



National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE)

Background

The National Intrepid Center of Excellence is a facility dedicated to the research, diagnosis and treatment of servicemembers and veterans experiencing traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and psychological health conditions. The **Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund** led the fundraising effort for the Center, securing \$65 million in private donations from the American people and overseeing the construction and equipping of the facility. NICoE was officially donated to the Department of Defense in a dedication ceremony attended by more than 1,000 people on June 24, 2010. The NICoE was transferred from TRICARE Management Activity's Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury to the Department of the Navy for further alignment under the National Naval Medical Center, effective August 10, 2010.

The Center is a 72,000 square foot, two-story facility located on the Navy campus at Bethesda, Maryland. It is adjacent to the future Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, with close access to the Uniformed Services University, the National Institutes of Health and, within the National Capitol Region, the Veterans Health Administration.

Purpose

NICoE will provide state-of-the-art, comprehensive evaluation of selected servicemembers and veterans with complex cases of post-traumatic stress and/or traumatic brain injuries or other complex psychological health conditions. This will include advanced diagnostics, initial

treatment plans, family education and reintegration support. Further, NICoE will test new protocols and provide comprehensive training and education to patients, providers and families while maintaining ongoing telehealth follow-up care across the country and throughout the world. The Center will also conduct extensive research into brain damage, serve as an educational resource and explore new therapy methods.

Besides being a center of excellence for holistic evaluation and treatment planning, NICoE will also guide the development of new best-practices for military medicine. The Center will be led by a skilled interdisciplinary team to harness the latest advances in science, therapy, telehealth, education, research and technology, while providing compassionate, family-centered care for warriors and their loved ones throughout the recovery process.

“Through this center, we now have a place to deliver the care our wounded warriors deserve and in a way we can all be proud of.” Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn, III

Treatment

NICoE will first focus its treatment plans on active duty servicemembers with mild TBI or psychological health conditions, or both, that have not responded to their current treatments. After being referred to NICoE by a military treatment facility, they will come to the Center to live with their families for two weeks. Once here, an experienced team of interdisciplinary specialists will meet with the servicemember and family members to begin the process of assessment and treatment. After a review of medical records and test results, followed by a full assessment and receipt of initial care and a treatment plan, servicemembers will return to their home bases and their referring military treatment facility. The Center's goal is to help servicemembers ultimately return to active duty, and all patients will be followed by the Center after their stay.

Advanced Technology for Warrior Care

NICoE features cutting-edge technology, such as the CAREN (Computer Assisted Rehabilitation Environment), to treat warriors experiencing TBI and/or psychological health conditions. One of only five such machines in the world, the **CAREN** is a computer-assisted rehabilitation system with a motion platform, treadmill and virtual environments for evaluating and rehabilitating a patient's vision, reaction time, gait and multitasking ability. The Center also has some of the most advanced imaging technologies in the world, enabling providers to view brain scans and images that have previously been unavailable.

NICoE features the following onsite treatment facilities and services:

- Occupational therapy gym
- Gait lab
- Outdoor rehabilitation space
- Vocational rehabilitation space
- Virtual reality suite with vehicle and firearms simulators
- Speech, hearing and sight rehabilitation
- Comprehensive physical and occupational therapy—including auto driving rehabilitation
- Advanced training equipment for strength, agility, balance and aerobic conditioning

Amenities

NICoE features the following amenities for servicemembers and their families:

- Rooms for music therapy, sleep studies and recreation therapy
- A family lounge, café, business center and activity center
- Conference rooms and auditorium
- An atrium called “Central Park,” which serves as a peaceful, naturalistic center with plants, simulated sounds and different surfaces for servicemembers to experience while walking (i.e., artificial turf, carpet and stones)

The **Fisher House Foundation**, the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund's sister organization, is building a new 20-room Fisher House next to NICoE that is specially designed to meet warrior and family needs related to TBI and psychological health. This effort will continue promoting NICoE's healing environment of hope, inspiration and community.

The Future

NICoE seeks to be a national leader in advancing world-class psychological health and traumatic brain injury treatment, research and education in a supportive, healing environment. With its dedicated staff, the Center seeks to provide new hope for servicemembers recovering from TBI and post-traumatic stress.

The NICoE is “an outstanding gift for our warriors from the American people.” NICoE Deputy Director Thomas De-Graba, MD