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June 19, 2014

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Department of Defense Program Offers Free, Anonymous Mental Health Self-Assessments to Recognize PTSD Awareness Month

*Military installations around the world will hold special events to recognize June as PTSD Awareness
Month
and Friday, June 27 as PTSD Awareness Day*

Wellesley Hills, Mass. —June is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month, and Military Pathways, a program of the Department of Defense, is encouraging service members, veterans, and their families to take advantage of a free mental health self-assessment tool available at MindBodyStrength.org to determine if they have symptoms that might be PTSD or another common mental health disorder such as depression or generalized anxiety disorder. “Self-assessments give users valuable information about their own mental health,” said Dr. Douglas Jacobs, MD, associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and founder and medical director of Screening for Mental Health, the parent company of Military Pathways.

At MindBodyStrength.org users provide some basic demographic information and answer a set of questions about their symptoms. After completing the assessment, users receive immediate feedback as to whether their symptoms are consistent with those of a mental health condition such as PTSD.

It is important to note that only a health care provider can diagnose a mental health condition such as PTSD after a thorough medical evaluation, but a self-assessment is a private and valuable step that can provide users with more information about their own mental health. Lingering symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, hypersensitivity and emotional numbness can not only interfere with work and social life, they can also be an indication of the need for medical intervention.

Army veteran Elijah Ochoa, who served two deployments in Iraq as a medic, said PTSD symptoms such as reliving the event and severe anxiety, plagued him a few months after his return home. He found it especially difficult to live in a city because of the noises and crowds, and found public transportation would trigger memories of trauma.

“Had I taken a mental health self-assessment when I was first suffering with PTSD, I would have known to get treatment and would have been spared months of pain.” Ochoa said

Ochoa said that when his symptoms got bad, he avoided going out and, instead, focused on his anxiety and depression. He eventually found help at his local VA. Working with a therapist, he used talk therapy and mindfulness techniques to successfully manage his symptoms. He has since enrolled in nursing school and, with only two semesters to graduate, has already secured a job as a psychiatric nurse at a local VA.

In addition to Military Pathways' online self-assessments, military installations around the globe will be recognizing June as PTSD Awareness Month and Friday, June 27 as PTSD Awareness Day with special events with free promotional and educational materials about PTSD. To learn more about Military Pathway's visit www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org.

About Military Pathways

Military Pathways gives service personnel and their families the opportunity to learn more about mental health and alcohol use through anonymous self-assessments offered online. The program is designed to help individuals identify symptoms and access assistance before a problem becomes serious. The self-assessments address alcohol use, PTSD, depression, generalized anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and a brief screening for adolescent depression. The program is run by the nonprofit Screening for Mental Health, Inc. and is funded by the Department of Defense with support from the National Center for Telehealth and Technology (<http://www.t2.health.mil/>).