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NEWS RELEASE

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Six new Lovell Federal Health Care Center staff part of Department of Veterans Affairs goal to hire 1,600 mental health professionals to increase access to care

NORTH CHICAGO, Ill. – Lovell Federal Health Care Center announced today that six new hires in the past year are part of an nationwide government goal to improve access to care for Veterans, military members and military families.

The hires fall under a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) initiative announced last year to bring on 1,600 new mental health professionals. The initiative was outlined in President Obama’s August 31, 2012, Executive Order to Improve Access to Mental Health Services for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families. Lovell FHCC has hired six new mental health professionals.

“I am proud of the hard work our staff has completed to bring these new staff members on board,” said Lovell FHCC Director Patrick Sullivan. “We are not slowing our efforts, however, and will continue to actively recruit for any vacant mental health positions for the future so Veterans will get the care they need.

“These new hires will directly impact patients and their families in a positive way,” said Capt. José Acosta, Lovell FHCC deputy director and commanding officer. “It’s our duty here at Lovell FHCC to reach out to our Veterans and military members who need these vital mental health services and give them the best care possible.”

As the nation’s first and only federal health care center – an integration of Department of Defense and VA medical care services in North Chicago – Lovell FHCC fell under the VA initiative.

As of May 31, 2013, VA has hired a total of 1,607 mental health clinical providers to meet the goal of 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in the Executive Order. Additionally, VA has hired 2,005 mental health clinical providers to fill existing vacancies.

“Meeting this hiring milestone significantly enhances our ability to improve access to care for those Veterans seeking mental health services and demonstrates our continued commitment to the health and well-being of the men and women who have served the nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Meeting this goal is an important achievement but we recognize that we must continue to increase access to the quality mental health care Veterans have earned and deserve.”

VA provides a full range of comprehensive mental health services across the country, as does Lovell FHCC and its outpatient clinics. In Fiscal Year 2012, more than 1.3 million Veterans received specialized mental health care from VA. This number continues to rise each year from 927,052 in Fiscal Year 2006.

In addition to hiring more mental health professionals, VA is expanding the use of innovative technology to serve Veterans in rural or underserved areas. VA expects to increase the number of Veterans receiving care from tele-mental health services in fiscal year 2013, and has increased the number of Vet Centers, which provide readjustment counseling and referral services, from 233 in 2008 to 300 in 2012.

In November 2011, VA launched an award-winning, national public awareness campaign called “Make the Connection,” which is aimed at reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental health care and informing Veterans, their families, friends, and community members about VA resources. More information on Make the Connection can be found at www.maketheconnection.net.

Mental health professionals interested in seeking employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs can obtain information at www.vacareers.va.gov. Veterans and their families interested in learning more about the mental health services provided by VA can go to www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

About the Lovell FHCC: The Lovell FHCC was established Oct. 1, 2010, as the nation's first and only fully integrated Department of Veterans Affairs/Department of Defense federal health care center. The center has a dual mission of caring for Veterans and ensuring the medical and dental readiness of U.S. Navy recruits and sailors serving in the region. Lovell FHCC, which is located in North Chicago, operates four Great Lakes Naval Station clinics and three community based outpatient clinics in McHenry and Evanston, Ill. and Kenosha, Wis. The facility also serves military families and military retirees.