Student Veterans and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
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According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ National Center for PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD is defined as “an anxiety disorder resulting from exposure to an experience involving direct or indirect threat of serious harm or death.” “PTSD develops in some people who have seen or lived through a shocking, scary or dangerous event” such as combat.

This definition applies to both our general population and our combat student Veterans. Our Shasta College Veterans population is approximately 200 men and women. There are statistics that place 20% of recent Veterans with PTSD. Unless the Veteran voluntarily discloses having PTSD, we cannot be certain of who or how many whose education is affected. When a Veteran discloses a PTSD diagnosis, they may be eligible for accommodations through the District’s disability services through DSPS.

When faculty become aware of a Veteran in their class there are considerations one can do to help:

- Flexibility can help to reduce stress. For example it can take months for Veterans to get an appointment at the VA and it may conflict with the class schedule. If the Veteran informs you of a pending appointment, you may choose to afford him/her an alternative that will allow them to still complete a requirement which they would otherwise miss. Medical appointments are important for their care and rescheduling can delay their services.

- Avoid focus of attention on student Veterans in your class whom may have served in combat. Veterans do not typically want to draw attention to themselves and combat experiences.

- If you notice a student Veteran becoming agitated or an unhealthy interaction is occurring, it could be a good idea for you to divert attention and allow the Veteran to walk-away and take a break if they wish. They may need to contact a support person.

- If a Veteran experiences a flashback during class, encourage them to notice where they are. Give reassurance of their safety. Have them get up and move around if necessary and get a drink of water. If there are other Veterans in class they can be instrumental in helping. One Shasta College faculty member recently noted that during a field trip a Veteran unexpectedly experienced a loud and unsettling outburst. His fellow Veteran class members immediately came to his aid to help him calm down.

Veterans want to be successful students. With just a little assistance they can be. Please consider using some of the suggestions above to support our student vets.

When it comes to the general college population and PTSD please read more at the following links: [http://ptsd.about.com/od/prevalence/a/PTSDinCollegeStudents.htm](http://ptsd.about.com/od/prevalence/a/PTSDinCollegeStudents.htm) and [http://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentaccessibilityservices/resources/ptsd/index.php](http://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentaccessibilityservices/resources/ptsd/index.php)