Community Circles of Support for Veterans’ Families

Chicagoland Women Veterans Attachment to the Labor Force: How to Play a Role & Access the Results
Overcoming Outreach & Employment Barriers for Women Veterans

New Research Strategies
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
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
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
Demographic Trends Add Urgency

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates, the number of women Veterans will grow from \textbf{1.8 million} (7.8\% of all Veterans) in 2010 to \textbf{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 \textbf{four times} more likely to be homeless than non-Veteran women. (Foster, 2010)
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)
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.
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
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.
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
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”
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
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 feedback
  • Interim & Final Briefings: In-person and electronic
See Separate Attachments for Samples of Outreach Materials