



Providing Help, Hope and Healing to over 3 Million Americans Living with Brain Injury

**Ensure Returning Service Members Receive Access to Effective TBI Treatments**

## About Brain Injury

A traumatic brain injury is an alteration in brain function, or other evidence of brain pathology, caused by an external force. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that 1.7 million people in the U.S. sustain traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) annually and at least 3.17 million children and adults live with a permanent disability as a result of a TBI. The cost to society for medical care and lost wages associated with TBI is \$76.3 billion annually. Individuals with TBI may experience memory loss; concentration or attention problems; slowed learning; and difficulty with planning, reasoning or judgment. Emotional and behavioral consequences include depression, anxiety, impulsivity, aggression and thoughts of suicide. Physical challenges of TBI may include fatigue, headaches, problems with balance or motor skills, sensory losses and seizures. TBI can lead to respiratory, circulatory, digestive and neurological diseases, including epilepsy, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Poor outcomes after TBI result from shortened length of stays in both inpatient and outpatient medical treatment settings. Payers point to a lack of sufficient evidence-based research as a primary reason for coverage denial of medically-necessary treatment. This occurs particularly when behavioral health services and cognitive rehabilitation are needed.

## About BIAA

Founded in 1980, the mission of the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) is to provide help, hope and healing to the millions of Americans who sustain brain injuries each year. BIAA is dedicated to increasing access to quality health care and raising awareness and understanding of brain injury through advocacy, education and research. Together with its nationwide network of chartered state affiliates, as well as hundreds of local chapters and support groups across the country, BIAA is the Voice of Brain Injury for individuals, their families and the professionals who serve them.

Service members who have sustained brain injuries while serving their country deserve the right treatment, right now!

## Take Action Now!

**The estimated 360,000 service members who have sustained a TBI in Iraq and Afghanistan must have access to a full continuum of care, including:**

- **Cognitive Rehabilitation Therapy (CRT):** This critical therapy is available to active duty military and is now available in certain circumstances to the medically retired under TRICARE. By working with TRICARE officials to communicate to service members and health care providers about how to access and be reimbursed for these techniques, BIAA will support the ongoing use of CRT while additional research is being performed to improve the standardization, design, and conduct of CRT efficacy studies.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation:** Many service members and veterans with TBI seek employment, but the Department of Veterans Affairs views employment as a goal of rehabilitation rather than a means of rehabilitation, thereby declaring many medical retirees ineligible for vocational rehabilitation that leads to volunteer positions or community service.
- **Home and Community Based Treatment:** While the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs have vastly improved the quality and speed of care for service members and veterans with TBI, access to local and specialized treatment remains limited. Decision makers within each Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) should be encouraged to exercise their authority to contract with private providers throughout their regions.

### For Information Contact:

Amy Colberg, Director of Government Affairs  
Brain Injury Association of America  
1608 Spring Hill Road, Suite 110  
Vienna, VA 22182  
703-761-0750 ext. 637  
acolberg@biausa.org

**Sign up for BIAA's free e-newsletter, *Policy Corner*, at [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)**

*Development and distribution of this Issue Brief was supported by Centre for Neuro Skills, with locations in Bakersfield, Dallas, Los Angeles and San Francisco. See [www.neuroskills.com](http://www.neuroskills.com) for more information.*