



# Neurological/Behavioral Health Subcommittee

Examination of Mental Health Accession Screening: Predictive Value of Current Measures  
and Processes  
Report Update

May 18, 2020



# Overview

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- Membership
- Review Tasking
- Summary of Subcommittee Activities to Date
- Areas of Interest
- Way Ahead



# Membership



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# Tasking

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- On July 29, 2019, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, directed the Defense Health Board (“the Board”) to provide recommendations to the DoD in order to improve mental health accession measures/processes.



# Tasking Justifications

The Board should address and develop findings and recommendations on the policies and practices in place

## To:

- Determine factors, to include historical or current diagnoses or symptoms, that predispose or promote a person to/from poor outcomes under stress of military service.
- Evaluate the predictive validity and effectiveness of psychiatric/psychological assessments and applicability to accession screening.
- Identify stressors and risks inherent in military service that can both positively and negatively influence Service member mental health morbidity.
- Optimize ways to support recruits' mental fitness.



# Objectives

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- Review the most current research findings regarding factors that predispose or protect a person to/from poor outcomes under stress, such as PTSD and suicide, including the most current DoD Clinical Guidelines regarding suicide prevention.
- Review the most current research findings on the ability to predict future functioning based on historical or current diagnoses or symptoms and on factors that may promote resilience. Include work done by the Defense Science Board and both the Navy and the independent investigation of the Washington Navy Yard shooting.
- Review findings on predictive validity of psychiatric/psychological screenings within the context of data on predictive validity of physical screenings.



# Objectives, Cont'd

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- Review existing mental health and neuropsychological assessments and evaluation strategies to assess effectiveness and applicability to use in the pre-accession period.
- Describe how the stressors, risks, and structure inherent in military service can both positively and negatively influence Service member mental health morbidity.
- Consider alternative ways to assess future mental fitness among recruits (e.g. an increased post-accession period subject to Existing Prior to Service (EPTS) discharges during which fitness can be assessed) and alternative means of supporting recruits (e.g., Israeli Defense Force's Suicide Prevention Program)



# Summary of Activities Since Last DHB Update

Date	Activity
March 10, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teleconference to discuss development of background sections.</li></ul>
April 14, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Half-day teleconference focused on resilience with briefings from:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Navy 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sailor Office</li><li>2. Navy Bureau of Medicine</li><li>3. Marine Corps Marine &amp; Family Programs</li><li>4. Air Force Director of Psychological Health</li><li>5. Air Force Resilience Coordinator</li><li>6. Army Resilience Directorate</li></ol></li></ul>
May 12, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Half-day teleconference focused on suicide prevention and restriction of lethal means with briefings from:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Defense Suicide Prevention Office</li><li>2. Marine Corps Suicide Prevention</li><li>3. Air Force Suicide Prevention</li><li>4. Navy Suicide Prevention</li><li>5. Army Suicide Prevention</li></ol></li></ul>



# Summary of Activities to Date – Report Development

- Subcommittee members reviewed first draft of Appendix B and Appendix C during March 10 meeting.
- DHB research staff adjudicated feedback and re-organized the two sections adding additional information about accessions process and mental health screening.

Report Section	Status
Appendix A – Crosswalk of TOR Objectives and Recommendations	Conceptual stage
Appendix B – Introduction and Background	Revision stage
Appendix C – Accession to U.S. Military Overview	Revision stage
Appendix D – Novel Solutions	Draft stage
Appendix E – Findings and Recommendations	Draft stage



# Areas of Interest

Topic	Discussion Points
Accessions as Part of the Military Lifecycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessions data is integrated into other assessments across the career span of Service members to determine the range of outcomes for recruits accessed under various conditions.</li><li>• This information informs MEPS processes.</li></ul>
Managing Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do mental health screening tools and waivers help DoD manage risk to the Service member and the Services?</li><li>• Mental health testing and screening is used to identify and mitigate risk for adverse mental and behavioral health outcomes.</li></ul>



# Areas of Interest, Cont'd

Topic	Discussion Points
Limited Predictive Validity and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Existing screening tools have limited predictive validity.</li><li>• Steps needed to improve predictive validity of accessions screening, e.g., psychological/psychiatric expertise on site, may be too resource intensive.</li></ul>
Novel Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What novel solutions could help to prevent and mitigate adverse outcomes from mental health conditions among Service members?</li><li>• Extending the 180-day entry-level period may allow for increased opportunity to evaluate person-environment fit for recruits.</li><li>• Artificial Intelligence may enhance identification of risk for mental health conditions.</li></ul>



# Way Ahead

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- Appendix B and C (Background and Accessions Overview) reviewed by subcommittee: 90% complete
- Briefings on novel solutions during June meetings
- Appendix D (Novel Solutions) to be submitted to subcommittee for review following June briefings
- Teleconferences every two weeks to discuss report appendices and revisions
- All teleconferences conducted over Zoom

Questions ?