

For Your Information and Inspiration

Helping Veterans Feel At Home Again

Returning home from war should be a soldier's comfort. But after long months of separation, many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families find themselves struggling to readjust into relationships, parenting, education and civilian employment.

One out of every five veterans shows symptoms of combat-related stress, according to a recent report by the RAND Corporation.

With 30,000 to 50,000 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan to the New York State area, JBFCS recognized their pressing need for mental health services and, thanks to funding by the New York State Health Foundation, responded by creating a new program, **Home Again: Veterans and Families Initiative**.

Alice Psirakis, LCSW, is director of the Initiative and a former captain in the United States Army who supervised the Behavioral Health Services clinic at Fort Dix, New Jersey from 2004 to 2007.

"The program is free, has no insurance requirements and is designed to welcome not only returning veterans, but also anyone they are in a significant relationship with," Alice explains.

"Spouses, children, unmarried companions, parents, siblings and relatives are covered. The

major focus is to support family reintegration."

Individual and family counseling are offered to help provide a smoother transition at home. Cognitive behavioral therapy is the model used to help veterans with the healing process from combat trauma.

"Veterans tell me they just want to forget and move on," Alice notes. "But they have to deal with the fact that they won't forget things they did or witnessed in a combat zone. The healing process starts when veterans learn to co-exist with painful memories, which over time reduces their emotional suffering."

Home Again is administered at two JBFCS Bronx-based counseling centers in Riverdale and Pelham. However, services are available for any Iraq or Afghanistan veteran living in the five boroughs and Westchester County.

Home Again, a program within the JBFCS Center for Trauma Program Innovation, is working with the Bronx Veterans Administration Medical Center and also actively engaged in a network of collaborations with local and national agencies.

**For more information,
call Home Again: Veterans
and Families Initiative at
(646)957-0853**

