



Chicagoland Women Veterans: An Employment Study. How You Can Play A Role and Access the Results.

Overview

The number of women serving in all branches of the military has skyrocketed. Women comprise 14% of active duty service members, 17.6% of Guard and Reserve, and 20% of new recruits (United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010; Women in Military Service for American Memorial, Inc., 2009). In recent years, women have been given an expanded role in military operations including those taking place in combat theatres (Alvarez, 2009; LaBash, 2009). Like their male counterparts, female service members undergo comprehensive training, attain job skills, and demonstrate extraordinary leadership.

As the numbers of women actively serving in the military have grown, so has the number of women Veterans. Eight percent of all Veterans are female, and this number will continue to rise in coming years (United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 2006). Notwithstanding their many accomplishments during periods of active duty, the transition to civilian life for many women

Veterans has proven to be complicated and difficult. Economic instability disproportionately affects women Veterans: incomes are lower and unemployment rates are higher when compared with male Veterans (BPW, 2007; United States Department of Veteran Affairs, 2006). Women Veterans have higher rates of unemployment than civilian women (Foster & Vince, 2009).

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is funding the National Center on Family Homelessness (The National Center) to conduct a qualitative study of employment among Chicagoland women Veterans. The goals of our research are to compare male and female Veteran unemployment and underemployment, understand the dynamics of homelessness among unemployed female Veterans, and explore effective service interventions for women Veterans. Our study design is unique because it incorporates the perspectives of female and male Veterans, community stakeholders providing services to Veterans, and employers hiring Veterans. The study capitalizes on the lived experiences of Veterans while at the same time understanding the systemic issues that impact their transition to civilian life.





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The National Center will offer in person interim briefings on preliminary findings and a final report briefing to employers and community stakeholders (representatives of government, community and faith based organizations, Veterans Service Organizations and foundation funders). These briefings will build a platform for future collaborations by creating a learning community for the participants to share resources and best practices to successfully reduce employment barriers for women Veterans in Chicago and surrounding communities.

Opportunities for Participation and Engagement:

- **Participate in Employer or Community Based Organizations' Focus Groups:** Allow your human resources staff member or hiring manager or staff serving Veterans to participate in one hour focus groups to be held at the Robert R. McCormick Foundation offices at 105 N. Wacker Drive, Suite 4300 in Chicago. These focus groups will occur between July and December 2011.
- **Attend Interim Briefings:** At appropriate intervals in the data collection and analysis, early learning briefings for local stakeholders will be provided by the National Center and our Chicagoland Project Director. The purpose is to share preliminary information and to gather input from the briefing participants that will guide the project's next steps. Successful briefings will ensure maximum impact of the study by providing the briefing participants with access to cutting edge research data. The interim briefings will occur during the data analysis period between June and August 2012.
- **Sign Up to Receive the Executive Summary and Final Report.**

Executive Summary:

A 5-10 page executive summary will outline key findings and recommendations. The executive summary of the final report will be formatted for electronic dissemination and will generate interest in the study's findings by highlighting the results in compelling, non-academic language.

Final Report:

A final report that compiles the findings from all components of the study will be prepared. The report will present findings in an accessible and user-friendly way, with a focus on action-oriented lessons learned. It will include a discussion of how the dynamics are different for men and women Veterans.

It is anticipated that the executive summary and final report will be released by September 2012. The National Center anticipates that interim and final report briefings will be an hour long. The sessions will be held at a downtown Chicago location and attendees will be offered light refreshments. In addition, the executive summary and the full final report will be electronically disseminated.

Please contact Larkin Ray Harris at larkin.harris@familyhomelessness.org or 217-416-6048.





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