

The Commission report: *Serve, Support, Simplify* presents six recommendations with specific action steps for the Administration and Congress:

1. Immediately Create Comprehensive Recovery Plans to Provide the Right Care and Support at the Right Time in the Right Place

Recommendation: Create a patient-centered Recovery Plan for every seriously injured service member that provides the right care and support at the right time in the right place. A corps of well-trained, highly-skilled Recovery Coordinators must be swiftly developed to ensure prompt development and execution of the Recovery Plan.

Goals: *Ensure an efficient, effective and smooth rehabilitation and transition back to military duty or civilian life; establish a single point of contact for patients and families; and eliminate delays and gaps in treatment and services.*

Seriously injured service members—approximately 3,100 in the current conflicts—require assistance in navigating complex medical systems in general. The Commission’s research, including site visits and the work of previous studies, indicate that individuals both need and benefit from this support, and that too often, it is not available.

2. Completely Restructure the Disability Determination and Compensation Systems

Recommendation: DoD maintains authority to determine fitness to serve. For those found not fit for duty, DOD provides a payment for time served. VA then establishes the disability rating, compensation and benefits.

Goals: *Update and simplify the disability determination and compensation system; eliminate parallel activities; reduce inequities; and provide a solid base for the return of injured veterans to productive life.*

According to initial findings of a survey conducted by the Commission among wounded and evacuated members, the current disability rating system in both DoD and VA is poorly understood and a source of dissatisfaction. Just over 40% fully understood the disability evaluation process. Virtually all recent evidence has pointed to the need for major reform.

3. Aggressively Prevent and Treat Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury

Recommendation: VA should provide care for any veteran of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts who has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). DoD and VA must rapidly improve prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of both PTSD and traumatic brain injury (TBI). At the same time, both Departments must work aggressively to reduce the stigma of PTSD.

Goals: *Improve care of two common conditions of the current conflicts and reduce the stigma of PTSD; mentally and physically fit service members will strengthen our military into the future.*

DoD and VA have stepped up screening for these conditions with almost three-quarters of survey respondents reporting being screened for PTSD and TBI, and over 40% of them reporting symptoms of PTSD or other mental health problems

4. Significantly Strengthen Support for Families

Recommendation: Strengthen family support programs including expanding DoD respite care and extending the Family and Medical Leave Act for up to six months for spouse and parents of seriously injured.

Goals: *Strengthen family support systems and improve the quality of life for families.*

Approximately two-thirds of injured service members reported that their family members or close friends stayed with them for an extended time while they were hospitalized; one in five gave up a job to do so.

5. Rapidly Transfer Patient Information Between DoD and VA

Recommendation: DoD and VA must move quickly to get clinical and benefit data to users. In addition, DoD and VA should jointly develop an interactive ‘My eBenefits’ website that provides a single information source for service members.

Goals: *Support a patient-centered system of care and efficient practices.*

Most of the time, the role of information technology is invisible to the service member. They often notice when information is *not* available. A common complaint is lost paperwork. For example, 40% reported having to resubmit paperwork during the disability evaluation process.

6. Strongly Support Walter Reed By Recruiting and Retaining First Rate Professionals Through 2011

Recommendation: Until the day it closes, Walter Reed must have the authority and responsibility to recruit and retain first rate professionals to deliver first rate care. Walter Reed Army Medical Center has a distinguished history and, with one in five injured service members going directly to Walter Reed, continues to play a unique and vital role in providing care for America’s military.

Goals: *Assure that this major military medical center has professional and administrative staff necessary for state-of-the art medical care and scientific research through 2011.*