



Department of Veterans Affairs  
James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital  
13000 Bruce B. Downs Boulevard  
Tampa FL 33612

In Reply Refer To:

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to request funding assistance for Equine Therapy program (e.g. Quantum Leap Farms, Odessa, Florida) for veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder related to military trauma.

Approximately one year ago, several of our veterans were able to take part in a program lasting several months offered by Quantum Leap, Inc. Although only a limited number of veterans were able to take part in the program, I observed that these veterans made significant gains in areas of adaptive functioning. While they continued to have symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, they began to show significant improvements in areas such as cause and effect reasoning, problem-solving, insight into their own interpersonal style and moods, developing trust, and understanding how their condition affects others, as well as how to begin to self-regulate their emotions.

Regrettably, funding for the program evaporated in 2008 and 2009 due to budgetary cuts at the James A. Haley V.A. Hospital (the nation's busiest VA and one of four nation-wide VA Poly-trauma centers). Although a limited number of programs in the VA (e.g. OIF/OEF veterans, spinal cord injury patients) do have access to Equine Therapy, many veterans in the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder program do not have access because of budgetary cuts. This unique, naturalistic non-verbal therapy offers the possibility for therapeutic gains in ways that other, educationally-based or verbally-oriented therapies cannot. It allows for personal explorations of feelings and behaviors to help promote human growth and development, in a tranquil, peaceful, non-threatening setting. Moreover, hippo-therapy with horses has been shown to improve muscle tone, balance, posture, coordination, and gross and fine motor skills with patients with physical limitations and chronic pain conditions. Many psychiatric conditions have the potential for improvement, including anxiety and mood disorders, schizophrenia, trauma-related disorders, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, eating disorders, autism, and impulse control disorders, among others.

Our agency would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with funding sources to make this program more widely available to our veterans. Please contact myself, and/or Dr. Carri-Ann Gibson, M.D., Director of the PTSD program at James A. Haley VA, if we can in any way provide additional information or assistance that would augere in making this therapy available again to our veterans with PTSD. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

*John T. Hummer, Ph.D.*

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PTSD Program

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