



## **NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS**

### **Barriers to Care for Women Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Depressive Symptoms**

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#### Quick Takeaways

- Women veterans with both PTSD and depressive symptoms have the highest rate of unmet medical care needs, as compared to women veterans with either (or neither) PTSD or depressive symptoms.
- The two most frequent barriers to care for women veterans with both PTSD and depressive symptoms are: affordability due in large part to uncertainty regarding whether they qualify for VA benefits; and concerns about whether VA could meet their current medical care needs because of prior negative experiences with VA healthcare facilities.

#### Summary

This study examined the unmet medical needs and barriers to healthcare experienced by women veterans, including those who screened positively for lifetime PTSD and/or depressive symptoms.

#### Findings

Data from the National Survey of Women Veterans was used to determine that the 59% of women veterans with PTSD and depressive symptoms had unmet medical care needs in the preceding year. This can be compared to 30% of women veterans with PTSD, 18% of women veterans with depressive symptoms, and 16% of women veterans with neither symptoms who had unmet medical care needs in the prior year.

Among women veterans with both PTSD and depressive symptoms, the majority cited affordability as their reason for delaying or going without care. Among women veterans not using VA healthcare, women veterans with PTSD and depressive symptoms were also more likely to report that they were unsure whether they were eligible for VA benefits and were less likely to have health insurance to cover care outside of the VA.

#### Conclusion

The authors point out the particular vulnerability of women veterans with comorbid PTSD and depressive symptoms, particularly in navigating the VA and other healthcare systems. They identify areas of concern for VA and other healthcare facilities as they work to offer the most equitable access to care possible.