

SEC. 723. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TASK FORCE ON MENTAL HEALTH.

(a) Requirement to Establish.--The Secretary of Defense shall establish within the Department of Defense a task force to examine matters relating to mental health and the Armed Forces.

(b) Composition.--

(1) MEMBERS.--The task force shall consist of not more than 14 members appointed by the Secretary of Defense from among individuals described in paragraph (2) who have demonstrated expertise in the area of mental health.

(2) RANGE OF MEMBERS.--The individuals appointed to the task force shall include--

(A) at least one member of each of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps;

(B) a number of persons from outside the Department of Defense equal to the total number of personnel from within the Department of Defense (whether members of the Armed Forces or civilian personnel) who are appointed to the task force;

(C) persons who have experience in--

(i) national mental health policy;

(ii) military personnel policy;

(iii) research in the field of mental health;

(iv) clinical care in mental health; or

(v) military chaplain or pastoral care; and

(D) at least one family member of a member of the Armed Forces who has experience working with military families.

(3) INDIVIDUALS APPOINTED WITHIN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.--At least one of the individuals appointed to the task force from within the Department of Defense shall be the surgeon general of an Armed Force.

(4) INDIVIDUALS APPOINTED OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.--(A) Individuals appointed to the task force from outside the Department of Defense may include officers or employees of other departments or agencies of the Federal Government, officers or employees of State and local governments, or individuals from the private sector.

(B) The individuals appointed to the task force from outside the Department of Defense shall include--

(i) an officer or employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(ii) an officer or employee of the Substance Abuse and Mental

Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services.

(5) DEADLINE FOR APPOINTMENT.--All appointments of individuals to the task force shall be made not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(6) CO-CHAIRS OF TASK FORCE.--There shall be two co-chairs of the task force. One of the co-chairs shall be designated by the Secretary of the Defense at the time of appointment from among the Department of Defense personnel appointed to the task force. The other co-chair shall be selected from among the members appointed from outside the Department of Defense by members so appointed.

(c) Assessment and Recommendations on Mental Health Services.--

(1) IN GENERAL.--Not later than 12 months after the date on which all members of the task force have been appointed, the task force shall submit to the Secretary a report containing an assessment of, and recommendations for improving, the efficacy of mental health services provided to members of the Armed Forces by the Department of Defense.

(2) UTILIZATION OF OTHER EFFORTS.--In preparing the report, the task force shall take into consideration completed and ongoing efforts by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve the efficacy of mental health care provided to members of the Armed Forces by the Departments.

(3) ELEMENTS.--The assessment and recommendations (including recommendations for legislative or administrative action) shall include measures to improve the following:

(A) The awareness of the potential for mental health conditions among members of the Armed Forces.

(B) The access to and efficacy of existing programs in primary care and mental health care to prevent, identify, and treat mental health conditions among members of the Armed Forces, including programs for and with respect to forward-deployed troops.

(C) Identification and means to evaluate the effectiveness of pilot projects authorized by section 722 with the objective of improving early diagnosis and treatment of post traumatic stress disorder and other mental health conditions.

(D) The access to and programs for family members of members of the Armed Forces, including family members overseas.

(E) The reduction or elimination of barriers to care, including the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health related conditions, and the enhancement of confidentiality for members of the Armed Forces seeking care for such conditions.

(F) The awareness of mental health services available to dependents of members of the Armed Forces whose sponsors have been activated or deployed to a combat theater.

(G) The adequacy of outreach, education, and support programs on mental health matters for families of members of the Armed Forces.

(H) The early identification and treatment of mental health and substance abuse problems through the use of internal mass media communications (including radio and television) and other education tools to change attitudes within the Armed Forces regarding mental health and substance abuse treatment.

(I) The efficacy of programs and mechanisms for ensuring a seamless transition from care of members of the Armed Forces on active duty for mental health conditions through the Department of Defense to care for such conditions through the Department of Veterans Affairs after such members are discharged or released from military, naval, or air service.

(J) The availability of long-term follow-up and access to care for mental health conditions for members of the Individual Ready Reserve and the Selective Reserve and for discharged, separated, or retired members of the Armed Forces.

(K) Collaboration among organizations in the Department of Defense with responsibility for or jurisdiction over the provision of mental health services.

(L) Coordination between the Department of Defense and civilian communities, including local support organizations, with respect to mental health services.

(M) The scope and efficacy of curricula and training on mental health matters for commanders in the Armed Forces.

(N) The efficiency of pre- and post-deployment mental health screening, including mental health screenings for members of the

Armed Forces who have experienced multiple deployments.

(O) The effectiveness of mental health programs provided in languages other than English.

(P) Such other matters as the task force considers appropriate.

(d) Administrative Matters.--

(1) COMPENSATION.--Each member of the task force who is a member of the Armed Forces or a civilian officer or employee of the United States shall serve without compensation (other than compensation to which entitled as a member of the Armed Forces or an officer or employee of the United States, as the case may be). Other members of the task force shall be treated for purposes of section 3161 of title 5, United States Code, as having been appointed under subsection (b) of such section.

(2) OVERSIGHT.--The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness shall oversee the activities of the task force.

(3) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.--The Washington Headquarters Services of the Department of Defense shall provide the task force with personnel, facilities, and other administrative support as necessary for the performance of the duties of the task force.

(4) ACCESS TO FACILITIES.--The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness shall, in coordination with the Secretaries of the military departments, ensure appropriate access by the task force to military installations and facilities for purposes of the discharge of the duties of the task force.

(e) Report.--

(1) IN GENERAL.--The task force shall submit to the Secretary of Defense a report on its activities under this section. The report shall include--

(A) a description of the activities of the task force;

(B) the assessment and recommendations required by subsection (c); and

(C) such other matters relating to the activities of the task force that the task force considers appropriate.

(2) TRANSMITTAL TO CONGRESS.--Not later than 90 days after receipt of the report under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall transmit the report to the Committees on Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs

of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Secretary may include in the transmittal such comments on the report as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(f) Plan Required.--Not later than 6 months after receipt of the report from the task force under subsection (e)(1), the Secretary of Defense shall develop a plan based on the recommendations of the task force and submit the plan to the congressional defense committees.

(g) Termination.--The task force shall terminate 90 days after the date on which the report of the task force is submitted to Congress under subsection (e)(2).

Subtitle D--Studies and Reports