Legislative Briefing

OHA Health Policy Action

Your guide to proposed health legislation, what we think about it, and what we're doing about it.

March 2013

H.B. No. 5754; *An Act Concerning Mental Health Services For Veterans And Members Of The Armed Forces*

What is this bill about?

H.B. No. 5754 will require the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, in conjunction with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, to increase state resources to better identify through screening programs the mental health needs of Connecticut's veterans and active members of the armed forces, and to provide increased assistance where needed.

We have been a nation at war for over a decade, the longest period on continuous military conflict in recent history, and as such, have demanded significant sacrifices of those who have chosen to serve. With deployments frequently spanning 6 – 18 months, soldiers return from active duty to try and pick up their lives where the left them. However, this is not always an easy feat. Soldiers must attempt to step back into their careers, their family life, and society, all while dealing with the physical and emotional scars of war.

What are the implications of this bill for healthcare consumer advocacy?

While not every serviceman will need the full range of services available to them, HB 5754 contemplates ensuring that each soldier has the opportunity to learn about and access whatever services they may need in order to reintegrate into civilian life, identifying any deficiencies in the identification and enrollment of eligible servicemen and creating system that allows them to learn about and access the entire universal of available resources

Please refer all media, agency, and legislator inquiries to Vicki Veltri

Talking Points

1. OHA is aware of this proposed legislation and submitted written public testimony **in support** of this bill.
2. This legislation address a critically import concept that the citizens of Connecticut owe our nation's military men and women
3. OHA supports this legislation and its principals which are aimed at positioning Connecticut a national leader in assuring allocation of adequate resources for screening programs to meet the mental health needs of the state's veterans.

OHA represents the collective voice of 3.5 million healthcare consumers. For our state to be competitive, our people must be healthy. Our mission is to • assure managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare • educate consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans • inform legislators of problems consumers face in accessing care and propose solutions to those problems.