



December 10, 2008

Report: Local vets need better support on their return

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One in three veterans returning from service in Afghanistan and Iraq experiences serious psychological injury, yet the challenges that they and their families face are often invisible to their local community, employers and service providers, according to a Rochester-area study released today.

More than 140 veterans, family members and service providers in the Rochester/Finger Lakes region participated in Voices Together summits in September in Pittsford, Canandaigua and Batavia. The report by the Center for Governmental Research, on behalf of the Veterans Outreach Center, offers a roadmap for improving reintegration policies and services at both the local and policy levels.

The top need is a coordinated, comprehensive care network for veterans and their families, especially their children. It must be available locally, easily navigated, well-publicized and connected, the report says.

Before this, no programs were offered specifically for children of service members. Now, stakeholders are focusing on services for such children, and study participants have formed a family support group.

Veterans also want the community — schools, employers, social networks and religious organizations — to be more aware and supportive. A buddy system of veterans supporting each other also would help, the report says.

The study was funded by the New York State Health Foundation and the Bob Woodruff Family Fund.

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