

Section 5:

Medical, Behavioral Health & Social Services

The tremendous growth at Fort Carson has led to many changes in medical and behavioral health services available at Fort Carson Evans Army Community Hospital and in the community. Fort Carson and TriWest have conducted a Joint Strategic and Operational Planning Process to help identify needs for medical and behavioral health services, and community-based providers continue to work to address increased demand, particularly related to behavioral health and social services needs.

Fort Carson Efforts

Fort Carson continues to implement infrastructure and programming changes to accommodate the increased numbers of troops and family members, as well as address ongoing behavioral health challenges, particularly related to deployments. The key changes in recent years at Fort Carson include expansion of medical facilities, and increased emphasis on community and brigade-based behavioral health, and increased efforts to partner with community-based providers to meet additional service needs.

Medical & Behavioral Health

The recent expansion of Fort Carson's Evans Army Community Hospital (EACH) resulted in the fourth floor of the hospital dedicated to behavioral health services, including primary and secondary level care, intensive outpatient programs, specialty evaluations, case management for off-post referrals, and other services. Fort Carson also has plans to open a 15-bed in-patient psychiatric facility at EACH by FY 2013 for acute psychiatric care. In 2009, Fort Carson opened a 16,000 square foot clinic located off-post to serve military families in the community. This Premier Health Clinic serves children and families.

A Community-Based Focus¹

Fort Carson has also taken a community-based approach to mental and behavioral health. Behavioral health teams now serve Fort Carson's brigades at the brigades' facilities. Multi-disciplinary teams of behavioral health teams now work closely with the brigades, making assessments, counseling, and outreach more accessible to the Soldiers. Fort Carson has also instituted a confidential alcohol treatment and education program to encourage Soldiers to seek assistance and engage family members in treatment and recovery. In recent years, Fort Carson has significantly increased its behavioral health staff to serve Soldiers and family members.

Fort Carson has established a Child & Family Assistance Center (CFAC). This multidisciplinary team of psychologists, psychiatrists, marriage and family therapists, and social workers, will expand to the off-post clinic noted above in order to increase services to Fort Carson family

¹ COL Robert McLaughlin, "People Sustain the Mission: Sustaining Human Capital at Fort Carson," http://www.imcom.army.mil/hq/publications/journal/journal_plus_spring_2011/hccarson/ accessed April 22, 2011.

members. A School-Based Behavioral Health Program has also been established, initially placing Fort Carson behavioral health providers and services in an elementary school on-post. Pending the availability of funding, Fort Carson is seeking to expand this program to serve other schools in the Fort Carson region.

Fort Carson is at the forefront of serving Soldiers and families facing challenges and stresses of military life, including transitions, deployments, and injuries, and casualties. Through Army Community Service, Fort Carson employs military family life consultants (MFLCs) who provide non-medical counseling services in schools and for Soldiers and family members. The installation is also working to develop a more holistic approach to serving Soldiers and families with the establishment of a Resiliency Campus on-post. Fort Carson's wellness center is slated to become the Forrest Resiliency Center, the cornerstone of the resiliency campus, which will include a broad range of health and wellness services for Fort Carson Soldiers and family members. The Soldier Family Assistance Center on Fort Carson serves families of wounded warriors and Fort Carson has established a partnership with the VA to assist with transitions of medically-discharged veterans through the pilot Disability Evaluation System.

Warrior Family Community Partnership

Fort Carson established the Warrior Family Community Partnership (WFCP) in order to provide a centrally located hub that links Soldiers, families, and the community to information, programs, and services on Fort Carson. The WFCP is an integrated, multi-faceted partnership of Army and community resources, both virtual and onsite, that are easily available to all.

Through one-on-one staff assistance, information kiosks, a website, and other resources, the WFCP integrates existing systems of support and services to Fort Carson Soldiers and their Families to assure an optimal quality of life while fulfilling their mission to our nation. The WFCP also serves as the community's link to providing services to Soldiers.

Army 101

Fort Carson developed "Army 101" to help inform community-based providers regarding Army life and culture, stresses on families throughout the deployment cycle, resources available on the installation, and other aspects of the Army. The four-hour training, offered quarterly to the community enables off-post entities to better serve military families by giving the providers more knowledge of Army life. This program won the Army Communities of Excellence Exemplary Practice award in 2010.

TRICARE/TriWest Efforts

TriWest, the region's TRICARE provider is also working with Fort Carson and community-based providers to identify ongoing gaps in and barriers to service. TriWest representatives participate in the Growth Plan's Medical, Behavioral Health & Social Services Partnership Group to provide expertise regarding Soldier and family access to TRICARE services, as well as work with community-based providers to address ongoing needs for specialty care, including behavioral health services.

TRIAP

In August 2009, TRICARE launched the TRICARE Assistance Program (TRIAP), as a web-based demonstration program for active duty service and family members, TRICARE Reserve Select beneficiaries, and Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) beneficiaries. TRIAP provides confidential (face-to-face via webcam) counseling services for short-term, non-medical issues, such as stress management, family pressures, deployment stresses, parent/child communication, etc. Referrals or prior authorization are not necessary to utilize this service. TRICARE recently announced the extension of TRIAP through March 20, 2012. The purpose of the extension is to allow for more time to assess the program's effectiveness².

Southern Colorado Coalition of Acute Inpatient Behavioral Health Providers

In order to enhance coordination of inpatient behavioral health care, TriWest has helped facilitate meetings of off-post (TRICARE network) providers serving active duty Soldiers in an in-patient setting. The coalition meets regularly with its membership and with Evans Army Community Hospital to discuss treatment issues, as well as case management, including addressing transitions from inpatient to outpatient care. This coalition benefits both Fort Carson and off-post providers by enhancing understanding of Army requirements and better coordinating care between the installation and off-post providers, as well as the transition of care to outpatient settings. This type of coordination should continue in order to ensure that off-post providers are aware of and able to address Fort Carson-related inpatient behavioral health requirements.

Ongoing challenges for the region include the need for more coordination between Fort Carson and community-based providers, particularly for outpatient services, funding for case management services, and additional care coordination between Fort Carson, the VA, and community providers. Additionally, the region should continue to monitor and address potential unintended consequences of staffing challenges, as Fort Carson's efforts to increase its behavioral health staff may make it more difficult for off-post providers to recruit and retain staff.

Community-Based Efforts

While Fort Carson has committed many resources toward meeting the medical and behavioral health needs of Fort Carson Soldiers and families, off-post providers, including social services agencies, continue to see significant impacts and increased needs for services in the community. In fact, Fort Carson spent more than \$7 million in off-post behavioral health care in FY 2010, an increase of 21.6 percent over FY 2009.³ As identified in the Phase II Growth Plan, key ongoing

² Elaine Sanchez, "Family Matters Blog: TRICARE Continues Web-based Counseling", March 30, 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=63376>, accessed April 5, 2011; and TRICARE Assistance Program webpage, <http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/home/overview/SpecialPrograms/TRICAREAssistanceProgram>, accessed April 5, 2011.

³ "Fort Carson Behavioral Health Child and Family Programs," LTC Erin V. Wilkinson, Psy.D, Military Children and Youth Symposium, April 15, 2011 (<http://www.wfcp.carson.army.mil/April-MonthOfTheMilitaryChild.html>.)

challenges include the need for enhanced communication and information-sharing with Fort Carson to identify services available on-post and the development of a continuum of care for service members, veterans, and family members seeking services off-post, particularly those who do not have access to TRICARE or VA benefits.

Further, community-based social services providers and local governments are faced with ongoing fiscal challenges and budget cuts, while seeing increased demand for services. The El Paso County Department of Human Services continues to see increased demand for services from Fort Carson⁴, and programs such as the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (DVERT) has been discontinued, although the agencies involved in this program continue to collaborate.

As discussed in *Section 4: Education and Child Development*, off-post services for children with disabilities or special needs are also taxed based on growth and limited funding. The Resource Exchange (TRE), which serves as the state-designated community-centered board for federally-funded disability services in the region, has seen significant growth – driven primarily by Fort Carson growth. The region has experienced 11 percent growth in number of eligible children over the past year. The size and funding for TRE’s early intervention program is based on previous year enrollment of children ages 0-2 years and does not fully fund all identified children. However, TRE currently receives funding to serve approximately 364 children annually, but is currently serving nearly 650 children with this funding.

Community-based providers in the region have a strong desire to serve military families despite fiscal constraints. Local providers offer many and varied services to address the diversity of needs of Fort Carson Soldiers and families. However, providers in the region continue to struggle with understanding all of the services available on-post, how to access those services, and how to serve Soldier and family members who prefer to seek services off-post. Further, because of the large number of agencies working to serve Fort Carson Soldiers and families, as well as other service members and veterans, the region is seeking to develop better coordination of these efforts to ensure that service members and providers (both on- and off-post) are aware of ongoing and new collaborations and services available in the region. One focus of the Growth Plan is to assist in this regional communication and collaboration to streamline and enhance service delivery in the region. Below is an overview of the implementation and coordination efforts in the region.

Network of Care

In order to address the coordination, communication, and service delivery challenges among on- and off-post providers, PPACG has contracted with Trilogy Integrated Resources, Inc. and is working with the Growth Plan’s Medical, Behavioral Health & Social Services Partnership Group to develop a Network of Care for service members, veterans, and their families. This web-based resource implements the primary recommendation of the Phase II Growth Plan to establish a primary point of entry for behavioral health and social services information and assistance.

⁴ See the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan, Phase II Supplemental Report, *Fort Carson Impacts on the El Paso County Department of Human Services*.

The Network of Care, launched in May 2011 includes a service directory to help connect Fort Carson Soldiers and family members to community resources, a library of articles on veterans issues, behavioral health and other topics, as well as other features, including a Personal Health Record, which allows service members and veterans to keep electronic copies of their service records, medical and other information to assist in care coordination. This site is accessible at <http://pikespeak.networkofcare.org>.

Military System of Care

During the second phase of the Growth Plan, efforts to address mental/behavioral health and social services needs of Fort Carson Soldiers and families shifted from the Military Community Collaborative (MCC), which is no longer active, to several other efforts addressing various components of Soldier and family needs, including the Growth Plan's Medical, Behavioral Health & Social Services Partnership Group, the Southern Colorado Acute Behavioral Health Coalition, the Colorado Military Family Alliance, and other entities. PPACG has continued to participate in these efforts to assist with information-sharing. However, the need for a more focused collaborative effort has emerged and is being addressed by a Military System of Care Committee facilitated by PPACG as part of the Medical, Behavioral Health & Social Services Partnership Group.

The Military System of Care Committee includes representatives from Fort Carson, the Veterans Administration, local hospitals, behavioral health providers, and crisis intervention service providers. The purpose of this group is to develop a system of care for coordinated service delivery for service members, veterans, and their families. Participating entities are seeking opportunities for collaboration and working to identify funding to provide this coordinated care. The committee is currently an ad hoc entity with no formal structure and no funding other than the time committed by staff members of the various participating organizations. The next step for this organization is to complete a strategic planning effort, identify funding sources (including commitments of resources from participating agencies), and identify specific services to be included in the system of care. Initial services identified may expand, once the group's structure becomes more formalized. In order for the Military System of Care Committee to proceed and successfully serve military families, additional strategic planning and resource identification are needed.

Community Provider Trainings

Established during the second phase of the Growth Plan, Community Provider Trainings offer additional information and resources to assist off-post providers in meeting the behavioral health and social services needs of Soldiers and family members. These trainings, conducted primarily by Fort Carson representatives, provide detailed information on traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other issues, including the Army Force Generation (ARFOGEN) cycle, working with children of Soldiers, and resiliency. The Community Provider Trainings aim to build upon the information presented in the above-referenced Army 101 program, in order to enhance the region's knowledge and capabilities to serve Fort Carson Soldiers and families. PPACG hosts the trainings on a quarterly basis.

Veteran Trauma Court

Local, state, and federal partners established a pilot Veteran Trauma Court (VTC) in the Fourth Judicial District in late 2009 to assist veterans in the criminal justice system. The goal of this program is to decrease the number of veterans entering the criminal justice system by helping them obtain treatment for service-related issues that may have resulted in criminal activity. In its first year, the VTC served more than 50 veterans and active-duty service members⁵.

Additionally, in 2010, the state legislature passed HB 10-1104, which allows establishment of a veteran's treatment court program (expanding of the pilot program) in each judicial district in the state for military veteran courts and allows current VTC to seek other funding.

Colorado Injured Military Support Network

The Colorado Injured Military Support Network (CIMS) is an informal monthly networking meeting for entities that serve injured service members. Community-based providers, Fort Carson and TriWest representatives, and others attend these monthly meetings to learn about available resources in the community and connect service providers. The group has been meeting for five years and has increased its participation each year as more providers seek to serve injured service members.

Ongoing Communication and Coordination

As noted above, there are many varied efforts currently working to serve Fort Carson Soldiers and families, as well as other service members, veterans, etc. Keeping Fort Carson officials and community-based providers aware of all the efforts in the region remains an ongoing challenge. The Colorado Defense Mission Coalition (CDMC), which serves as the Growth Plan steering committee, has emerged as an existing entity that brings together a broad spectrum of interests and providers together to share information, discuss common issues, and identify ongoing challenges across a myriad of issue areas and sectors impacted by the region's military installations. Additionally, Fort Carson's Army 101 and the Community Provider Trainings hosted by PPACG continue to help educate off-post agencies regarding military culture, stresses based on deployment cycles, resources available on-post, and how the community can work more closely with Fort Carson in meeting Soldier and family needs.

As the Network of Care becomes established and the Military System of Care effort moves forward, it will be important for the CDMC to remain a key information clearinghouse to assist in this regional communication and coordination to help ensure that Fort Carson is aware of community-based services and that off-post providers work together with Fort Carson to better align services to minimize duplication of effort and enhance service delivery to Soldiers and families.

⁵ "Veteran Trauma Court Celebrates First Anniversary", *4th Judicial District Veteran Trauma Court Newsletter*, September-December 2010, page 2.

Ongoing Actions and Implementation

Based on the impacts and recommendations throughout the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan process and ongoing efforts through Phase III of the Growth Plan, ongoing implementation of the Phase II recommendations and actions will include the following:

1. Continued development of and updates to the Network of Care, including ongoing trainings and outreach to ensure service members and their families, as well as Fort Carson officials and community-based providers are aware of all available services; encourage use of the Network of Care for ongoing care coordination.
2. Continuation of the role of the CDMC to assist with regional communication, collaboration and information-sharing and to help streamline various regional efforts to support Soldiers and families.
3. Completion of a strategic plan for the Military System of Care to identify critical services, partners, and funding opportunities to establish a more coordinated care approach to serving Soldiers and family members with behavioral health and social services needs.
4. Continued and enhanced partnerships with Fort Carson, TriWest, and others to monitor trends and address gaps in service, including efforts to recruit and retain medical and behavioral health professionals both on- and off-post, as well as provide information to off-post providers (through Community Provider Trainings and other outreach mechanisms).
5. Identification of long-term funding mechanisms to support the Network of Care, Military System of Care and other efforts to collaborate and serve Fort Carson Soldiers and family members.

See Appendix I for the status of Growth Plan recommendations related to Medical, Behavioral Health and Social Services.