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*For Immediate Release*

**Vibrant Emotional Health and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families Awarded Three-Year Contract to Provide Mental Health Awareness Training to Veterans' Service Provider Networks**

New York, NY (January 22, 2018) - The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has awarded Vibrant Emotional Health, formerly the Mental Health Association of New York City, a grant to train individuals to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness, and establish new pathways for veterans, service members and their families to access services and supports for those in need. This grant is partnership with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University.

The purpose of Veterans Mental Health First Aid Training is to:

1. Train individuals providing direct services to veterans to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental disorders, particularly serious mental illness and/or serious emotional disturbance;
2. Establish linkages community-based mental health agencies to refer individuals with the signs or symptoms of mental illness to appropriate services.

Veterans, service members, and military families face unique challenges when they or loved ones need behavioral health services. 31% of troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan report mental health conditions and traumatic brain injury, yet fewer than half seek treatment (RAND, 2008). Insufficient capacity to address the needs of service members returning home, coupled with a lack of understanding among veterans, service members and their families about behavioral health disorders, treatment options, and the stigma associated with both, contribute to underutilization of behavioral health treatment.

Utilization and access to behavioral health services is further limited by a lack of awareness of military culture and an understanding of the unique needs of the military connected community by many community-based, non-clinical providers of service. Increasingly, veterans, service members and their families are turning to community-based organizations for employment services, housing/shelter, benefits navigation, financial management, legal services, help with basic needs such as food, clothing and utilities, as well as health and behavioral health services. 38% of veterans are not enrolled in VA services. Earlier identification and intervention are necessary to have an impact on the 20 veterans who die by suicide every day, as reported by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“To increase access to and utilization of needed behavioral health services, it is necessary to enhance mental health awareness of veterans, service members and military families, as well as the non-clinical providers serving this population,” said Kimberly Williams, President and CEO of Vibrant Emotional Health. “We are excited to be working with the IVMF to launch the inaugural Mental Health First Aid training to the Institute’s AmericaServes team.”

AmericaServes, administered by the IVMF, is a network of more than 900 community-based providers nationwide working together seamlessly to provide veterans and their families with more efficient access to and navigation of care and resources in communities. Over a period of three years, Veterans Mental Health First Aid trainings for local network providers will occur in each of the AmericaServes sites, including: Rhode Island, New York (NYC and Upstate New York), Pennsylvania, the National Capitol Region, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, California, Washington State, Texas, and Oklahoma.

“Mental and behavioral health services are just as critical to overall well-being as physical health,” said Jim McDonough, managing director of programs and services for the IVMF. “We are honored and proud to partner with Vibrant to bring access and awareness of emotional and mental health services to veterans and the families in communities across the country.”

### **About Vibrant Emotional Health**

Formerly the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC), Vibrant Emotional Health, is a non-profit organization that helps individuals and families achieve emotional wellbeing. For over 50 years, our groundbreaking solutions have delivered high-quality services and support, when, where and how people need it. We offer confidential emotional support through our state-of-the-art contact center and crisis hotline services that use leading edge telephone, text and web-based technologies and include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, NFL Life Line and NYC Well. Through our community wellness programs individuals and families obtain supports and skills they need to thrive. Our advocacy and education initiatives promote mental wellbeing as a social responsibility. Each year we help more than 2.5 million people live healthier and more vibrant lives. We’re advancing access, dignity and respect for all and revolutionizing the system for good. Visit [www.vibrant.org](http://www.vibrant.org) for more. And follow Vibrant on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

### **About the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University**

The Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University is the first interdisciplinary national institute in higher education focused on the social, economic, education, and policy issues impacting veterans and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, the IVMF delivers leading programs in career, vocational, and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. The IVMF also supports communities through collective impact efforts that enhance delivery and access to services and care. The Institute, supported by a distinguished advisory

board, along with public and private partners, is committed to advancing the lives of those who have served in America's armed forces and their families. For more information, visit [ivmf.syracuse.edu](http://ivmf.syracuse.edu) and follow the IVMF on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

### **About AmericaServes**

AmericaServes is IVMF's public-partnership, the country's first coordinated system of public, private, and non-profit organizations working together to serve veterans, service members, and their families. Its vision is that every service member, veteran, and their family can easily access the full range of comprehensive services required to achieve their unique goals, and to provide a first-class service experience to match service member and veterans' first-class military service.