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National Organization of Psychologists Cites Urgent Need for Mental Health Care for Military Service Members and their Families

***Access High-Quality, Pre-Screened Psychologists for Mental Health Services on
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Washington, D.C., March 20, 2007-- Psychologist Judy E. Hall, Ph.D., Executive Officer of the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology (National Register) and content editor for www.findapsychologist.org, says returning members of the military and their families need immediate access to qualified psychologists to avoid treatment delays at military mental health centers and clinics.

“Soldiers coming back were not being seen because there was such an overload of patients and so few mental health providers on base,” said Retired Army Colonel and member of the National Register Board of Directors, Carl Settles, Ph.D.

Dr. Hall added that the recent report in the American Medical Association’s *Archives of Internal Medicine* focuses attention on the large number of service men and women in urgent need of care. The report found that almost one-third of returning veterans who received health care at Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities between 2001 and 2005 were given a mental health or psychosocial diagnosis. The report cited high rates of substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues.

The National Register developed www.findapsychologist.org to ensure access to psychological care across the US and Canada. The site contains practice profiles and contact information on more than 12,000 doctoral-level psychologists. The credentialed psychologists featured on www.findapsychologist.org are rigorously screened for education, health service experience, license, and professional ethics. Many are enrolled as TRICARE providers; others are of the same high quality. The website also offers practical information on a range of behavioral health issues, such as identifying problems in their children, and provides advice for those in the stages of pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment.

“Psychologists are experts in behavior,” says Dr. Hall, “and experts are needed now to address the wide range of problems faced by service members returning home to their families. These problems range from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other anxiety disorders to marital, child/adolescent, and work-related problems. Many are coming home to extensive financial difficulties which increase the likelihood of depression. Depression left untreated can lead to physical illness. This is a vicious cycle that must be broken now.”

Dr. Hall expressed concern about access to credible, professional information, especially in light of the documented lapses in the military healthcare system. She noted that, “Service men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as their families, need to understand the early warning signs and when to get appropriate mental health care.” Dr. Hall added, “They should have access to a continuum of care that allows them the broadest treatment for their needs. We need to make certain that these veterans and their families find appropriate, quality resources in a timely manner even if they are in treatment at VA or other military facilities.”

The National Register (www.nationalregister.org) is the largest credentialing organization of psychologists. The nonprofit organization was formed more than 30 years ago by the American Psychological Association and the American Board of Professional Psychology and is based in Washington, DC. The National Register launched www.findapsychologist.org in 2006 to provide consumers with free access to qualified psychologists and credible information on mental health issues. For more information, visit www.findapsychologist.org.

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