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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Hamilton ORIGINAL DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
LAST UPDATED 2-19-14 HB 278/aHAFC  
SHORT TITLE Veteran Virtual Reality PTSD Treatment SB \_\_\_\_\_  
ANALYST Esquibel

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY14	FY15		
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

#### Responses Received From

Human Services Department (HSD)

Veterans' Services Department (VSD)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of HAFC Amendment

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee amendments to House Bill 278 remove the FY15 general fund appropriation of \$300 thousand to be expended in \$100 thousand increments annually from FY15 through FY17.

#### Synopsis of Original Bill

House Bill 278 (HB 278) appropriates \$100 thousand annually from FY15 to FY17 from the general fund to the Board of Regent of Western New Mexico University to continue the veterans' virtual reality treatment pilot project.

HB 278 proposes the pilot project continue as a three-year study to determine the efficacy of virtual reality therapy for veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The pilot and study proposed in HB 278 aims to demonstrate that the therapy is cost effective, therapeutically effective and decreases long-term costs due to chronic care. HB 278 also proposes therapists' training and curriculum development in the masters of social work program at Western New Mexico University. HB 278 directs Western New Mexico University to administer the pilot, provide reports to the Legislature, and seek public and private grants and donations to be deposited in the newly created "veterans virtual reality treatment grants fund."

## **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

HB 278/aHAFC does not include an appropriation.

HB 278/aHAFC requests that Western New Mexico University create a “veterans virtual reality treatment grants fund” for the deposit of public and private grants and donations.

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee’s FY15 budget for the Veterans’ Services Department (VSD) includes \$80 thousand in general fund revenue for the purposes outlined in the bill.

The Human Services Department’s Behavioral Health Services Division indicates that in FY13 it allocated \$500 thousand for services to veterans with PTSD and \$550 thousand on jail diversion for veterans.

## **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

HSD indicates the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that PTSD afflicts:

- 31 percent of Vietnam veterans
- 10 percent of Gulf War (Desert Storm) veterans
- 11 percent of Afghanistan veterans
- 20 percent of Iraqi war veterans

Veterans may not self identify when seeking services or do not seek services due to the stigma associated with a mental health diagnosis, so as many as 75 percent of veterans could suffer from some level of PTSD.

According to the Veterans Administration, the number of veterans in New Mexico was 179,497 as of the end of 2007. The state funds numerous behavioral health activities that work in collaboration with the NM National Guard, Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration to support veterans and their families. Often the state funded public behavioral health system is the first point of contact for a veteran experiencing PTSD and the veteran’s family.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder characterized by feelings of intense horror, fear and helplessness as a result of exposure to a traumatic event when one experiences actual or threatened death or serious injury. PTSD can occur following a life-threatening event like military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape. PTSD is marked by clear physical and psychological symptoms including depression, substance abuse, problems of memory and cognition, and other physical and mental health problems. The disorder is also associated with difficulties in social or family life, including occupational instability, marital problems, family discord, and difficulties in parenting (Military.com).

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