



Texas Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

Coordinating Efforts with Families of Wounded Military

Since 2001, our country has experienced an incredible and unsuspected increase in disabled, wounded and loss of military due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Across the United States families are experiencing the mixed emotions of pride, patriotism, honor, fear and grief. Our military families are faced with life altering issues every minute of every day during duty.

The largest military installation in the world is Fort Hood Army Base in Killeen, Texas, Bell County. The description provided to me is of an entire county that has been experiencing grief, loss and stress over the past five years. Deployments and Re-deployments have exacerbated the tense situation that already exists.

Military personnel and their families are intertwined throughout Bell County. They are neighbors, professionals, sales clerks, customers, parents, students, patients and friends. They are woven throughout the populace and they are critical components of this community. With the obvious stressors, there is no wonder that this entire community is experiencing effects much-like post-traumatic stress disorder. There is an increase in child-abuse, spousal abuse, divorce and spousal murders related to the pressures of war in Bell County.

There are very caring support personnel in both the military and civilian communities that are working at maximum capacity but the load is overwhelming. This entire community falls into the definition of the "Walking Wounded".

One of the top military hospitals in the U.S. is Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC), in San Antonio, Texas approximately 125 miles from Killeen. Brooke has some of the most advanced medical treatments for severely wounded soldiers in the world, as well as, excellent medical services for the families of the military including child and adolescent psychiatry. In 2007, BAMC will be opening the Intrepid Center, a state of the art hospitality facility designed to address the multi-faceted medical needs of severely wounded warriors. Military families will be assisted with moving to San Antonio to be with their spouses and to be a part of their recovery.

Texas Federation of Families is working with various organizations to determine appropriate strategies and guidelines for developing peer-to-peer supports. The sister organizations that are a part of the Texas statewide family network have been providing support to individuals connected with the military either as a relative of a soldier or as a military spouse with an exceptional child. As a unified network we are seeking to develop a peer-to-peer family support system that is or has been impacted by severe injuries and served in San Antonio. From that initial point, it is our goal to establish a coordinated transition of support upon dismissal to the receiving statewide family network throughout the U.S.

Military families are keenly aware of the impact upon their children whose parent has experienced life changing injuries and that long term supports and interventions are critical.

Pjd
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**7800 Shoal Creek Blvd
Suite 243-S
Austin, TX 78757
pattiderr@txffcmh.org**

**Phone: 512/407-8844
Cell: 512-944-9972
Toll Free: 866/893-3264
Web Site: www.txffcmh.org**