



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

“Trauma-Informed Care for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness: Meeting the Needs of Women Veterans”

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Quick Takeaways:

- Women veterans have an 81-93% rate of being exposed to trauma during their life, and high rates of trauma during military service.
- Women veterans are up to four times more likely to be homeless than nonveteran women, and trauma is a significant risk factor associated with homelessness.
- Women veterans have differing needs for care than male veterans, and women veterans are more likely to be supporting a child or children than male veterans.
- Trauma-informed care must understand the circumstances specific to women veterans and adjust to better meet their specific needs.

Study:

Women veterans experience trauma at very high rates, including higher rates of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) than male veterans. Exposure to trauma is associated with homelessness, PTSD, mental health problems, and substance use disorders. Women veterans are also more likely to be supporting children than male veterans. Successful trauma-informed care must understand the specific circumstances that women veterans face, and address the lack of services specifically for women veterans, including childcare.

Staff working with women veterans under the trauma-informed care framework should receive additional training to address issues and traumas that are experienced at higher rates by women veterans, such as MST and IPV. It is vital that the organization as a whole work towards creating a safe and supportive environment which avoids re-traumatization and prioritizes security and privacy. Staff should be made aware of common triggering actions, and work with women veterans to develop coping strategies to avoid re-traumatization.

In some places, women-specific services are unavailable to women veterans. Because the trauma-informed care framework seeks to personalize the service and treatment options, these women-specific services should be made available. Working with the clients and adapting policies to meet their needs is vital. A lack of access to childcare and transportation can often hinder women veterans from seeking out or using services.

Conclusion:

Women veterans are homeless at a higher rate than non-veteran women, and also have higher rates of exposure to trauma than male veterans. Trauma-informed care can help to improve the level of service that women veterans receive by addressing the specific circumstances that women veterans face, and providing the services that women veterans require but often lack in a more traditional service framework. Providing childcare and creating a safe and secure environment are also important factors in providing care to women veterans.