

**Not for Publication until released by
the House Armed Services Committee**

Statement of
Captain Brent M. Breining, USN
Director, Navy Wounded Warrior-Safe Harbor
Before the
Subcommittee on Military Personnel
of the
House Armed Services Committee

Subject:
Update on the Navy Wounded Warrior-Safe Harbor
Recovery Care Program

3 February 2015

**Not for Publication until released by
the House Armed Services Committee**



Navy Wounded Warrior – Safe Harbor

Staff Biography



Captain Brent Breining

Director of Navy Wounded Warrior — Safe Harbor

Captain Brent Breining is the Director of Navy Wounded Warrior — Safe Harbor, where he oversees the non-medical care of more than 3,100 seriously wounded, ill and injured Sailors and Coast Guardsmen, and provides resources and support to their families. Through proactive leadership, the program provides individually tailored assistance designed to optimize the success of enrollees' recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration activities. It's goal is to return Sailors and Coast Guardsmen to duty and, when that is not possible, to work collaboratively with federal agencies, and state and local organizations to ease them back into their communities.

A native of Naperville, Illinois, he graduated from the University of Michigan in 1990 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. He was commissioned through the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps and was designated a Naval Flight Officer in October 1991.

His operational tours include assignments with the “Patriots” of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 140 deploying on USS George Washington (CVN 73), the “Gray Wolves” of VAQ 142 deploying to Prince Sultan Air Base in support of the 363rd Air Expeditionary Wing, and Strike Operations Officer for Carrier Group Six (CCG 6) deploying on USS John F Kennedy (CV 67). His command tour was with the “Black Ravens” of VAQ 135 deploying on USS Nimitz (CVN 68). He has supported combat Operations Deny Flight, Southern Watch, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom.

His shore tours include instructor duty with the “Vikings” of VAQ 129; in-residence education at the Air Command and Staff College in Montgomery, Alabama; joint duty as Chief of the Flying Hour Program Office for U.S. Special Operations Command in Tampa, Florida; and assignment as the 2010 Defense Legislative Fellow for Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AI.) in Washington D.C. His most recent tour was at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in Washington, D.C., where he served as a division chief with the Defense Combating Terrorism Center and Senior DIA Liaison to the Director for Strategic Operational Planning at the National Counterterrorism Center. He is a 2011 graduate of the Joint Forces Staff College and earned a Master of Public Administration from Auburn University Montgomery in 2002.

His personal decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), Air Medal (four Strike/Flight awards), Navy Commendation Medal (two awards), Joint Service Achievement Medal, and Navy Achievement Medal (four awards). He has logged over 2,500 flight hours and 600 carrier arrested landings on six different carriers.



Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members of the subcommittee – thank you for the opportunity to discuss updates on Navy Wounded Warrior-Safe Harbor (NWW-SH), the non-medical recovery care program for the Navy and Coast Guard. Since its establishment in 2005, NWW-SH has made significant progress in providing the very best in non-medical care for our seriously wounded, ill, and injured Sailors and Coast Guardsmen, their families, and caregivers. Nine years later, NWW-SH enrollments have expanded more than ten-fold, and its staff includes Non-Medical Care Managers (NMCMs) and Recovery Care Coordinators (RCCs) located at Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers at 17 locations throughout the country.

As of January 1st, 2015, NWW-SH has supported 3,283 service members across the life of the program, which includes 1,810 seriously wounded, ill, and injured Sailors and 109 Coast Guardsmen. This number also includes 1,364 less seriously ill and injured Sailors and Coast Guardsmen that have been assisted by NWW-SH. The program addresses an enduring need that will persist even after sustained combat operations conclude.

Historical Narrative

In 2005, the Military Severely Injured Center requested a Navy Liaison be assigned to support Sailors seriously wounded in combat. The Navy Liaison, a Program Director, and an Outreach Case Manager were designated as the first staff of Navy Wounded Warrior. At that time there were 20 wounded Sailors enrolled in the program.

The following year, the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) directed the Secretary of Defense to “prescribe a comprehensive policy for the Department of Defense on the provision of assistance to members of the Armed Forces who incur severe wounds or injuries in

the line of duty”. The 2007 President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors (Dole-Shalala Commission) recommended continued support be extended from September 11, 2001, onward for active and transitioning wounded warrior service members. In response to the 2008 NDAA, NWW-SH services were expanded to include seriously ill Sailors, and in 2009 the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and the Commandant of the Coast Guard signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding authorizing NWW-SH to provide support to seriously wounded, ill, and injured Coast Guardsmen. In 2010, NWW-SH was named a Program of Record with an enrolled population of just over 1,000.

On October 1, 2012, NWW-SH realigned from the CNO's Total Force Requirements Division under the Chief of Naval Personnel to Commander (N1) to Navy Installations Command (CNIC) under the Fleet and Family Readiness directorate (N9). The program's operations became fully regionalized across the seven Navy regions in the continental United States and Hawaii on October 1, 2013.

Enrollment Expansion

NWW-SH has experienced continuous program growth since its inception. Even as sustained combat operations in Afghanistan come to a close, the program will likely continue to grow commensurate with the average rate of incidence of serious illnesses and injuries across the Fleet. In fact, only 19 percent of NWW-SH enrollees are combat wounded while the vast majority (81 percent) are enrolled for non-combat conditions. Enrollment in NWW-SH is extended to active duty and reserve Sailors and Coast Guardsmen with a service-connected serious illness or injury sustained while in the line of duty, including shipboard or training accidents, liberty accidents, motorcycle and vehicular accidents, or diagnosis of a serious illness

such as cancer, brain disease, stroke, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The following is a breakdown of the program enrollment demographics:

- Gender: 82% Male, 18% Female
- Rate: 89% Enlisted, 10% Officer, 1% Midshipmen
- Status: 87% Active, 13% Reserve
- Origin: 19% Combat, 81% Non-combat

To highlight the expansion in program enrollments, at the conclusion of NWW-SH regionalization on October 1, 2013, average active case management had risen to 300 per year for seriously wounded, ill, and injured Sailors and Coast Guardsmen. This number had grown to 403 cases per year by October 1, 2014. Program enrollments of seriously wounded, ill, and injured service members increased by 19 percent in FY2013 and 34 percent in FY2014. The recent growth in referrals is largely due to increased Fleet awareness through an effective marketing and outreach effort that was broadened by our new regional footprint. Additionally, a change in attitude has been observed with Navy and Coast Guard service members willing to overcome the stigma of seeking help, which indicates that these barriers are being broken down with increased awareness across the Navy and Coast Guard.

Program Structure

Regional NWW-SH non-medical care teams consisting of military, civilian, and contractor NMCMs and RCCs tailor support to each enrolled service member during their recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration phases. Responsibilities are separated into addressing initial needs (conducted by the NMCM), and development and implementation of a long-term care plan bridging the three phases of recovery listed above (conducted by the RCC). Currently

NWW-SH has 53 staff members supporting 1,663 active cases consisting of 595 Recovering Service Members (RSMs) and 1,068 Transitioned Service Members (TSMs).

Support includes, but is not limited to, Comprehensive Recovery Plan development, addressing pay and personnel issues, connecting family members and caregivers to available support resources, providing adaptive sports and recreational opportunities, and linking them to education and job training benefits. NWW-SH strives to return a Sailor or Coast Guardsman to duty. When that is not possible, the program works collaboratively with federal agencies and local organizations to help them successfully reintegrate into their communities, easing their transition to civilian life and ensuring that they are cared for throughout their lifetimes.

Due to the size of its population and smaller incidence of combat exposure, the Navy has elected to establish a decentralized program for providing wounded warrior support with enrolled Sailors and Coast Guardsmen still attached to their parent command. For long-term inpatient status, enrollees are usually attached to the Military Treatment Facility (MTF) where they are receiving care. When in outpatient status, they remain with their parent unit for administrative oversight.

NWW-SH is responsible for providing strictly non-clinical support while working closely with Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) Navy Clinical Case Managers (NCCMs) located at the MTFs to ensure that the enrolled service member's clinical needs are being addressed. The Navy Case Management team is comprised of over 220 specially trained and licensed registered nurses and licensed clinical social workers assigned to 23 MTFs. NCCMs work as part of the recovery team along with RCCs, NMCMs, and/or VA federal recovery coordinators. Together these specialists help service members successfully navigate through the military medical system, which can be very complex.

Today, NCCMs remain a vital member of the care delivery team, and they continue to assist with optimal outcomes for wounded warrior patients and their family members, both at home and abroad. NCCMs work closely with their counterparts from NWW-SH on optimal care delivery. The nature of this cooperation has been a focus of renewed attention in 2014, with new programs in place to provide seamless communication. For instance, BUMED recently started to systematically track referrals from Navy Medicine to NWW-SH to ensure that they are appropriately taking place with the desired frequency.

Oversight

The Recovery Coordination Program (RCP) directive, DoDI 1300.24, mandates that the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for Warrior Care Policy (WCP) conduct formal annual RCP evaluations across the Military Departments. Additionally, they encourage the Military Departments to conduct internal evaluations. As such, NWW-SH has instituted regional Site Assist Visits (SAVs) incorporating OSD WCP areas of focus to ensure compliance with existing RCP policy. The SAV team reviews roles and responsibilities, database case management, field operations, training, outreach and awareness, enrollment guidance, and compliance with cross-functional (adaptive sports, family programs, transition support) program policy guidance. Additionally, the SAV team conducts random sampling of database records and meets with at least 8-10 recovering service members and family members or caregivers to discuss their recovery, rehabilitation, or reintegration progress to ascertain any gaps in services or resources. NWW-SH has visited each of our regional staffs in the U.S. and Hawaii over the last year.

Current Initiatives

Family Programs/Caregiver Peer-to-Peer

The Military Caregiver Peer-to-Peer Support Program is a Joining Forces supported initiative in response to the findings of a 2014 RAND Study on Caregivers commissioned by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. The purpose is to raise awareness of challenges and assist military families and caregivers of wounded warriors. Launched in the National Capital Region in June 2014, the plan calls for nation-wide rollouts to 118 DoD installations by the end of summer 2015. This program utilizes Military Family Life Counselors to facilitate support groups at MTFs and bases consisting of military family members and caregivers, allowing them to connect with their peers, share best practices, learn about available resources, and tell their stories. To date NWW-SH has implemented this program at seven out of eight identified locations where NWW-SH staff is present.

NWW-SH has implemented Family Symposiums to provide an opportunity to spotlight the contributions of families and caregivers of seriously wounded, ill, and injured Navy and Coast Guard service members in targeted Navy regions. Families and caregivers participate in a panel forum to share their experiences and challenges in an effort to raise awareness of the various needs and services required to support their RSM as they progress through the phases of recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration. A local resource fair is held in conjunction with the Family Symposium to highlight available military, VA, and civilian resources. NWW-SH has sponsored three Family Symposiums to date, each drawing on the successes of the previous events. The latest event at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center drew an audience of 119 to include enrollees, family members, hospital staff, and military personnel from other

branches. NWW-SH also publishes a quarterly family newsletter listing upcoming events and available resources to promote awareness to families and caregivers of RSMs and TSMs.

Education and Employment Program

NWW-SH Education and Employment Program connects transitioning wounded warriors to scholarship programs, resume writing resources, and employment and internship opportunities such as OSD WCP's Operation Warfighter (OWF), which provides wounded warriors internship opportunities in the federal workplace. NWW-SH transition coordinators also utilize the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation Program and eBenefits, OSD WCP's Education and Employment Initiative (E2I) counselors, as well as their connections with industry to identify available employment opportunities tailored to their wounded warrior's individual needs. In 2014, NWW-SH provided the following support:

- 51 TSMs were employed (20 percent increase over 2013)
- E2I Navy participation increased from 185 in 2013 to 354 in 2014 (91 percent increase over 2013)
- Navy placement in OWF internships increased from 82 in 2013 to 129 in 2014 (57 percent increase over 2013)
- 74 TSMs registered for school (50 percent increase over 2013) with over 26 participating in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- NWW-SH provided employment support information to 178 TSMs and tailored job assistance and referrals to 73 TSMs

The Department of the Navy Wounded Warrior Hiring and Support Conference brings together government, military, and industry leaders who brief wounded warriors on innovative

strategies for successful reintegration, career development, and long-term employment while emphasizing the importance of education and training. This annual event is sponsored by the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and co-hosted by Naval Air Systems Command, Naval Sea Systems Command, and Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command. NWW-SH participates in planning sessions and a resources panel as well as identifies interested Navy and Coast Guard wounded warriors for participation.

Anchor Program

The NWW-SH Anchor Program provides TSMs with a peer mentor from a local Reserve component and a senior mentor selected from a pool of community veterans and retirees to facilitate their transition and reintegration into the community during their first year as a military veteran. Of the 166 peer mentors, 160 are Navy Reservists supporting 202 wounded warrior veterans.

Adaptive Sports/Recreation

Adaptive athletic reconditioning and recreation – athletic activities that are modified to meet the abilities of seriously ill or injured individuals – are essential to the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded warriors. In 2014, 129 NWW-SH athletes participated in 11 adaptive sports camps/clinics throughout the country as well as the London Invictus Games and DoD Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In 2015, 344 active and transitioned enrollees have registered to participate in adaptive sports/recreation opportunities.

Benefits Administration

NWW-SH manages the Navy's Pay and Allowance Continuation (PAC) program, which facilitates the continuation of pay for up to one year during a service member's hospitalization and rehabilitation after incurring a wound, illness, or injury in a combat zone. In 2014, NWW-SH facilitated the distribution of more than \$95,884 to nearly 250 Sailors in PAC benefits. Additionally, NWW-SH administers the Navy's Special Compensation for Assistance with Activities of Daily Living (SCAADL) program, which compensates caregivers of wounded warriors who may have experienced a loss of income. More than \$509,000 in SCAADL benefits was paid to 50 NWW-SH enrollees in 2014.

NWW-SH Call Center

The call center connects people to the catalog of services provided by NWW-SH, and handled more than 1,300 incoming calls and over 700 outreach calls during calendar year 2014. Established at the start of FY2013, the call center is based in Millington, Tennessee. Representatives field telephone inquiries 24 hours a day, every day of the year, and continually work to increase program support capabilities.

Testimonials

Navy Machinist's Mate 1st Class Michael Dayton, injured in a shipboard accident:

"NWW has been really beneficial for me. Initially, I didn't consider myself a wounded warrior; I wasn't wounded in combat. But I now realize that doesn't matter. If you are a service member, and you are seriously hurt or diagnosed with a life-changing illness, NWW is there to help."

Navy Aviation Structural Mechanic 1st Class John Dusseau, recovering from cancer:

“My NWW non-medical care manager saved my life. He reminded me that I was still a Sailor; the Navy still cared about me.”

Navy Special Operator 1st Class Mark Robbins, wounded in combat:

“I could barely walk straight due to my injury, my wife had never been to the area, and we both didn’t know how to navigate the medical system. [My non-medical care management team] helped us line things up and made everything run smooth. We would call for an appointment and would be told we could be seen in three weeks; [NWW] could get us an appointment the next day, if not that very day. If there ever was an issue, she was right on top of it, which was a lifesaver.”

Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Anthony Owens, serious illness:

“My life is not easy, but [NWW] has really helped make it easier. They really do a lot for me, and go above and beyond.”

Way Ahead

While NWW-SH has made significant strides over the past nine years, there will always be more work to do. In the coming years the program needs to continue efforts to expand its regional footprint to keep pace with a growing wounded warrior population. Additionally, it needs to place continued emphasis on adaptive and recreational sports opportunities while taking advantage of the latest marketing trends to raise awareness of the program, the services provided, and the people supported within the medical and Fleet communities. Our wounded warriors,

their families, and caregivers have sacrificed much for this Nation, and they deserve the very best support we can offer them in return.

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members of the subcommittee – I thank you for holding this hearing and continuing to shed light on these important issues. It has been my pleasure to testify before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.