Mental Health Professionals to Meet Goal,  
Expands Access to Care and Outreach Efforts**

**VA Caribbean Healthcare System Hires 14 New Mental Health Professionals**

(San Juan, Puerto Rico – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has met the goal to hire 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in President Obama’s August 31, 2012, Executive Order to Improve Access to Mental Health Services for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families. VA Caribbean Healthcare System has hired 14 new mental health professionals toward this goal.

“I am proud of the hard work our staff has completed to bring these new staff members on board,” said DeWayne Hamlin, Director. “We are not slowing our efforts however, and will continue to actively recruit for any vacant mental health positions for the future so Veterans will get the care they need.

As of May 31, 2013, VA has hired a total of 1,607 mental health clinical providers to meet the goal of 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in the Executive Order. Additionally, VA has hired 2,005 mental health clinical providers to fill existing vacancies.

“Meeting this hiring milestone significantly enhances our ability to improve access to care for those Veterans seeking mental health services and demonstrates our continued commitment to the health and well-being of the men and women who have served the Nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Meeting this goal is an important achievement, but we recognize that we must continue to increase access to the quality mental health care Veterans have earned and deserve.”

VA provides a full range of comprehensive mental health services across the country. In Fiscal Year 2012, more than 1.3 million Veterans received specialized mental health care from VA. This number has risen each year from 927,052 in Fiscal Year 2006. In addition to hiring more mental health professionals, VA is expanding the use of innovative technology to serve Veterans in rural or underserved areas. VA expects to increase the number of Veterans receiving care from tele-mental health services in fiscal year 2013, and has increased the number of Vet Centers, which provide readjustment counseling and referral services from 233 in 2008 to 300 in 2012.

In November 2011, VA launched an award-winning, national public awareness campaign called Make the Connection, which is aimed at reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental health care and informing Veterans, their families, friends, and members of their communities about VA resources. More information on Make the Connection can be found at [www.maketheconnection.net](http://www.maketheconnection.net).

Mental health professionals interested in seeking employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs can obtain information at [www.vacareers.va.gov](http://www.vacareers.va.gov). Veterans and their families interested in learning more about the mental health services provided by VA can go to [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov).