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Cohen Veterans Network Announces Collaboration with SAFE Project to Combat Substance Use Disorder in the Veteran Community

CVN to Take the #NoShame Pledge to Help Reduce Stigma Associated with Seeking Help for Addiction and Mental Health Challenges

Stamford, Conn., May 11, 2023 – This May, Cohen Veterans Network (CVN), a not-for-profit philanthropic organization that serves post-9/11 veterans, active duty service members and their families through a nationwide system of mental health clinics, is partnering with the SAFE Project, a national non-profit committed to overcoming the epidemic of addiction in the United States, to highlight the impacts of substance use disorder and mental health challenges in the veteran community, fight the stigma associated with seeking help and promote resources available to combat addiction.

Millions of veterans struggle with substance use disorder (SUD) and mental illness. According to [SAMHSA](#), in 2020, the most recent year for which data is available, 12% of veterans (2.4 million) had a SUD, while 19.7% of veterans (3.9 million) had a mental illness. And 5.7% (1.1 million) had both a SUD and mental illness. Additionally, veterans are [twice as likely](#) to die from an accidental overdose when compared to the general U.S. population.

“The stigma surrounding addiction and mental illness are significant barriers to individuals seeking treatment,” says Cohen Veterans Network President and CEO Dr. Anthony Hassan. “But there is no shame in asking for help rather it is a show of strength. We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with SAFE Project to amplify this incredibly important message across the communities we serve, and work towards helping more veterans and military families get the support they need and deserve.”

On May 18th, CVN will join the SAFE Project’s #NoShame Movement to combat stigma. Participants across CVN’s 23 Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinics will take the #NoShame Pledge agreeing to encourage individuals to seek the help necessary in addressing addiction and mental health concerns by providing a shame-free environment. CVN is inviting others to sign the pledge [alongside of them](#) and share their No Shame certificate on social media using the initiative’s hashtag - #NoShame.

“Our military culture values both discipline and self-reliance,” says SAFE Project Founder and CVN Board Member Mary Winnefeld. “But we all need to understand that addiction is not a shortcoming in either of those values... rather, it is a disease. More importantly, it's a *treatable* disease. Conquering it will require organizations, such as Cohen Veterans Network, that are willing to stand up to the stigma of addiction by promoting a culture of support and understanding, and by providing access to resources for those in need.”

Since its inception in April 2016, CVN has cared for over 53,000 clients and provided over 450,000 clinical sessions. Treatment is available for a variety of mental health challenges including depression, anxiety,



adjustment issues, anger, PTSD, grief and loss, family issues, transition challenges, relationship problems, and children’s behavioral problems. CVN also provides comprehensive case management services to help clients with challenges such as substance use disorder and stressors like unemployment, finances, housing, and legal issues. CVN care is available to all post-9/11 veterans, including the National Guard and Reserves, regardless of combat experience, role while in uniform or discharge status. The network additionally treats active duty service members with a TRICARE referral as well as the entire military family, including parents, siblings, spouses or partners, children, caregivers, and others. Services are available in person or via CVN Telehealth, face-to-face video therapy.

Learn more about the #NoShame Movement and join CVN in taking the pledge [here](#).

ABOUT COHEN VETERANS NETWORK

Cohen Veterans Network (CVN) is a 501(c)(3) national not-for-profit philanthropic organization for post-9/11 veterans, active duty service members and their families. CVN focuses on improving mental health outcomes, operating a network of outpatient mental health clinics in high-need communities, in which trained clinicians deliver holistic evidence-based care to treat mental health conditions. It was established in 2016 by philanthropist Steven A. Cohen with a commitment of \$275 million to build the network. Learn more about CVN at cohenveteransnetwork.org.

ABOUT SAFE PROJECT

SAFE Project is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit committed to overcoming the addiction epidemic in the United States. Founded by Admiral James and Mary Winnefeld in 2017 following the loss of their 19-year-old son Jonathan to an opioid overdose, SAFE Project provides transformative programming, training, and technical assistance based upon a multipronged, strategic, and collaborative approach within each of our key initiatives: SAFE Campuses, SAFE Communities, SAFE Workplaces and SAFE Veterans. For more information, visit safeproject.us.

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