

# AB 1616: Non-Narcotic Based PTSD Treatment Study

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Assemblymember Laurie Davies

## IN BRIEF

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AB 1616 adds Section 709 to the Military and Veterans Code, authorizing the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), upon appropriation by the legislature, to establish a study of non-narcotic treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affecting veterans. The bill would require CalVet to submit a report to the Legislature with its findings and recommendations by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2030, and will sunset January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2031.

## THE ISSUE

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PTSD remains a significant, ongoing challenge for many veterans. While a range of treatments exists, there is a growing interest in non-narcotic treatment options that may compliment or reduce reliance on medication-based approaches. However, the availability of California specific data evaluating the effectiveness, feasibility, and outcomes of these non-narcotics PTSD treatments for veterans is limited.

A study published in the [National Library of Medicine](#) found that veterans with treatment-resistant PTSD who received Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment (HBOT) showed significant improvements in PTSD symptom severity compared to the control group. The study also found improvements in depressive symptoms and brain structure/function measures for those treated with HBOT.

While the evidence of the study is preliminary and based on a small study group, it strongly suggests that alternative, non-narcotic therapies have the potential to reduce symptoms and improve the quality of life for veterans, showing these issues warrants further research to better understand effectiveness, feasibility, and best practices.

California Association of Veteran Service Agencies (CAVSA) estimates 97,462 Veterans in California have PTSD and 1,267,000 nationally.

## CURRENT LAW

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CalVet's existing statutory role is to assist veterans and their families with services such as processing disability claims, housing support, and health related information. Currently, CalVet does not have the authority to fund/conduct research into PTSD treatment mediums. This means California does not have a state level mechanism to evaluate emerging therapies for veterans with PTSD.

## THE SOLUTION

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AB 1616 authorizes the CalVet, upon appropriation, to fund a study examining non-narcotic treatments, including but not limited to Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment for PTSD affecting veterans.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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