

President Obama Signs Into Law Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act
Wounded Warrior Project® Supported Bill, Urges Continued Focus on Veterans' Mental Health
Washington, D.C. (February 12, 2015) – Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) joined President Obama, veterans, and mental health advocates today at the White House for the signing of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act (SAV Act), which will help provide better support to injured veterans suffering from the invisible wounds of war, such as [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD).

WWP is encouraged to see overwhelmingly bipartisan progress in efforts to improve mental health care and services and suicide prevention programs at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD). WWP worked closely with members of Congress to include provisions that authorize the VA to conduct a student loan repayment pilot program aimed at recruiting and retaining psychiatrists, and to establish a [peer support](#) and community outreach pilot program to assist transitioning service members with accessing VA mental health care services. WWP has seen the success that warrior mentors and community outreach can have through our Peer Support Program and Peer--Facilitated Support Groups; with 1,320 peer mentors, 1,277 warriors with mentors, and 222 warriors in 15 Peer--Facilitated Support Groups, we know that in many cases, it takes a veteran to help a veteran.

“Now, the long--term conversation about the mental health needs of our veterans needs to happen,” said Charlie Abell, executive vice president of Policy and Government Affairs at WWP. “The passage of the Clay Hunt SAV Act is an important start; with this bill signing, we take critically important steps in removing the barriers that lead warriors to drop out of therapy or prevent them from receiving the care they need and have earned. But this does not mean our job is done; our work is only just beginning.”

Wounded Warrior Project now asks lawmakers and administrators to focus on prominent challenges that lie ahead in the following areas:

- **Military Sexual Trauma (MST):** Further efforts must be made to prevent MST and ease the evidentiary burden on warriors of establishing service--incurrence of such trauma.
- **Access to Mental Health Care:** Improve the access, timeliness, and effectiveness of care for the invisible wounds of war (including PTSD, depression, and anxiety; traumatic brain injury (TB); substance use conditions; and chronic pain) through programmatic change—including integrating complementary therapies—continued oversight, and legislation.
- **Complementary and Alternative Medicines:** Provide alternatives to trauma--focused psychotherapy—including supportive group therapy and other evidence--based therapies — for veterans who wish to avoid revisiting trauma.
- **The Veterans Affairs Schedule for Rating Disabilities Process:** Foster the development of more effective VA procedures to evaluate, and more appropriate and equitable criteria to rate, disability due to mental health conditions.
- **Veterans Treatment Courts:** Provide grant support for the development of veterans treatment courts to foster diversion of veterans who have mental health problems from the criminal justice system into treatment and rehabilitation programs.

“We must continue to prioritize mental health, and WWP remains committed to working with Congress, the VA, and the DoD to combat the scourge of mental health injuries that face this generation of injured veterans,” affirmed Abell.

Since 2010, WWP has been using the information gathered from its [Annual Alumni Survey](#) to refine its existing programs, develop new initiatives, and identify gaps in existing [veteran services](#) and support. This year's data

again showed that mental health conditions were among the most frequently reported health problems of Alumni: 75 percent reported experiencing PTSD, 67 percent reported depression, and 64 percent reported experiencing anxiety. Forty--three percent of Alumni reported experiencing a TBI. Overall, the survey results indicate that, for many, the effects of mental and emotional health problems can be even more serious than the effects of physical problems.

Wounded Warrior Project

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has a vision of fostering the most successful, well--adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history. To achieve this objective, WWP is committed to a lifetime of service and commitment through its mission: to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP currently serves more than 63,000 warriors and over 9,000 family members through its 20 unique programs and services. The purpose of WWP is to raise awareness and to enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members, to help injured servicemen and women aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs. WWP is a national organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved and learn more, visit www.woundedwarriorproject.org.

<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2015-02-12-President-Obama-Signs-Into-Law-Clay-Hunt-Suicide-Prevention-for-American-Veterans-Act>