­

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 24, 2012

**VA and Entertainment Industries Council Launch Resource on Veterans’ Mental Health**

*Publication to Support the Creative Process in Film and Television Industry*

 WASHINGTON – A powerful new tool is available to the entertainment industry with the release of *Picture This: Veteran Mental Health Challenges and Solutions*, a comprehensive guide to assist members of the creative arts community in accurately portraying mental health issues Veterans may experience.

 “I encourage those in the entertainment industry who seek to tell stories about Veterans to focus on the topic of Veteran mental health in ways that transcend stereotypes and present a more honest, compelling, and powerful product,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “The true stories of the Veterans I know and have served with are more engaging than a simple caricature of a Veteran with a mental health problem.”

The Entertainment Industries Council, Inc. (EIC), in collaboration with and sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs, developed this guide with input from mental health experts, Veterans, advocates, policymakers, the entertainment industry, and many others who are committed to honoring the service of Veterans and helping them overcome challenges.

*Picture This* was written to help writers, actors, producers, and others create authentic depictions of Veterans facing and overcoming mental health challenges. The publication was developed as a result of forums in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., that brought together mental health experts, members of the entertainment community, and Veterans to share powerful testimonials of their own challenges and triumphs.

Discussions about the issues some Veterans face and factors that influence whether or not they seek help influenced the publication’s content. *Picture This* supports the creative process and is organized to address the needs of those developing entertaining story lines and characters that greatly impact societal perceptions.

 Citing firsthand accounts from Veterans and their families referenced in *Picture This* and featured in VA’s [*Make the Connection*](http://maketheconnection.net/) public outreach campaign, VA’s Deputy Chief Consultant for Specialty Mental Health, Dr. Sonja Batten, states, “You can serve your audience, and in particular, our Nation’s Veterans, by allowing the real stories they share on *Make the Connection* to inform and inspire your work.”

 *Picture This* includes background data on America’s Veterans and explains terminology on symptoms, conditions, and treatment options. Detailed information on mental health topics is accompanied by candid and unscripted accounts of Veterans and their family members who faced difficult life events and experiences, reached out for support, and found resources for getting their lives back on track.

 “EIC has been fortunate to work with the Department of Veterans Affairs to support some of the most valiant and important citizens in our country. This effort serves to help returning Servicemembers take greater control of the challenges they face,” said Brian Dyak, EIC President and CEO. A nonprofit organization, EIC was founded in 1983 by leaders of the entertainment industry to bring the power of the entertainment industry to bear on health and social issues.

 On Aug. 31, President Obama issued his historic Executive Order to improve mental health services for Veterans, Servicemembers and military families.  As directed in the Executive Order, VA is hiring 1,600 new mental health professionals and 300 support staff.  Last year, VA provided quality, specialty mental health services to 1.3 million Veterans. Since 2009, VA has increased the mental health care budget by 39 percent.  Since 2007, VA has seen a 35 percent increase in the number of Veterans receiving mental health services, and a 41 percent increase in mental health staff.

To see the joint VA / Entertainment Industries Council publication, please visit: <http://www.eiconline.org/eic-resources/publications/national/picture-this/VA-MH>.

For additional information on VA, please visit: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). To learn more about the *Make the Connection*campaign, please visit: [www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net).

 For more information on EIC, please visit [www.eiconline.org](http://www.eiconline.org).

# # #