



Homefront **E**nabling **R**elationships, **O**pportunities, and **E**mpowerment through **S**upport

What is HEROES Care?

HEROES Care is a collaborative effort among well established non-governmental organizations (NGOs) designed to provide complete and proactive support for members of all branches of the military and their families through pre-deployment, deployment, family reintegration and post-deployment.

The program has established a network of tens of thousands of trained caregivers and thousands of professional mental health care and service providers dedicated to the service of military members and their families.

Why HEROES Care?

Among the disturbing developments that have recently occurred, two stand out as areas of grave concern: the alarming increase in the number of suicides among members of the military, and the effects of PTSD, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, on a growing number of military families. Many of these families suffer due to a lack of a responsive support structure that can recognize and intervene to assist in crisis situations. Experts agree that a comprehensive, local system of support is needed. Not only was the HEROES Care model designed to meet this need, but to detect and provide mechanisms for action *before* problems escalate to a crisis level.

How is HEROES Care Different?

The VA has recognized that the collaboration of NGOs is critical in streamlining the process to provide timely and effective services. This program meets that objective. By combining the ability of HEROES Care to provide for the financial needs of military families, the ability of trained Hometown Support Volunteers to provide direct support and to coordinate community efforts, the resources of local professional mental health care providers to intervene when appropriate, and job training and placement services to address the changing needs of the family employment dynamic, the recognized needs of military families are met where they live.

The structure of HEROES Care was designed to meet two additional criteria:

1. To allow other NGOs with specialized expertise to partner with the program while maintaining their independence of action and organizational control.
2. To act as an augment to and not as a replacement for any existing federal or military program.

How does HEROES Care work?

Members of the military enroll on a voluntary basis. Each service member designates an individual to receive support during deployment as their Primary Care Receiver. This person can be any family member or 'significant other'. A volunteer from the local community who has been trained in care-giving and the deployment cycle is assigned to that individual. Assignments are gender matched. This Hometown Support Volunteer (HSV) stays in regular contact with the designated family member coordinating local support efforts. The HSV has direct access to affiliated organizations which can provide employment and emergency financial support. The HSV has also been trained to recognize behaviors that might indicate the need for professional mental health care. The HSV and can recommend any member of the family or assigned significant other for this service. The HSV continues in the support relationship for up to two years post-deployment at the discretion of the Primary Care Receiver.

Who are the affiliated service providers and how do they work together?

The program is administered by **HEROES Care**, a national organization providing emergency material and financial aid to military families in crisis. Because of the organization's nature and mission, HEROES Care is able to act as a point of contact and control to coordinate volunteer efforts. Members of organizations that would otherwise be unable to provide coordinated support can do so as HEROES Care volunteers.

Stephen Ministries, an international, non-denominational organization of over one hundred thousand specially trained caregivers, has amended its mission to allow its members to become HEROES Care volunteers. These Stephen Ministers receive additional specialized training to become HSVs. The Stephen Leaders within the congregation are trained as HEROES Care Outpost Leaders to manage the HSVs. These volunteers do not proselytize and provide program services to anyone regardless of race, religion, or national origin.

Give an Hour is a national organization of mental health care providers dedicated to providing an hour of their time in the support of military families each week. Specific behaviors exhibited by a care receiver will trigger a contact to the HEROES Care program management team for referral to a local Give an Hour volunteer.

MSCCN is an award winning, national job training and placement service founded by and for military spouses. Its mission is to find meaningful employment for the family member left behind as well as service members, Wounded Warriors, and their caregivers. The HSV refers the care receiver to MSCCN through the HEROES Care management team.

To learn more about the program, visit www.heroescare.org.

Contact us at president@heroescare.org.