



## Veterans and substance abuse: Did you know?

- Research conducted by RAND has shown that nearly [20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans have reported symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\) or major depression](#).<sup>1</sup>
- Data from SAMHSA's annual household survey show that from 2004 to 2006, 7.1 percent of veterans (an estimated 1.8 million persons 18 or older) [met criteria for a past-year substance use disorder](#).<sup>2</sup>
- Many service members do not seek treatment for psychological disorders because they fear that it will harm their careers, and according to the RAND research findings, of those who do seek help, [only half receive treatment that the researchers deemed "minimally adequate"](#) for their illnesses.<sup>3</sup>

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## Alcohol/Drug Council of North Carolina offers free addiction assessments to National Guard service members

We developed the [ASI-MV Connect program](#) to help bring the benefits of the Addiction Severity Index (ASI) assessment to more people, so we're especially pleased to share the news that the Alcohol/Drug Council of North Carolina ([ADCNC](#)) is using the program as part of an initiative to [provide free assessments to state National Guard service members](#).

"Our mission is to reduce the human suffering and economic cost of alcoholism and other drug abuse and addiction. We want to end discrimination against people struggling with addiction and reduce the stigma associated with substance abuse — the number one unmet health need in the United States," explains Wayne Tesh, Special Projects Coordinator at the ADCNC. "When we discovered that members of our state National Guard needed help but could not afford to pay for assessments due to health insurance coverage restrictions, we decided to take action."

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The ADCNC met with the state National Guard, and reached an agreement to set up a program to provide service members with free assessments and referrals for treatment. To fund the program, ADCNC applied for and won a state-administered block grant, establishing the National Guard Veterans' project.

How does the program work?

"We set up a procedure where the Commanding Officers (COs) contact the State National Guard Prevention Specialist with requests for assessment. Once a request is authorized, the CO can contact ADCNC directly, and we then issue vouchers for assessment by Licensed Clinical Addictions Specialists (LCAS)," explains Tesh. "So far through the project we've trained 48 specialists to conduct initial substance abuse assessments and case management services using the ASI-MV Connect program."

There are several reasons why ADCNC decided to use ASI-MV Connect. For one, says Tesh, it is a consistent, validated assessment that "enables us to maintain fidelity while working with specialists all across the state, even without face-to-face contact. It's also available in English and Spanish, which is paramount for ensuring access."

In addition, the assessment is computer based and self administered, so it "saves time for our providers, and controls 'drift,' which can be an issue."

Finally, says Tesh, the ASI-MV Connect clinical reports "serve as a 'crosswalk' over to [ASAM levels-of-care](#). With the rich level of clinical data that is available, it's easier and more time-efficient to do transfers and make referrals for treatment. And through the [Data Center](#), we can look at the demographics, trends, and outcomes for this particular population and see whether their needs change over time."

The ADCNC has reached several important milestones in the project, including training 48 licensed clinical addiction specialists in the ASI-MV Connect, holding two contract meetings for providers, signing agreements with 22 providers, and issuing 34 vouchers for assessment. Fortunately, ADCNC has also been able to come in 23% under the projected budget for 100 assessments. "Using the ASI-MV Connect program significantly reduces overhead and administrative expenses," notes Tesh.

The National Guard Veterans' Project is now in its second year of operation, and the ADCNC is excited about the future of the program. "There is a strong need to be more responsive to service members who are struggling with substance abuse issues, and we're proud to be part of North Carolina's efforts to increase access to quality drug assessments and treatment," says Tesh.

To learn more about ADCNC and the National Guard Veterans' Project, visit the [ADCNC website](#).

If you're investigating assessment programs and want to learn more about the ASI-MV Connect, we encourage you to [register online for a free 30-day trial](#).

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## Research shows that computer-mediated administration of the ASI enhances self-disclosure

How does computer-mediated administration of the ASI impact clients' self-disclosure? According to research published in the *Journal of Addiction Medicine* (Volume 3, Issue 4: p. 194–203), it [facilitates self-disclosure, which may enhance the assessment's clinical utility](#).

"We are finding that, especially with shamed-based questions, clients tend to be comfortable and self-disclose more to a computer than to a live interviewer, as long as they understand the information they share will be used to help and not punish them," observes Dr. Albert Villapiano, Vice President of Clinical Development at Inflexxion and a co-author of the article. "Also, many providers find that reviewing the ASI-MV report with clients can help open the discussion about difficult topics, such as abuse, and facilitate the engagement process."

Following is the complete abstract of the article. If you would like to review an author's copy of the article, please feel free to [contact us](#).

### **The Effect of Computer-Mediated Administration on Self-Disclosure of Problems on the Addiction Severity Index**

Butler, S. F. Ph.D, Villapiano, A., Ed.D., & Malinow, A., Ph.D.

**Objectives:** People tend to disclose more personal information when communication is mediated through the use of a computer. This study was conducted to examine the impact of this phenomenon on the way respondents answer questions during computer-mediated, self-administration of the Addiction Severity Index (ASI) called the Addiction Severity Index-Multimedia Version (ASI-MV).

**Methods:** A sample of 142 clients in substance abuse treatment were administered the ASI via an interviewer and the computerized ASI-MV, 3 to 5 days apart in a counterbalanced order. Seven composite scores were compared between the 2 test administrations using paired t tests. Post hoc analyses examined interviewer effects.

**Results:** Comparisons of composite scores for each of the domains between the face-to-face administered and computer-mediated, self-administered ASI revealed that significantly greater problem severity was reported by clients in 5 of the 7 domains during administration of the computer-mediated, self-administered version compared with the trained interviewer version. Item analyses identified certain items as responsible for significant differences, especially those asking clients to rate need for treatment. All items that were significantly different between the 2 modes of administration revealed greater problem severity reported on the ASI-MV as compared with the interview administered assessment. Post hoc analyses yielded significant interviewer effects on 4 of the 5

domains where differences were observed.

**Conclusions:** These data support a growing literature documenting a tendency for respondents to be more self-disclosing in a computer-mediated format over a face-to-face interview. Differences in interviewer skill in establishing rapport may account for these observations.

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## References

<sup>1</sup>Tanielian, T., & Jaycox, L. H. (Eds.) (2008). Invisible wounds of war: *Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery* (MG-720-CCF). Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation. Available at <http://www.rand.org/multi/military/veterans/>

<sup>2</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (2007). *The NSDUH report: Serious psychological distress and substance use disorder among veterans*. Rockville, MD. Available at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k7/veteransDual/veteransDual.htm>

<sup>3</sup>RAND Corporation (2008, April 19). One in five Iraq and Afghanistan veterans suffer from PTSD or major depression. *ScienceDaily*.

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## About this newsletter

The ASI-MV Connect newsletter is a free bi-monthly publication for professionals in the substance abuse field, keeping you updated on addiction and assessment research, ASI-MV Connect product developments and features, and ways to make the most of your ASI-MV Connect subscription.

We encourage you to forward this newsletter to your colleagues.

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advice, diagnosis or treatment. Reliance on any information provided in this newsletter is at your own risk.

You should consult your physician or other qualified health provider if you have questions about a medical condition. If you think you have a medical emergency, call your doctor or 911 immediately.

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