BUMED NOTICE 6520

From: Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

Subj: MENTAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES FOR UNIQUE OR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Ref: (a) 10 U.S.C. §1090a
(b) DoD Instruction 6490.08 of 17 August 2011
(c) DoD Instruction 6490.04 of 4 March 2013
(d) TRICARE Operations Manual 6010.59-M

Encl: (1) Mental Healthcare Services for Unique or Special Circumstances Process

1. Purpose. To disseminate options, ensure awareness, maximize care and avoid potential conflicts of interest for Navy personnel receiving mental healthcare services within the Military Health System who may have unique or special circumstances.

2. Scope and Applicability. This notice applies to all Navy Medicine (NAVMED) healthcare providers delivering care to Sailors and Marines.

3. Background

   a. Per references (a) and (b), the Secretary of Defense prescribes and maintains regulations relating to commanding officer and supervisor referrals of members of the Military Services for mental health evaluations. These regulations include measures to foster a culture of support in the provision of mental health care by reducing perceived stigma, setting procedures for inpatient evaluations, and prohibiting the use of referrals for retaliatory actions against whistleblowers.

   b. There are unique populations within the naval forces, including command leadership triads, senior leaders, chaplains, healthcare providers, and the Judge Advocate General Corps community, that may have conflicts of interest receiving mental health care within the Military Health System.

   c. NAVMED understands the sensitive nature of receiving mental healthcare services in the same setting or from providers who are current or former clients. There are several mental healthcare options available for unique or special circumstances that support Department of Defense policy while providing the means to avoid potential conflict of interests.

   d. This policy does not supersede or preclude provisions of reference (c) that establishes policy and procedures for the referral, evaluation, treatment, and medical and command
management of Service members who may require assessment for mental health issues, psychiatric hospitalization, and risk of imminent or potential danger to self or others.

4. **Action.** NAVMED primary care providers, mental health providers, and clinical leaders must be aware of care options available to ensure that patients are offered the most appropriate care based on unique or special circumstances. Mental healthcare options available must be disseminated to providers and implemented throughout NAVMED.

5. **Policy.** A combination of primary care and referrals to medical treatment facility (MTF) mental health or TRICARE Network mental health providers, outlined in enclosure (1), allows for an individualized approach to provide appropriate mental health care in unique or special circumstances. The options provided in subparagraphs 5a through 5d are available based on need and clinical judgment:

   a. **Primary Care:** An excellent option to treat uncomplicated depression and anxiety. This option may reduce the likelihood of a conflict of interest between patients and providers.

   b. **Referral to a MTF Specialty Mental Health:** If higher-level mental healthcare services are needed, the primary care provider can refer to the MTF for in-person or virtual care.

   c. **Mental Health Referral to the TRICARE Network:** Per reference (d), chapter 8, the TRICARE program has implemented policy to refer authorized beneficiaries to the TRICARE Network. Primary care providers may also refer a patient to this Network of authorized providers due to special circumstances, including a conflict of interest for care in the MTF. The primary care provider must indicate that the mental health consult is referred to the Network due to conflict of interest for care in the MTF. This care may be provided in-person or virtually.

   d. **Non-Clinical Mental Health Counseling Services:** Non-clinical counseling services are also available through the Fleet and Family Service Centers, Marine Corps Community Services, and Military OneSource.

6. **Records Management**

   a. Records created as a result of this notice, regardless of format or media, must be maintained and dispositioned per the records disposition schedules located on the Department of the Navy Directorate for Administration, Logistics, and Operations, Directives and Records Management Division portal page at https://portal.seanav.navy.mil/orgs/DUSNM/DONAA/DRM/Records-and-InformationManagement/Approved%20Record%20Schedules/Forms/AllItems.aspx.
b. For questions concerning the management of records related to this notice the records disposition schedules, please contact the local records manager or the Department of the Navy Directorate for Administration, Logistics, and Operations, Directives and Records Management Division program office.

Releasability and distribution:
This notice is cleared for public release and is available electronically only via the Navy Medicine Web site at, https://www.med.navy.mil/directives/Pages/BUMEDNotes.aspx
MENTAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES FOR UNIQUE OR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES PROCESS

1. Primary Care
   - Primary Care, which can be easily accessed, can treat many mental health conditions, such as uncomplicated depression and anxiety, without the need for specialty mental healthcare.

2. MTF Mental Health Consult (in person)
   - Always an option for those who prefer to receive care at an MTF.

3. MTF Mental Health Consult (virtual)
   - Per patient’s preference, and if clinically suitable for virtual care.
   - Seen in comfort, convenience, and privacy.

4. Network Mental Health Consult (in person)
   - Primary care clinician must indicate mental health consult is referred to the Network due to special circumstances and conflict of interest for care in the MTF (e.g., Chaplains, Judge Advocate Generals, Triad).

5. Network Mental Health Consult (virtual)
   - Per patient’s preference, and if clinically suitable for virtual care.
   - Seen in comfort, convenience, and privacy.
   - Primary care clinician must indicate mental health consult is referred to the Network due to conflict of interest for care in the MTF.

* Other Counseling Resources
   - Fleet and Family Support Center
     [https://www.cnic.navy.mil/ffr/family_readiness/fleet_and_family_support_program/FFSC.html](https://www.cnic.navy.mil/ffr/family_readiness/fleet_and_family_support_program/FFSC.html)
   - Marine Corps Community Services
     [https://www.usmc-mccs.org/](https://www.usmc-mccs.org/)
   - Military OneSource
     [https://www.militaryonesource.mil/](https://www.militaryonesource.mil/)
   - For more serious mental health concerns, Fleet and Family Support Center and Military OneSource will refer to a higher level of care.