



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT “AT EASE”

(1) *WHAT IS “AT EASE USA”?*

At Ease USA is a group of Omaha-area citizens committed to providing confidential trauma treatment and therapeutic support to active military, veterans and their loved ones. No one is turned away based upon an inability to pay. Spurred by almost daily media reports of those affected by untreated trauma reactions and PTSD, the At Ease USA Board of Directors decided to take action. Their plan is to complement existing services offered by military and veterans organizations, with a focus on the elimination of barriers to treatment for those suffering from the effects of deployment and the uncertainty of war.

(2) *WHAT ARE THE ISSUES FACING ACTIVE MILITARY, VETERANS AND THEIR LOVED ONES?*

Estimates show up to 35% of armed forces deployed in Iraq will suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).^{*} Left untreated, PTSD can lead to violent behaviors, depression and even death. For the first time since the Vietnam War, the rate of suicide in the armed forces is higher than the civilian rate.^{**} In 2009 more soldiers died due to high risk behavior (such as drug abuse, driving under the influence, and self-harm) than died in combat.^{**} Families also suffer, as demonstrated through a 20% increase in the number of children of active duty troops seeking mental health treatment each year.^{***}

(3) *WHO PROVIDES THESE NEW AT EASE SERVICES?*

Through a competitive bid process in late 2009, At Ease USA selected Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska (LFS) to develop and pilot the At Ease program. Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska is a 501(c)(3) non-profit with a 118 year history, including 31 years of experience in outpatient behavioral health services. More information about LFS and the LFS At Ease program can be found at www.lfsneb.org.

Senator Chuck Hagel has praised LFS At Ease as “a potential national model,” saying, “Local public-private partnerships could be the quickest and most compassionate way to get veterans the help they need. The government is spending billions of dollars annually trying to help veterans, but our circuits are overloaded after nine years of war and a crippling recession. Non-profits, religious groups and businesses must step up.” *This is exactly what the At Ease USA and LFS At Ease partnership is doing!*

(4) *WHAT SERVICES ARE OFFERED THROUGH THE LFS AT EASE PROGRAM?*

The LFS At Ease Program offers to active military, veterans and their loved ones:

- Therapists trained and qualified to treat trauma disorders, depression and anxiety through proven therapeutic methods;
- Assessments;
- Individual, family and group counseling;
- Peer-to-peer support;
- Educational opportunities;
- Coordination of services and collaboration with federal agencies/community groups to support a system of care for service personnel and their loved ones;
- Development of strategies to reduce stigma through promotion and awareness of behavioral health and trauma issues, including assurances that it is treatable; and
- Provision of a strength-based holistic treatment environment.

At Ease USA and LFS At Ease have taken the lead with this model program to serve with a sense of duty and utmost respect for an individual's personal sacrifice, honor and need for confidentiality. The program recognizes that it is critically important for service members to have service options and a strong sense of trust in the provider of those services. LFS At Ease offers this as well as the opportunity to participate with anonymity.

(5) *WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AT EASE USA AND LFS AT EASE?*

LFS manages and provides the At Ease program. At Ease USA is a volunteer organization raising awareness and funding to support the LFS At Ease program. The organizations collaborate closely regarding program direction and administration through a contractual agreement. At Ease USA pays the Omaha Community Foundation a small fee for a charitable checkbook account.

(6) *WHAT IS THE CURRENT STAFFING? WHERE ARE THEY LOCATED IN NEBRASKA?*

Debra Jones is Director and Senior Therapist for LFS At Ease. Paul Greenwell, MS, a registered therapist and member of the Nebraska Army National Guard, joined the team in June 2010. LFS At Ease is located at 730 Fort Crook Road North, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005.

The vision is to expand LFS At Ease services across the LFS statewide system of 32 offices. LFS has a unique ability to connect clients via TeleHealth, a secure network with audio and visual capabilities. TeleHealth is used in hospitals across the state for primary and behavioral healthcare. LFS is also credentialed by TriCare to utilize web-based treatment within a 40 mile radius of Omaha. These two service delivery methods increase the future ability of LFS to serve active military, veterans and their loved ones that live outside the metropolitan Omaha area.

(7) *HOW MANY SERVICE PERSONNEL AND THEIR LOVED ONES WERE SERVED IN 2009/2010?*

Since the program began in June of 2009, 53 people have received help through the program. The therapists are currently working with 24 service personnel and families.

(8) *ARE CONTRIBUTIONS TO AT EASE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE?*

Yes. Checks may be made payable to At Ease USA and mailed to the Omaha Community Foundation, 302 S. 36th Street, Omaha, NE 68131. Lutheran Family Services also receives designated gifts for the LFS At Ease program.

* Source: Wein, Lawrence, "Counting the Walking Wounded," *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 2009

**Source: Army Health Promotion, *Risk Reduction, Suicide Prevention Report 2010*

*** Source: Hefling, Kimberly. "Military Sees Big Increase in Troops' Children Seeking Mental Health Care," *Associated Press*, July 7, 2009