

Community Circles of Support for Veterans' Families

# Chicagoland Women Veterans Attachment to the Labor Force: How to Play a Role & Access the Results



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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MCCORMICK FOUNDATION



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# Overcoming Outreach & Employment Barriers for Women Veterans

## New Research Strategies



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# Genesis of Research

Despite higher levels of educational attainment on average,  
Women Veterans in Chicago & Nationwide:

- Lag male Veterans and female civilian counterparts in their employment rates
- Lag male Veterans and female civilian counterparts in their wage attainment
- These gaps are more pronounced for the youngest age cohort of women Veterans aged 18 - 24





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# Possible Barriers to Women Veteran Job Readiness, Employment & Retention

- Women Veterans use fewer government benefits
- Less likely to self-identify as Veterans
- 11% of Military single parents are female as compared to 3% who are male – extrapolate to Veteran population
- More support needs to overcome barriers to employment such as child care, after-school care and transportation



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# Possible Barriers to Women Veteran Job Readiness, Employment & Retention

- Greater stigma regarding their military service and lack of recognition for their service;
- Wage gaps in civilian employment relative to men;
- Higher rates of Military Sexual Trauma, as well as trauma experienced prior to their military service, which can cause co-morbidities that negatively impact job readiness.
- Non-traditional Military work assignments: transportation, vehicle/air craft maintenance which may be more challenging to map to civilian employment



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# Demographic Trends Add Urgency

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates, the number of women Veterans will grow from **1.8 million** (7.8% of all Veterans) in 2010 to **2.13 million** (15%) in 2036.

**Women Veterans are more likely to . . .  
be younger**

(median age 47 for females 61 for males)

**identify themselves as a racial minority**

**Women Veterans** are up to **four times** more likely to be homeless than non-Veteran women. (Foster, 2010)



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**Women Veterans comprise 5% of nation's  
homeless Veteran population.**

**Of the estimated 107,000 currently homeless  
Veterans, 7,000 are female. 23% of these  
women have children under the age of 18.**

(United States Department of Veterans Affairs; U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs  
Center for Women Veterans, 2010; Mulhall, 2009)



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**Women Veterans with children (also single male Veterans with children) are the most underserved portion of this population.**

**There is a severe lack of shelters or programs that will take women with children. The possibility of a woman losing her children is a real fear.**





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# A number of factors contribute to experiences of homelessness including:

Economic conditions - Job market, cost of living

Education

Willingness to re-train or move to find work

Isolation and loss of support systems

Challenges that include mental health issues and/or substance abuse  
and experiences of violence

Housing and Food Insecurity



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# Goals of Women Veterans Employment Study

- 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.



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# Women Veterans Employment Study Research Components

Institution Review Board Approved Informed Human Consent  
Qualitative Research Study comprised of:

- One on One Interviews with Women Veterans, including Women Veterans currently experiencing homelessness who are employed or seeking employment,
- Focus Groups with Veterans who are employed or seeking employment,
- Focus Groups with Employers and Community Stakeholders



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# Outreach Methods & Techniques

- Use “Tear off” Flyers for hard copy postings on bulletin boards on campuses; federal, state, county or municipal benefits or employment offices, faith based or other community groups (Avoid “Static” Posters)
- Electronic versions of Flyers have “live link” for e-mail/websites
- Pay attention to language i.e., suspicion of the word “Free” try “No Cost To You”





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# Outreach Methods & Techniques

- Offer “on-site” child care
- Offer lists of resources
- Provide stipends (but don’t use that word) for transportation & separate stipends for participation
  - In an Informed Human Consent Research Study strict parameters are established so that stipends are not cohesive and the value of stipends must be pre-approved
  - The purpose of stipends is to recognize the effort required to participate and to make the participant feel valued
  - Stipends may be cash or desired gift cards – bus/train passes, food or other retail outlets



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# Outreach Methods & Techniques

- Relationship, Relationship, Relationship with Referral Sources – don't presume & do things your referrers way
- Shoe Leather – Show up to events & the value of walking in the door at places that may not on surface seem like the place to go
- If you don't ask, nothing happens
- Ensuring that your "ask" is appropriate
- Keeping Referral Sources in "the loop"
  - Within the bounds of confidentiality, providing outcome feed back
  - Interim & Final Briefings: In-person and electronic



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# See Separate Attachments for Samples of Outreach Materials