



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sunstone Therapies Launches Clinical Study in Maryland on Group MDMA-Assisted Therapy for Veterans with PTSD

Public–philanthropic collaboration between the State of Maryland and Reason for Hope explores scalable, evidence-based psychedelic treatments to improve veteran mental health care.

ROCKVILLE, MD (June 1, 2026) - A new clinical trial will evaluate the safety, feasibility, and tolerability of MDMA-assisted therapy for veterans who are living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The 12-month study conducted by Sunstone Therapies, with support from Adventist HealthCare, will examine whether group therapy can deliver clinical benefits similar to individual therapy while improving scalability and cost-effectiveness, an essential step toward expanding access to mental health treatments for veterans in need.

The initiative, funded in part through a \$1 million grant from the State of Maryland’s Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Alternative Therapies Fund and a \$525,000 grant from Reason for Hope, marks a growing collaboration between clinical researchers, state health leaders, and mental health advocates to expand access to innovative care options. Reason for Hope’s funding will enable the trial to expand in size and geographic reach, while also advancing the development of educational resources and supportive programming for the families of veterans participating in psychedelic therapy.

“This aspect of responsible and ethical psychedelic therapy has not gotten the recognition that is needed,

particularly in the context of clinical trials, and we are grateful that Reason for Hope is helping to pioneer this important work,” said **Dr. Manish Agrawal, CEO, Sunstone Therapies**.

“This collaboration between Reason for Hope, the State of Maryland, and Sunstone Therapies demonstrates what’s possible when public and private partners come together to accelerate solutions for those living with trauma. Veterans and their families have waited long enough,” said **Brett Waters, Founder and Executive Director, Reason for Hope**.

Study Overview

The trial will recruit 52 veterans diagnosed with PTSD:

- 40 Maryland-based veterans funded through the state program.
- 12 veterans funded by Reason for Hope, open to participants in the greater Washington, D.C.-metropolitan region, including parts of West Virginia and Southern Pennsylvania.

Participants will receive a single dose of MDMA combined with either individual or group psychotherapy. Each will undergo three preparatory sessions, one dosing session, and three integration sessions under the guidance of licensed mental health professionals at Sunstone’s Rockville clinic.

“Veterans have long borne the weight of trauma with limited treatment options. This study is about creating scalable, evidence-based pathways to care for those who have served,” said **Leith J. States, SVP for Military Initiatives, Sunstone Therapies**. “By comparing individual and group therapy models, we hope to learn how to safely expand access to MDMA-assisted therapy without compromising the clinical quality veterans deserve.”

The compound’s effects on empathy, trust, and emotional openness can promote rapid bonding within groups, reduce defensiveness, and allow participants to process difficult experiences with greater tolerance and support. When combined with the normalization, validation, and vicarious learning that occur naturally in group settings, MDMA-assisted therapy has the potential to enhance recovery, strengthen social connections, and expand access to care in a cost-effective and scalable way.

This study is the first to directly compare MDMA-assisted therapy delivered in individual versus group settings, offering critical insights that could shape how trauma treatment is delivered nationwide.

All study procedures are Institutional Review Board-approved and conducted under regulatory oversight from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Drug Enforcement Administration, with medical staff present throughout every session to ensure patient safety. Full enrollment will begin in mid-June 2026.

Background

Post-traumatic stress disorder remains one of the most urgent and complex mental health challenges affecting up to one in three veterans who have experienced combat or trauma (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimate). While existing treatments can help, many individuals continue to experience persistent symptoms despite therapy or medication.

“The veteran community has been unequivocal in its call for more effective treatments for PTSD. Reason for Hope is honored to support this critical study, and I’m incredibly proud of the Veteran Mental Health Leadership Coalition’s advocacy that helped secure this state funding. It’s been a

long journey to reach this point, and an extraordinary one. What matters most now is what comes next and the lives this work will touch,” said **Lieutenant General (Ret.) Martin R. Steele, Chief Executive Officer, Reason for Hope and President, Veteran Mental Health Leadership Coalition**. “This study isn’t only for the veterans themselves, but for their families, their belief in themselves, and their quality of life. The potential impact is profound, and it’s deeply exciting to see it become reality.”

Early clinical trials of MDMA-assisted therapy have shown significant and sustained symptom reduction, which led the FDA to grant *Breakthrough Therapy Designation* for MDMA-assisted psychotherapy.

“Maryland is proud to be part of a growing national effort to explore promising emerging therapies for PTSD. This work builds on similar bipartisan initiatives underway in states like Texas, Georgia, and Illinois—proof that compassion and innovation transcend politics,” said **Dr. Rachel Talley, Maryland Department of Health Acting Deputy Secretary for Behavioral Health**.

Experts anticipate that MDMA and psilocybin may achieve FDA approval for therapeutic use this year, marking a critical inflection point for trauma-focused care.

About Sunstone Therapies

Sunstone Therapies is a clinical research organization pioneering the delivery of psychedelic-assisted therapy within a medical framework. Led by experienced oncologists, therapists, and researchers, Sunstone conducts FDA-approved clinical trials exploring new approaches to trauma, depression, and end-of-life distress. Learn more at [sunstonetherapies.com](https://www.sunstonetherapies.com)

About the Maryland Department of Health

The Maryland Department of Health’s Behavioral Health Administration oversees statewide initiatives to improve mental health access and outcomes, including funding alternative therapies for PTSD and traumatic brain injury through the *David Perez Military Heroes Act*.

About Reason for Hope

Reason for Hope is a nonprofit dedicated to advancing the future of mental healthcare and preventing deaths of despair through research, education, and advocacy. We work to expand safe, affordable, and equitable access to psychedelic and other emerging therapies for those suffering from serious mental health and substance use disorders. Reason for Hope’s co-founders and leadership team are united by the loss of loved ones to suicide. Learn more at [reasonforhope.org](https://www.reasonforhope.org).

About Adventist HealthCare

Adventist HealthCare, based in Gaithersburg, Md., is a faith-based, nonprofit organization of dedicated professionals who work together each day to improve the health and well-being of people and communities through a ministry of physical, mental, and spiritual healing. Founded in 1907, Adventist HealthCare is the first, largest, and only health system headquartered in Montgomery County, Maryland. Learn more at [AdventistHealthCare.com](https://www.AdventistHealthCare.com).

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