



Request for Proposals (RFP):
New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) Needs Assessment of
Returning Veterans & Their Families in New York State

(By Invitation Only)

Deadline: Your proposal must be submitted by September 30, 2008

I. About the New York State Health Foundation

The New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) is a private foundation dedicated to improving the health of all New Yorkers. NYSEHealth has a three-part mission:

- **expanding health insurance coverage** to State residents who cannot afford to purchase their own coverage or whose coverage is inadequate;
- **increasing access to high-quality health care services** for underserved people; and
- **improving public and community health** by educating New Yorkers about health issues and empowering communities to address them.

II. Statement of Need

New York State is home to 1.4 million veterans, and to Fort Drum in Watertown, which is one of the largest entry and exit sites for Iraq and Afghanistan service members. Thousands of men and women continue to be deployed from New York State to these two wars and have returned after one or more deployments. Returning veterans are at high risk for a multitude of health and social issues. Rates of mental health problems among new veterans are especially high. National data already show that nearly one in three Iraq veterans will face a serious psychological injury, like depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or anxiety. A recent *Archives of Internal Medicine* study found that of the one-third of veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who were treated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) between 2001 and 2005, PTSD was the most common mental health diagnosis, affecting 52% of those diagnosed with mental health issues. Returning veterans who do not receive timely and appropriate care for mental health issues seem to be at risk for chronic mental illness, substance use issues, family life challenges, domestic violence, unemployment, homelessness, and even suicide. Approximately one-third of homeless adults have served in the

KEY DATES:

Intent to Apply
September 3, 2008

Application Deadline
September 30, 2008

Outcome Notification
By November 1, 2008

armed services. Other studies report that more than 45% of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and more than 70% suffer from alcohol or other substance use problems. A 2005 VA Report estimated that there are 12,700 homeless veterans in New York State.

The needs of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans are compounded by the fact that many have had multiple deployments. Approximately 40% of active duty soldiers who have served in Iraq since 2003 have been deployed more than once. A recent United States Army study of mental health showed that rates of PTSD were higher among soldiers with multiple deployments.

Further exacerbating the need for responsive health services for veterans is the lack of mental health and counseling services available to their family members. Approximately 40% of troops deployed to the two war zones are parents. As of June 2007, 19,000 children had a parent wounded in the wars and 2,200 children lost a parent in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Veterans' needs for timely and appropriate services are outstripping the available supply. While several agencies, including the VA, provide mental health, substance use, and social services to veterans at the national and local levels, the reintegration needs of returning soldiers and their families have already begun to outweigh the existing services. The VA disability benefits system is massively backlogged with several hundred thousand pending disability claims, some of which have been waiting six months or more. In addition, the families of veterans are currently not eligible for mental health and counseling services through the VA medical system.

III. Overview of NYSHealth Initiative for Returning Veterans and Their Families

The New York State Health Foundation has established the *NYSHealth Initiative for Returning Veterans* and Their Families*. This is a one-time funding initiative to advance solutions that will address veterans' needs in New York State over the next two years, and is part of the Foundation's *Integration of Substance Use and Mental Health Services* priority area. Our goal is to demonstrate that the health, mental health, and substance use issues experienced by veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and their families are important public health issues that require immediate attention in communities throughout New York State. The Foundation's initiative focuses on:

- 1) addressing veterans' reintegration needs, including access to timely primary and mental health and substance use services; and
- 2) strengthening collaboration between public and private sectors, including targeted funding and coordination of reintegration services.

IV. Scope of Project

An initial scan of national data and articles suggests that returning veterans and their families have a broad range of social service needs that range from housing and employment to health and mental health. However, the few existing studies focused on returning veterans examine

* *Note: NYSHealth is using the term returning veterans to refer to retired members of the U.S. Army, Marines, Navy, National Guard, and Reserve who have been deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and/or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).*

each of these issues in isolation, and do not capture the cumulative impact these factors have on returning veterans and their families. In addition, no comprehensive assessment has been done at the state level in New York.

Therefore, NYSHHealth is commissioning a comprehensive needs assessment of the health, mental health, and social service needs of returning veterans and their families in New York State. In addition, NYSHHealth would like the selected organization to identify model state-level strategies for addressing these needs. The outcomes of the needs assessment will be used to foster dialogue across public and private sector organizations throughout the State, inform the Foundation's programs, and advance a strategic response for addressing the needs of returning veterans and their families.

The maximum budget for the needs assessment is \$400,000 and the project must be completed within nine months.

The needs assessment of returning veterans and their families in New York State will include (but will not be limited to) the following key tasks and deliverables:

- identify existing sources of data on returning veterans' health, mental health, socioeconomic status, and other relevant demographic factors;
- collect and analyze data related to the health, mental health and social needs of returning veterans and their families (methods should include quantitative and qualitative data collection);
- catalog existing resources (i.e., county, state, national, services, benefits, etc);
- identify model state-level strategies for addressing the needs of returning veterans and their families; and
- produce a final report detailing the outcomes of the needs assessment.

Target Population:

The target population for this needs assessment includes veterans who have served at least one tour of duty in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and the spouses, partners, and immediate family members of returning veterans.

Research Methods:

We expect the selected organization to use both quantitative and qualitative methods, such as surveys and focus groups. Applicants must provide rationales for the types of qualitative and quantitative methods they plan to use in carrying out the needs assessment.

The survey will need a sufficient sample size to be representative of the target population and to support subgroup analysis by the following characteristics: male/female, geographic distribution, racial/ethnic diversity, National Guard and Reservists, married/single, parental status, single or multiple tours, and enrollment status in the VA medical system. The sample size is expected to be at least 500 OEF/OIF veterans and 250 spouses, partners, or immediate family members.

Stakeholder Advisory Panel:

The Foundation values the input of veterans and other stakeholders—including family members—in the development of the instruments to be used in the needs assessment. The applicant should delineate a plan to involve the target population in the needs assessment, which should include but not necessarily be limited to the use of a Stakeholder Advisory Panel. This plan should specifically address how the target population will be engaged in the development of the survey instrument(s), interpretation of the results, and to provide expert advice throughout the needs assessment process.

V. Components of the Application

The proposal should include the following key components and address the corresponding questions:

A. Organization Capacity and Experience Working with Military/Veteran Populations

- 1) What is your organization's level of understanding of military/veteran benefits structures? (e.g., VA benefits, transition from the U.S. Army health care system to the VA system, etc.)
- 2) What is your organization's understanding of military/veteran-specific issues, particularly as they relate to personnel involved in OEF and OIF?
- 3) What experience do you have collecting data on military and veteran populations?

B. Methodologies for Conducting Statewide Needs Assessment

- 1) What methodologies will you use to conduct the needs assessment (e.g., focus groups, surveys, etc.)? What is the rationale for using these methodologies?
- 2) Provide details on your approach to sampling, recruitment, data collection modalities, incentives, privacy concerns, sample sizes, expected response rates, length of interviews, and weighting of results.
- 3) How will you engage the target population during the different phases of the needs assessment? Please include details on how you intend to engage the target population in developing the survey instruments and study design, including utilizing a Stakeholder Advisory Panel?
- 4) How will you assess both the service needs and existing resources (national, state, and local) for the target population?
- 5) How will you go about identifying model state-level strategies for addressing the needs of returning veterans and their families?

C. Workplan (Maximum Time = 9 months)

- 1) How long will it take to complete the needs assessment?
- 2) Will the needs assessment process be divided up into separate phases?

D. Budget & Budget Narrative (Maximum Cost = \$400,000)

VI. Application Instructions

Please notify us of your intent to submit a proposal by **Wednesday, September 3, 2008** by sending an e-mail to Kavita Das, Program Officer, at Das@NYSHealth.org. Once we

receive your intent to apply, we will provide you with information on how to access our online application system. Applications will be due by **Tuesday, September 30, 2008**. Should you have any questions, please contact Kavita Das at Das@NYSHHealth.org or at (212) 584-7687.

A. Online Application Components

- 1) Organization Capacity and Experience Working with Military/Veteran Populations (two-page limit)**
- 2) Project Director/Lead Contact Information**
- 3) Proposal Narrative (10-page limit)**
 - a. Executive Summary (250 words maximum)**
 - b. Methodologies for Conducting Statewide Needs Assessment**

B. Proposal Upload Fields

- 1) Key Staff Background Information (three-page limit)**
 - a. Please upload a brief statement of your team's relevant experience and credentials
- 2) Budget & Budget Narrative**
 - a. Budget – Please download and complete the NYSHealth budget template. Note: The maximum budget for this project is \$400,000; however, price competitiveness will be an important consideration in the selection process.
 - b. Budget Narrative – Please include an explanation of the cost requirements and allocations for this project with a specific focus on personnel and non-personnel costs as well as how the costs will be allocated across phases of the project. (one-page limit)
- 3) Work Plan**
 - a. Please download and complete the NYSHealth work plan template. Use it to outline the time requirements for completing the needs assessment.
 - b. Note: The maximum length of time allowed for this project is nine months.
- 4) Terms & Conditions**

This NYSHealth document is a set of contractual items to which a potential applicant agrees via hard copy signature.
- 5) IRS Determination Letter**

The notice issued by the Internal Revenue Service which designates your organization as charitable and tax-exempt.
- 6) IRS Form 990**

The *Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax* IRS annual filing form.

7) Audited Financial Statements

Your organization's financial statements, which have been prepared and certified by a Certified Public Accountant.

8) Financial Information Form

This form requests fiscal ratios and financial information compiled from your organization's audited financial statements and Form 990.

Please note: if your organization is not tax exempt, the online application requests that you supply a document that explains your organization's status.