

TESTIMONY BY JOHN D. CORRIGAN, PHD  
DIRECTOR, OHIO BRAIN INJURY PROGRAM  
BEFORE THE HOUSE FINANCE  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE  
MARCH 23, 2017

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the committee, my name is John Corrigan. I am a Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. I also serve as the Director of the Ohio Brain Injury Program, which is established under Ohio Revised Code (ORC 3335.60), as is its advisory body, the Brain Injury Advisory Committee (ORC 3335.61).

In the 1990's the Ohio General Assembly created the Ohio Brain Injury Program and its Brain Injury Advisory Committee to address the needs of Ohioans who have experienced brain injury. The program was originally housed at the Ohio Department of Health before being moved to the, then, Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission. In 2013, these programs were moved to The Ohio State University College of Medicine to allow leadership from persons who specialize in brain injury rehabilitation.

Together, the Brain Injury Program and Advisory Committee seek to address the needs of more than 100,000 Ohioans treated each year in Emergency Rooms or

hospitalized due to brain injury, as well as an estimated half million Ohioans who experience mild TBIs, better known as concussions, that are evaluated outside the hospital, or not at all. A recent Ohio Department of Health survey found that 1.8 million adults in Ohio have had at least 1 traumatic brain injury, or TBI, in their lifetime that was severe enough to cause loss of consciousness. Almost 100,000 Ohioans report both that they have a disability and that they have had a serious brain injury in their life.

As part of our mission to serve Ohioans with brain injury and their families, we are concerned about Ohio's Veterans, some of whom have experienced combat-related TBIs, others of whom have had brain injuries at other times in their lives. As part of our response, in 2015 the Ohio Brain Injury Program began the Star Behavioral Health Providers program in collaboration with the Ohio National Guard, the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Red Cross and OhioCares. The Star program was created by the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University—Ohio was the 3<sup>rd</sup> of what are now 9 states to have established this program.

The Star program is designed to give Veterans, service members and their families more choices if they decide they want to see a behavioral health professional. The program provides three tiers of specialized training to local mental health providers that enhance these professionals' understanding of military culture, as well as problems that can occur during service—traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress. The Star program improves both quality and access to behavioral health care for service members, Veterans and their families.

Local behavioral health professionals who are licensed to provide mental health services and who complete the Star program training are entered into a registry that

is available online to the public seeking services, as well as professionals needing to make referrals for mental health care. A service member, Veteran, or family member who seeks care from a Star-trained provider can have confidence that he or she has some understanding of the unique experience of military service and knows what the evidence-based practices are for treating conditions unique to combat exposure.

Ohio initiated the Star Behavioral Health Providers program in 2015 via a grant from the Wounded Warriors Project that was given to Purdue University to expand the Star program from Indiana to other states. That funding ended in June 2016. During the 18 months of active funding, we were able to train 901 professionals from around Ohio, 131 of whom qualified to be included in the registry. These professionals come from 38 counties. Through support from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addictions Services and the Ohio Brain Injury Program we have been able to sustain the initial accomplishments of the program after the grant funding ended by maintaining the registry. We also have received in kind support to offer two additional training opportunities this spring. But to accomplish the program's goals we need to resume trainings statewide for Ohio mental health professionals, particularly for those who practice in our rural counties where a higher proportion of our Veterans reside. We also need to roll out new trainings that will serve as updates for those already in the registry.

In order to continue the Star program in Ohio, the Brain Injury Program is requesting \$150,000 in additional annual funding be allocated in the Biennium Budget. This funding will allow us to provide six Tier 1, three Tier 2, and two Tier 3 trainings each year. These trainings would reach an additional 1,200 providers during the next biennium and more than quadruple the current registry. We will also increase the geographic representation of providers, with the goal of having

registered professionals in all 88 Ohio counties. This funding will assure that in the future Ohio's Veterans and their families who want to seek assistance from a mental health professional have choices that are nearby, sensitive to their unique life experience, and informed about the latest, evidence-based treatments.

Accompanying my written statement are letters from community organizations that support the Star program. These include Kenneth Marcum, on behalf of the Disabled American Veterans; Douglas Howard, a board member of a non-profit organization called Run Down the Demons started by OSU student-veterans to raise awareness of Veterans with PTSD and TBI; Daniel Hutchinson, Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran, advocate, and author of *Nowhere to Turn: The Broken Home from Iraq*; Doug Beckley, Paralyzed Veterans of America Buckeye Chapter; and several providers who have received Star Behavioral Health Provider training.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.

## Support from Star Behavioral Health Providers:

I am a 5 licensed therapist who had attended all 3 tiers of training through SBHP. Through the free and inexpensive training; I became aware of Give An Hour to the military. I have provided free services to about 25 active duty, veterans and their families for the past year. The training I received through SBHP was invaluable. And again, I would have never known about the Give An Hour if it wasn't for this training. I worked for Dept. of Defense for 10 years as a therapist and got superb training when I worked there. The Tier 1, 2, and 3 training has been as excellent as any training I received working for DOD.

I feel I have helped many soldiers, veterans and their families in the past year. Some of the work has been exhausting because of the stress our military goes through. But they keep coming back so I must be doing something right. I have counseled these clients on PTSD, marital, financial and other personal issues. I do ongoing treatment as long as they need it.

The SBHP continues to offer free or inexpensive seminars and webinars on treating people in the military and their families and I continue to use this training and knowledge.

I hope the program continues to be funded because I'm certain there are other therapists who are helping the military and their families in OH. And this training has been a very valuable tool.

Sincerely,

Patricia Ciambro, MS, LPC, LICDC  
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To Whom It May Concern:

I feel that the training I have received ( Level 1) has been invaluable in my private practice. The military and veteran population has unique needs and we need therapist that are familiar with those unique needs. While some of us were exposed to PTSD and trauma treatment, most of our university training does NOT include any information on this population in general and the issues they struggle with. Yet these skills and knowledge are crucial to successful treatment. I plan on attending Level 11.

Thanks

Sheila Santoro Ph.D,LPCC, CCDCHH

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**3/16/17**

**To: Members of the House Committee Meeting**

Re: Issue efforts to pursue funding to expand the SBHP program in Ohio

**Dear Members of the House Committee:**

I am writing to you on behalf of SBHP. I would like to express that as a Psychologist in private practice in Gahanna and Central Ohio area, I have had opportunity to work with veterans of the military. In my effort to be an effective therapist, I have found attending the workshops made available by SBHP to be invaluable. Thus far I have completed Tier 1 and Tier 3. I will be attending Tier II this April in Akron. Because of the knowledge I have gained from these workshops I feel that I have been more successful in my effort to reach out to my veteran patients. I am much better able to discuss their concerns having knowledge of deployment (Tier 1) and many of the conflicts that they encounter. I do not believe that I could have attained such most valuable information from non-military personnel to the level of sophistication that I have received from those military personnel presenting at those workshops. Additionally the workshop on PTSD (Tier 3) was most valuable as it presented data collected from therapists in the military from working with active, inactive and veterans. The presentation of such information is unique. I know that because of my experience with these workshops arranged by SBHP have caused me to become a better therapist working with the military and veteran populations.

I would also like to add that in both of the workshops which I attended there was great enthusiasm not only on the part of the presenters but also on the part of the attendees. The attendees were of a very good mix of the various resources for delivery of services including psychologists, social workers, counselors and ministers. It is very clear that veterans and military, both active and in active, need to be understood by their therapists in order for delivery of services to be effective. I do not believe therapists can be as effective in delivery of such services to this population unless they can be participants in such programs offered through SBHP. Please continue to support SBHP. I look forward to having an ongoing relationship with SBHP and plan on continued participation in the workshops they offer so that I may further my skills as a therapist.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

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**Michael G. Drown, Ph. D., Psychologist**

*Phi Kappa Phi*  
*MD/md*

Ohio Brain Injury Program  
RE: Star Behavioral Health Program

Greetings to the members of the House Committee,

My name is April Cunion and I am a licensed Psychologist in the state of Ohio. At the current time, I have attended a Tier One training by SBHP and am registered to attend a Tier Two training in April 2017. Throughout these trainings, I have been able to gain a better understanding of treatment for PTSD and traumatic brain injury (TBI) for those who have served in an active-duty capacity in the military.

Coming into the trainings, I felt accustomed to military culture as my husband served for nine years in the US Navy prior to his honorable discharge and our relocation to Ohio. The trainings are helping me to be able to gain more than personal experience with the challenges that face our military veterans, which is valuable for my practice. It is particularly valuable that the training initiatives include testing participants on knowledge gained in sessions, thereby demonstrating growth. The additional goals of research on a monthly basis by SBHP have provided critical information on the utility of these services.

Based on news of the overwhelming need for VA services, I believe that this program can be effective in producing clinicians who can meet the clinical needs presented by veterans.

Sincerely,

April L. Cunion, Psy.D.

Psychologist License #6886

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