

## **POSITIVE PRACTICES OF REHABILITATION AND SOCIALIZATION OF MILITARY SERVANTS IN UKRAINE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Thousands of soldiers return to civilian life without an adaptation period – after experiencing horrors, with a broken psyche, nightmares and the inability to continue their normal lives, and often their stories end in complete disappointment in everything that happens around them. As a result, many soldiers with a broken psyche can become a new "lost generation". Therefore, the rehabilitation of each soldier should be carried out using individual modern rehabilitation methods with the participation of highly qualified specialists with the selection of a rehabilitation program taking into account the individual characteristics of each individual situation. Personalization of programs allows for the shortest possible time to carry out work on preventing personality disorders and deformations of social functions.

For the rehabilitation of soldiers today, the following methods are used: group therapy; training; individual work with specialists; additional classes (art therapy, etc.). A comprehensive approach to the rehabilitation of military personnel allows you to rebuild social skills, eliminate fixation on the events experienced and the state acquired due to them, establish new social contacts, restore cognitive and communicative functions. Today, there are the necessary tools to combat post-traumatic stress disorder and conduct effective rehabilitation of military personnel, who can contact us for an initial consultation and receive recommendations for further actions. This is a necessity, because their future, their happiness, health and strength of the nation depend on the health of our military personnel.

Such challenges necessitate a significant review of the types of rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine, taking into account international experience, as well as to identify the implemented forms of such rehabilitation.

Therefore, the above indicates the need to define a system of methods for the rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine, taking into account international experience, as well as to identify implemented forms of such rehabilitation.

**The state of scientific research on the issues of the article.** Analysis of modern research and publications indicate an increase in attention to the problems of rehabilitation of military personnel who suffered as a result of military operations in Ukraine, which is absolutely obvious. The authors have studied various aspects of this issue, in particular: O. Nykyforova studies the issues of medical and psychological assistance to veterans, including aspects of their social adaptation to peaceful life, V. Yakymets studies psychological assistance and rehabilitation of military personnel, O. Gulbs analyzes the features of socio-psychological rehabilitation of combatants, R. Karpinska studies the problems of medical rehabilitation of ATO participants. At the monographic level, the features of public administration in the field

of rehabilitation of military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine within the framework of a single medical space of healthcare in Ukraine were studied by S.L. Shostak.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the analysis of modern research on the rehabilitation of military personnel allows us to conclude that one of the shortcomings in the development of the system of rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine is the insufficient level of coordination of the system of public administration bodies that carry out public administration in this area, the unclear definition of their powers, sometimes the duplication of the latter, which necessitates a more in-depth study of the above issues.

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research tasks are planned within *the framework of this article*:

- to determine the system of methods for the rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine;
- to identify positive practices for the rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine, taking into account international experience.

## **1. The system of methods for the rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine**

Analysis of domestic and world practices of military rehabilitation allows us to identify the most modern and effective forms (types) of rehabilitation and to reveal their content.

**Physical rehabilitation.** Physical rehabilitation of military personnel is a comprehensive process of recovery from injuries and illnesses using physical exercises, physiotherapy, massage, manual therapy to restore strength, mobility, coordination and adapt to life, often free of charge, through government funding programs. It includes kinesiotherapy (physical therapy), occupational therapy, taping, hardware methods (shockwave therapy, magnetotherapy), and can be started after the acute period of treatment, depending on the condition of the military. The main tasks of physical rehabilitation are as follows: restoring strength, endurance and amplitude of muscle and joint movements, especially after injuries to the extremities, improving coordination, balance and walking skills, reducing pain, swelling and spasticity, preparing for a return to active life (including military service or civilian life). Rehabilitation methods and procedures should be distinguished: kinesiotherapy (physical therapy) – individual exercises, simulators, suspension therapy systems; physiotherapy – magnetotherapy, laser, shock wave therapy; manual therapy – massage, joint mobilization; kinesiotherapy – applying tapes to support muscles; occupational therapy – restoring everyday skills<sup>2</sup>.

**Game rehabilitation.** In Ukraine, Irex interactive rehabilitation rooms using the Canadian method have appeared. This rehabilitation takes place in a game form: football, volleyball, parachute. During rehabilitation, the patient sees himself on the screen as the hero of a sports game, where points are given for correct movements, and the system imitates movements, it makes the person remember how his arm and leg work. The person plays, the game distracts

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<sup>1</sup> Шостак С. Л. Публічне управління у сфері реабілітації військовослужбовців Збройних Сил України у рамках єдиного медичного простору охорони здоров'я України. Дисертація на здобуття наукового ступеня доктора філософії за спеціальністю 281 «Публічне управління та адміністрування». Міжрегіональна Академія управління персоналом, Київ, 2024. 240 с.

<sup>2</sup> Реабілітація постраждалих в умовах надзвичайних ситуацій та бойових дій. Посттравматичний стресовий розлад: монографія / за ред. К. Д. Бабова, І. Я. Пінчук, В. В. Стеблюка. Одеса: «ПОЛІГРАФ», 2015. 240 с..С. 235.

him from the pain syndrome and gives him the opportunity to develop joints and form a new motor stereotype<sup>3</sup>.

*Psychological rehabilitation.* Psychological rehabilitation of military personnel is a set of measures to restore their psycho-emotional state and adapt to peaceful life after a traumatic experience, including individual and group therapy, art therapy, training, cognitive-behavioral therapy and innovative methods (VR) aimed at overcoming PTSD, anxiety and depression, with mandatory family support and a clear legal basis in Ukraine.

As correctly noted by experts, “currently, state psychological assistance for veterans of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is provided in two options: in a military hospital in case of injury; through a family doctor who will provide a referral to a psychologist. Therefore, thousands of soldiers return to civilian life without an adaptation period – after experiencing horrors, with a broken psyche, nightmares and the inability to continue their normal lives, and often their stories end in complete disappointment in everything that happens around them. As a result, there are many soldiers with a broken psyche who can become a new “lost generation”. That is why the state is now actively creating a register of specialists who will provide psychological assistance. The main goals of psychological rehabilitation of military personnel: recovery – preservation and restoration of mental and physical health; adaptation – assistance in the transition from military life to civilian life; overcoming – working with the consequences of combat injuries (PTSD, anxiety, insomnia); support – psychological assistance to members of the families of military personnel.

The main components of psychological rehabilitation include: psychotherapy – psychotherapists work with service members to help them overcome psychological difficulties, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety, psychotherapy sessions promote conversations and the development of strategies for overcoming emotional and psychological problems; support group sessions – group sessions allow service members to communicate with like-minded people who are going through a similar recovery process. This can increase the sense of community and support, as well as help in overcoming military experiences; therapeutic methods – cognitive behavioral therapy, art therapy, relaxation techniques, etc.<sup>4</sup>. These methods are aimed at improving the emotional state and ability to adapt to new conditions.

*Friendly rehabilitation.* Friendly rehabilitation of military personnel is support through communication with people with similar experiences (other veterans, their families) in support groups and communities, which helps veterans not to feel alone, share experiences and adapt to peaceful life without fear of judgment, often supplementing professional assistance with sports, art therapy and other methods. This is an important direction that complements official state rehabilitation programs, which also include psychological and physical assistance.

*Family rehabilitation.* Family rehabilitation of military personnel is a set of measures (psychological training, joint recreation, communication exercises) aimed at restoring the functioning of a veteran's family, which has suffered from the consequences of war, helping

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<sup>3</sup> Крамар Т.В., Скляренко О.Є. Світовий досвід реабілітації та адаптації військовослужбовців з посттравматичним стресовим розладом. Вчені записки ТНУ імені В.І. Вернадського. Серія: Психологія. Том 35 (74) № 4 2024. С.143-148.

<sup>4</sup> Лебедева С.Ю., Овсяннікова Я.О., Похілько Д.С. Психологічна допомога та реабілітація учасників збройних конфліктів та фахівців ризиконебезпечних професій: світовий досвід. Габітус. Випуск 45. 2023. С. 139-145.

family members better understand each other and supporting the military on the path of adaptation to peaceful life. This is a critically important element of general rehabilitation, which includes psychological support, conflict resolution, and family integration into new realities, and is often organized by public organizations and the state through relevant programs. The main aspects of family rehabilitation are as follows: 1) psychological support – consultations for military personnel and their relatives regarding post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological consequences of war, training in stress and emotion management; 2) communication training – teaching the family effective communication, expression of feelings, and conflict resolution that arise due to role changes and adaptation to peaceful life; 3) joint recreation and leisure – organizing joint events (retreats, tourist trips) to restore emotional connection and create positive shared memories, such as programs from "Mudraya Sprava"; 4) social adaptation of the family – helping wives and children of veterans understand the condition of the military and their own rehabilitation, as they are also affected by the war<sup>5</sup>

*Енімал реабілітація.* Тим, кому після повернення потрібна психологічна допомога, тепер нерідко прописують каністерапію – лікування за допомогою спеціально навчених для цього собак. Терплячі хвостаті лікарі, після відповідного дресирування, здатні навіть витягти людину з депресії, кажуть лікарі. Варіанти лікування бувають різними: проживання собаки в будинку бійця, в тому числі і тимчасове, так звана «перетримка». За розповідями активістів, бійцям пропонують гуляти з собаками, грати.

*Social rehabilitation.* Social rehabilitation of military personnel is a comprehensive system of measures that helps veterans restore their social status and integrate into civilian life after injuries or service, restoring ties with society through assistance in employment, education, leisure activities, psychological support, and restoration of impaired functions. This is a free process funded by the state (NSZU) and includes medical, psychological, and social support so that a person can independently and fully function in society. The main areas of social rehabilitation are: 1) restoration of social status – assistance in solving problems after returning to civilian life, restoring social ties and functions; 2) professional adaptation – assistance in acquiring new skills, retraining, and finding a job, taking into account health status; 3) organization of leisure activities – involvement in sports clubs, creative circles, volunteering to expand the circle of communication and a sense of usefulness; 4) psychological support: overcoming post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), adaptation to a peaceful environment and building relationships.

*Educational rehabilitation.* Educational rehabilitation of military personnel is a set of programs for retraining, acquiring new professional skills and education (higher education, online courses, languages) for successful adaptation to civilian life, which helps veterans restore their careers, increase self-esteem and integrate into society. It covers both the acquisition of new knowledge and the restoration of professional skills lost due to a long absence from the labor market and injuries, is funded by the state and public organizations. The main components and areas of educational rehabilitation are: 1) professional reorientation – retraining courses, obtaining a civilian specialty in higher education

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<sup>5</sup> Шапошникова І. В. Соціальна реабілітація в умовах війни: світовий досвід та проблеми України. Проблеми сучасних трансформацій. Серія: економіка та управління, №12. 2024. С. 37-42.

institutions (the Ministry of Veterans Affairs cooperates with universities); 2) educational programs – access to free online courses from Ukrainian and world universities, learning foreign languages; 3) a comprehensive approach – educational rehabilitation is part of general rehabilitation, which includes physical, psychological and social assistance provided by teams of specialists (physical therapists, psychologists, social workers). Ainu – both in Ukraine and in the most famous universities in the world.

*Business rehabilitation.* Business rehabilitation of military personnel is a comprehensive support for veterans in starting and developing their own business through mentoring, grants (for example, through the Ukrainian Veterans Fund and other programs), entrepreneurship training, and legal/financial assistance to ensure self-realization, financial independence, and integration into civilian life, often with an emphasis on creating jobs for other veterans. This is an important area that combines state support and initiatives from business and public organizations to create a sustainable system for the reintegration of veterans returning to civilian life. The key areas of business rehabilitation are: 1) training and mentoring – courses on the basics of entrepreneurship, project management, and attracting grant funds, mentoring programs from experienced businessmen; 2) financial support – grant programs (for example, from the Ukrainian Veterans Fund) that provide funds for starting or developing a business, as well as other types of financial assistance; 3) creating business ideas – promising businesses are those where veterans can use their experience, for example, psychological rehabilitation centers where veterans themselves work; 4) integration of veterans – creating jobs for other veterans in their own businesses as a way to help their fellow veterans.

## **2. Positive practices of rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine taking into account international experience**

Today, due to the continuation of military aggression on the territory of Ukraine, the number of combatants who require medical and psychological rehabilitation is increasing, which is difficult for the existing system of medical institutions, only some of which have rehabilitation departments, to cope with. Therefore, it is now necessary to talk about comprehensive medical and psychological rehabilitation (or assistance) and social support for military personnel who participated in combat operations. The most optimal way to implement the tasks of the system of social rehabilitation of combatants is to create specialized centers for social rehabilitation of persons who participated in combat operations. Such centers will be able to solve the entire complex of problems of social adaptation and rehabilitation of veterans of hot spots.

The Center for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation of Combatants should include the following areas: 1) medical rehabilitation of military personnel (especially disabled); 2) social and psychological adaptation of military personnel; 3) social and psychological support of military personnel and their family members; 4) educational activities; 5) assistance in employment; 6) social and legal protection.

Currently, contracts have been signed in Ukraine with more than 35 rehabilitation institutions that primarily provide medical rehabilitation of military personnel; most psychological rehabilitation of military personnel takes place in private rehabilitation centers or in military intensive care units established in regional and district hospitals, but mainly at the expense of private (sponsored) funds. An exemplary example of the application of full-fledged diverse methods of rehabilitation of military personnel is the activities of the National Rehabilitation Center "Unbroken Ukraine" in the city of Lviv, where more than five thousand

Ukrainians have received qualified medical care, with a range of services from prosthetics to physical, psychological and psychosocial rehabilitation of victims. As for the private initiative to create rehabilitation centers for the military, an extraordinary example is the joint project of Viktor and Olena Pinchuk RECOVERY, which focuses on creating a national network of rehabilitation centers for wounded soldiers, rehabilitation of wounded soldiers in partner private medical clinics, and sending seriously wounded soldiers and civilians abroad for complex prosthetics. RECOVERY is the largest private national network of rehabilitation centers for wounded soldiers. The key areas of this project are: creation of a national network of rehabilitation centers for wounded military personnel; world-class educational programs for multidisciplinary rehabilitation teams. Today, 20 RECOVERY rehabilitation centers provide free services in Vinnytsia, Dnipro region (three institutions), Kyiv (4 centers) and Kyiv region, Lutsk, Lviv, Odessa (two institutions), Poltava, Rivne, Ternopil, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv and Chernivtsi. The halls of the centers are equipped according to world standards of inclusiveness and technological convenience. Physical rehabilitation rooms are equipped with virtual reality equipment that provides feedback to the patient. The complex of simulators and devices for rehabilitation covers the entire spectrum of possible functional disorders (including those resulting from mine and blast injuries) and helps to restore the wounded at a high technological level. Multidisciplinary teams of doctors in the centers consist of specialists in physical rehabilitation medicine, physical therapists, occupational therapists, massage therapists, assistants, speech therapists and psychologists. Thanks to high-tech equipment and qualifications, they provide high-quality, affordable and evidence-based rehabilitation assistance to Ukrainian defenders.<sup>6</sup>

It is also worth noting that one of the effective organizational forms of a comprehensive program of social rehabilitation (adaptation) of war veterans is the creation and operation of veteran hubs. Veteran hubs are centers that combine various social, psychological and legal services for veterans and their families. They become platforms for communication, exchange of experience, development of personal and professional skills. Veteran hubs provide a wide range of services, including psychological support, legal advice, assistance in employment, promote the development of entrepreneurial activity among veterans, implement sports rehabilitation programs and engage in national and patriotic education.

The main goal of creating veteran hubs is to provide comprehensive support and assistance to veterans in the following areas: 1) psychological support, which is important because after returning from the front, many veterans face trauma, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and conducting psychological consultations, therapies, and support groups; 2) socialization and mutual support, because veteran hubs are a meeting place for those who have a common experience of participating in combat operations, respectively, sharing experiences, joint events and projects contribute to the development of a support network, which allows veterans not to feel isolated; 3) labor reintegration and vocational training – veteran hubs provide opportunities for advanced training, learning new professions, or adapting to changes in the labor market, which allows veterans to find new sources of income, which contributes to their financial security and independence, thanks to these initiatives they can not only restore their financial situation, but also feel like useful members of society; 4) legal and legal assistance in obtaining veteran status, compensation, social benefits and pensions; 5) physical health and rehabilitation – cooperation with medical institutions in organizing medical examinations, providing physiotherapy and other types of medical services, which helps veterans restore their physical health faster and reduces their dependence on state medical institutions.

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<sup>6</sup> Про проєкт Recovery. URL: <https://recoveryua.org/pro-proekt>

The researchers drew attention to the fact that "their activities are still supported mainly by volunteers, and accordingly, they require greater state support, which should be manifested in: 1) studying the work of such centers abroad, namely in countries that have experience of military participation in military operations, generalizing these practices and adapting them in Ukraine; 2) developing effective programs for organizing the activities of these centers in Ukraine; 3) ensuring effective interaction between the state, business and specialized public organizations in their creation and activities; 4) ensuring educational work regarding the need for their activities and, accordingly, reclamation of their activities; 5) coordinating public-private partnership programs regarding the financial and logistical support of their activities; 6) involving veteran hubs in the implementation of social support programs, providing psychological assistance, promoting employment, organizing sports events, supporting entrepreneurship, national-patriotic education, developing civil society, etc.<sup>7</sup>.

We fully support this position and believe that the activities of veteran hubs are an effective form of socialization of military veterans, since the main emphasis of state influence, including funding, is aimed at the medical rehabilitation of military personnel, and their further socialization is still, unfortunately, poorly covered by budget financing and support.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it should be noted that a new veteran policy is being formed in Ukraine, which combines advanced domestic experience in combat traumatology with institutional models of NATO countries, Israel and the USA. It is based on the transition from outdated sanatorium-resort treatment to multidisciplinary rehabilitation, adaptive sports, digitalization of services and the involvement of public and private initiatives.

By analogy with hospitals in the USA and Israel, multidisciplinary teams (physician of physical and rehabilitation medicine, physical therapist, occupational therapist, psychologist) have been introduced in Ukrainian medical institutions. The network of modern centers consists of: the National Rehabilitation Center Unbroken in Lviv and the national network of innovative rehabilitation centers Recovery (operating in particular in Dnipro, Kyiv, Lviv and other cities) provide free high-tech assistance, including robotic therapy and virtual reality (VR) to restore mobility and cognitive functions. The latest standards of prosthetics and long-term support for patients with severe neurotraumas and amputations are applied (based on the basis of hospitals and specialized centers such as the Republican Center for Neurotrauma in the Rivne region).

International experience in combating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been adapted through evidence-based psychotherapeutic practices. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), and neurofeedback are actively used in working with military personnel and veterans. Adopting the practices of partner countries, Ukraine is developing a culture of involving families in psychological sessions, since resocialization is impossible without a stable microclimate in the family. The flagship in the field of mental health remains the state institution "Hospital for War Veterans "Lisova Polyana"" of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, where unique protocols for treating

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<sup>7</sup> Бриндіков Ю.Л. Організаційно-педагогічні умови дієвості реабілітаційної діяльності з військовослужбовцями Збройних Сил України, що приймали участь у бойових діях. Вісник Дніпропетровського університету імені Альфреда Нобеля. Серія : «Педагогіка і психологія». Дніпропетровськ : Приватний вищий навчальний заклад «Дніпропетровський університет імені Альфреда Нобеля», 2018. С. 69–75.

the consequences of concussions and combat psychological trauma are being developed. According to American and British approaches, the recovery process does not end with discharge from the hospital – it requires long-term support in the community. Competitions such as the "Invictus Games" and internal veteran leagues have become a powerful tool for physical and psychological adaptation, restoring a sense of team unity. With the support of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, specialized Veteran Development Centers are operating in the regions, focusing on professional retraining, digital literacy, and legal support for veterans. Local business initiatives are emerging (for example, corporate veteran support centers at large enterprises), which ensure a smooth transition of former military personnel to civilian work. Despite significant progress, the system faces the need to scale up human resources (there is a shortage of mental health specialists and sports rehabilitation specialists), develop barrier-free cities, and eliminate bureaucratic barriers when redirecting between the stages of "army – hospital – community". The implementation of an updated online platform for searching for services and expanding state guarantees through packages of the National Health Service of Ukraine contributes to solving these problems.

## **SUMMARY**

Positive practices of rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine taking into account international experience.

It has been established that the system of rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine is a complex of medical, psychological, professional and social measures aimed at restoring physical health, mental state, returning to active civilian life or further service. It combines state institutions, centers such as the national center "UNBREAKABLE", public initiatives and international standards.

It has been found that the main components of the system of rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine are: physical rehabilitation – restoration of motor functions, prosthetics, occupational therapy and sports rehabilitation (in particular, adaptive sports); psychological assistance – overcoming the consequences of combat trauma, PTSD, depression through individual and group psychotherapy; professional reintegration – retraining, acquisition of new skills and employment with the assistance of state employment services and veteran hubs; social adaptation – legal support, benefits, housing programs and resocialization in communities.

Effective methods of rehabilitation of military personnel in Ukraine that require proper administrative and legal regulation have been systematized and identified, in particular physical (kinesiotherapy, exercise therapy, prosthetics, sports rehabilitation, animal rehabilitation), psychological (group and individual therapy, work with psychological trauma), social (integration into society through support programs, cultural events, family support) and professional rehabilitation (training, retraining for return to the labor market).

Positive domestic practices of rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel in Ukraine are described, taking into account international experience, in particular, by analogy with hospitals in the USA and Israel, the work of multidisciplinary teams (physician of physical and rehabilitation medicine, physical therapist, occupational therapist, psychologist) has been introduced in Ukrainian medical institutions. The network of modern centers consists of: the National Rehabilitation Center Unbroken in Lviv and the national network of innovative rehabilitation centers Recovery (operating in particular in Dnipro, Kyiv, Lviv and other cities) provide free high-tech assistance, including robotic therapy and virtual reality (VR) to restore mobility and cognitive functions, which apply the latest standards of prosthetics and long-term support for patients with severe neurotraumas and amputations

(based on the basis of hospitals and specialized centers such as the Republican Center for Neurotrauma in Rivne region).

**Key words:** rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel, types of rehabilitation, system of methods for rehabilitation of military personnel, positive domestic practices of rehabilitation and socialization of military personnel.

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