



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Indian Stream Health Center Hosts Open House to Introduce Telemental Health Program with the Veterans Administration

Indian Stream Health Center (ISHC) invites community residents to an Open House on Wednesday, August 10th at noon to introduce a new Telemental Health Program in collaboration with the Veteran's Administration (VA) White River Junction Medical Center. Funded by a grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Rural Health, veterans in the ISHC service area in need of behavioral health assessment and treatment can now meet with a psychiatrist or psychologist located at the VA Medical Center in White River Junction using state of the art telecommunication equipment located in ISHC. The health center's equipment includes a monitor and video camera with microphone connected to a secure connection over the Internet that allows face to face communication between individuals in separate locations. Veterans who have had to travel nearly three hours for behavioral health services at the VA Medical Center in White River Junction can now receive the same care close to home.

The collaboration between ISHC and the VA to provide this service is part of a nationwide effort by the VA to bring services, particularly behavioral health support, closer to where veterans and their families live. This effort is in direct response to the large number of service members returning from first and repeat deployments to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars which has placed a high demand on the VA's behavioral health treatment systems. Compounding the challenge is the key role played by reservists and national Guardsmen in these wars.

The VA has discovered that the challenge of providing behavioral health care for these returning soldiers and veterans is exacerbated because these troops often come from cities and states located a significant distance away from existing military bases and VA centers. Recent statistics from the National Rural Health Association suggest that as many as 40 percent of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are from rural areas.

The VA is responding to the challenge of supporting these veterans by aggressive expansion of its community based outpatient clinics and through innovative applications of technology. The VA operates one of the largest telemental health programs in the world, with over 45,000 video-based and over 5,000 home telemental health encounters each year.

The VA's widespread use of telemental health tools represents the culmination of decades of development both inside and outside the VA. The earliest applications of telemental health date back to the 1960s and '70s when videoconferencing linked patients and providers largely through grant-funded demonstrations. Today, telemental health tools are used broadly, including for consultation, diagnosis, treatment, and suicide assessment.

The Board of Directors and staff of Indian Stream Health Center are proud to become a part of this nationwide system to support the veterans in our service area and encourage area veterans as well as family and friends to attend the Open House to see a demonstration of the equipment and learn more about the program. The Open House is scheduled from 12:00 Noon to 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 10 in the lower level of the ISHC facility on Corliss Lane, Colebrook, NH. Refreshments will be provided and VA representatives will be present both at the health center as well as electronically through the aforementioned telecommunications equipment to describe the program and to answer any questions individuals may have.