

Our troops are coming home.  
Are we ready to support them?

**JOINING FORCES AMERICA**  
COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR  
RETURNING SERVICEMEMBERS

Multiple deployments.

A volatile region.

A controversial mission.

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have lasted longer than American involvement in World War II, and they've challenged our armed forces in unprecedented ways. When servicemembers return from battle, many struggle to resume their "normal" lives.

### **THE JOINING FORCES AMERICA PROJECT**

In 2008, Capella University sponsored an *exhaustive study* of mental health issues impacting our returning troops. We learned that there are many ways for families, friends and neighbors to help. Unfortunately, we also saw that everyone—families, mental health providers, the military—had a long way to go in making sure servicemembers get the help they need.

In 2010 we followed up to see what progress has been made.  
What has changed since 2008?

Frankly, not enough.

## What we learned: Needs aren't being met

Our biggest insight from the 2010 survey? Despite increased national attention on this issue, too many servicemembers aren't getting the help they need. And families are struggling too—often in the shadows cast by their servicemembers they support.



**50%**

of returning servicemembers reported some sort of mental health issue.



**Only 25%**

of returning service members received mental health assistance.



**16%**

of family members sought mental health assistance.



**Almost 50%**

of mental health professionals feel that their profession is not well prepared to help servicemembers.

## A powerful stigma

Most servicemembers don't seek help with mental health issues. We asked them why.



**46%**

Feared it would harm career

- 32%** No help was offered
- 18%** Could not afford it
- 14%** Feared losing the respect of others
- 14%** Lack of availability
- 12%** Didn't think it was needed

## Depression a major challenge

Mental health professionals see servicemembers struggling with many challenges. Here is the percentage who face specific issues.



**71%**

Depression

- 66%** Post traumatic stress disorder
- 59%** Marital problems
- 56%** Substance abuse
- 56%** Financial concerns
- 51%** Other anxiety disorders
- 32%** Traumatic brain injury

## A difficult transition

Re-integrating into the family and community is difficult for many. Servicemembers told us what specific areas they struggle in.



**35%**

Marital issues

- 33%** Family issues
- 31%** Outlook on job/career
- 29%** Personal mental health
- 28%** Clarity on future life choices
- 25%** Finances
- 23%** Outlook on life
- 20%** Personal health/injury

## Families struggle, too

—with the same issues. Family members identified the areas that caused them difficulty.



**36%**

Marital issues

- 34%** Family issues
- 30%** Outlook on job/career
- 30%** Clarity on future life choices
- 30%** Finances
- 29%** Personal mental health
- 25%** Outlook on life
- 21%** Personal health/injury

# Reason for hope: You can help

The results of our survey may seem discouraging. But everyone—families, friends, coworkers, neighbors, mental health providers—can make a difference.



[JoiningForcesAmerica.org](http://JoiningForcesAmerica.org)

## Explore the data

The results above are just a few highlights. Our survey results contain many more insights—some surprising, some sobering, some encouraging. Dig in to the full report to get the full story.

## THE JOINING FORCES AMERICA PROJECT

In 2008, Capella University sponsored an exhaustive study of mental health issues impacting our returning troops. We learned that there are many simple things that families, friends and neighbors can do to ease the transition of returning servicemembers. Unfortunately, we also learned that everyone—families, mental health providers, the military—had a long way to go in making sure servicemembers get the help they need.

### BUILDING AWARENESS

To help build awareness and understanding, Capella produced *The Next Mission*, a documentary on the invisible wounds of combat duty. The film aired nationally on PBS, and earned a Regional Emmy Award—an honor that brought still more attention to veterans, servicemembers, and families who need our support.

*The Next Mission* was part of a national wave of interest in this issue. Media outlets around the country focused their attention on the plight of returning servicemembers and the challenges they face. Both the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognized the need for their departments to work together to address mental health issues. They are now in the process of building the systems needed to streamline the transition and ensure that information is shared.

In addition, both the VA and DOD have created new resources to educate servicemembers and veterans on the issues and to encourage them to get the help they need. Visit the [Joining Forces America](#) website for links to these and other resources.

### HOW HAS OUR NATIONAL EFFORT IMPACTED THESE ISSUES?

In the fall of 2010, Capella conducted a follow up survey to reexamine this important topic. Dig in to the results to find out what has changed, what's stayed the same, and what still needs to be done.

## 2010 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

This study was conducted via confidential online survey of military and mental health audiences. Military respondents included Capella military-affiliated learners (140), an online panel of military service members (203), Capella learners who are family members of military personnel (26), and an online panel of family members of service members (201). Mental health respondents included Capella mental health learners and alumni employed in the mental health field (232), Capella faculty from the Harold Abel School of Social and Behavioral Sciences (28), and an online panel of mental health professionals (200).

## ABOUT CAPELLA UNIVERSITY

An accredited, online university, Capella has built its reputation providing quality education for working adults. Capella offers bachelor's, master's, specialist, and doctoral degree programs in business, information technology, education, human services, nursing, psychology, public administration, public health, and public safety. From all 50 states and 52 other countries, more than 38,000 students are pursuing their education at Capella.

Capella has a long history of educating mental health professionals and military servicemembers. The Joining Forces America survey provided an ideal opportunity to bring attention to the congruent needs of both populations.



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