



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

*“Impact of the Seeking Safety Program on Clinical Outcomes Among Homeless Female Veterans With Psychiatric Disorders”*

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### Quick Takeaways:

- Comprehensive care for homeless female veterans should include programs and strategies that address their unique psychosocial, physical, and mental health needs.
- Incorporating psychotherapeutic services into treatment programs may improve outcomes for homeless female veterans with psychiatric or substance use issues.

### Study:

This study examined the effectiveness of Seeking Safety for homeless women veterans with psychiatric or substance use issues at 11 Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Centers with Homeless Women Veterans Programs (HWVP). Seeking Safety (SS) is a cognitive behavior therapy model composed of 25 sessions that build safety through topics including life skills, relapse prevention, and relationships. The study consisted of two phases: Phase I - pre-implementation of SS and Phase II - post-implementation. All participants received intensive case management and other services and were interviewed quarterly for one year. However, only Phase II participants received the SS model intervention.

### Findings:

The study found that all women entering the Homeless Women Veterans Programs showed significant improvement on most clinical outcome measures over one year. However, the Seeking Safety cohort (Phase II) reported significantly better outcomes in employment (as evidenced by number of days worked), social support, general symptoms of psychiatric distress, and symptoms of PTSD, particularly in avoidance and arousal. Interestingly, the study found that the Phase II participants were more likely to have used drugs in the past 30 days.

The researchers also discussed the appropriateness of the SS model to treat homeless female veterans. Although developed to meet the treatment needs of patients with concurring PTSD and substance use issues, the flexibility of SS enabled staff to customize delivery and focus to address a wide range of problems. Also, despite not having a formal PTSD diagnosis, many of the HWVP participants had experienced high levels of trauma.

### Conclusion:

Cognitive behavior therapeutic treatment models, such as Seeking Safety, may improve outcomes for homeless female veterans. Flexibility is a key component of the model – allowing providers to customize intensive services to meet the unique needs of their clients. Additionally, implementation of SS does not require extensive clinical training, making it a low-cost strategy for providing comprehensive treatment to homeless female veterans and others suffering from trauma and substance use issues.