

Advisory Committee for Women Veterans Meeting October 28, 2009

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Homelessness
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Sociodemographic Characteristics

- Age: Majority age 45 or less
- Race: More than 71% Veterans of Color, and 33% White
- Marital Status: Nearly 7% Married
- VA Benefits: 32% SC
- Usual Employment: Full Time 43%
- Disabled/Retired 19%



Period of Service

- Period of Service:
 - Vietnam-Era 16.63%
 - Post Vietnam 51.23%
 - Persian Gulf 22.53%
 - OEF/OIF 10.26%
- Served in combat zone: 9.54%



Length of Time Homeless

Health and Mental Health Needs of Women Veterans

- 85% Substance Abuse Treatment
- 57% Medical Treatment
- 32% MST Treatment
- 31% Non Combat PTSD
- 40% Adjustment Dx.
- 7% Combat PTSD
- 5% Schizophrenia
- 17% Other Psychotic Dx.
- 56% Mood Disorders

Special Characteristics

Majority of women have a history of serious trauma

- 32% Experienced physical harassment of a sexual nature
- 42% Experienced sexual harassment
- 24% Experienced rape



Homeless Women Veterans

- 5% of homeless Veterans are women
- Risk factors for homelessness among women include:
 - Trauma
 - **Combat**
 - **Sexual**
 - Poverty
 - Lack of affordable housing
 - Limited child care support

VA offers an extensive, specialized continuum of care to address the unique needs of homeless women Veterans.

Overview of Homeless Services for Women Veterans*

Women comprise roughly 5% of the 131,000 homeless Veterans**

Homeless Grant & Per Diem program:

- Funds grants to community agencies to offer transition housing and supportive services for homeless Veterans
- 7 programs provide specific enhanced services for homeless women and women with dependent children
- More than 200 GPD programs have the capacity to serve women

Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program:

- Provide a 24-hour, 7 days per week, supervised therapeutic milieu for Veterans with multiple and severe psychosocial deficits.
- Deliver specific treatment for mental illnesses and addictive disorders
- FY 2008, 5.23% of Veterans obtaining residential treatment were women
 - Total discharges = 33,046/Women discharges = 1721

*Programs that offer gender specific services within the VA Homeless continuum- all VA Homeless services have the capacity to serve women

**On any given night – CHALENG 2008 Annual Report

Focusing on the Needs of Homeless Veterans and Families

- 131,000 Veterans are estimated to be homeless on any given night.
- Women comprise roughly 5% of the homeless Veteran population
- VA has initiated programs to address the prevention of homelessness among Veterans with families including,
- HUD- VASH:
 - Provides for permanent housing for homeless Veterans and their families with VA supportive services
 - Currently, 11% of HUD-VASH Veterans are women
 - 20,000 Housing Choice vouchers are currently allocated for homeless Veterans
- Supportive Services for Low Income Veterans in Permanent Housing*
 - Provides grants and technical assistance to community non-profit organizations to work with Veterans and their families in order to maintain them in their current housing and prevent homelessness
- At-Risk Pilot with HUD for Veteran Families*
 - A multi-site three-year pilot project designed to provide early intervention to recently discharged Veterans and their families to prevent homelessness.

*Implementation to begin FY 2010

Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Programs (MH RRTP)

Safety and Security of Women Veterans in MH RRTPs:

- January 2008: Field mandated to implement:
 - Keyless entry for all MH RRTPs
 - Locks for female bedrooms and bathrooms
 - Use of closed circuit monitoring of public areas
 - \$2.7 million allocated to the field for implementation
- Staffing must provide 24/7 on-site supervision of MH RRTPs
- Separate and secure sleeping and bathroom arrangements
- Annual Safety and Security Assessment in all MH RRTPs will be conducted jointly with the Women Veteran Program Manager (WVPM) and will focus on the needs of women veterans

MH RRTP Handbook (May 2009)

- All MH RRTPs must maintain environments to support women Veterans' dignity, respect and safety
- Gender-specific treatment and rehabilitation services must be available
- Services provided to women Veteran must be on par with services for male Veterans

Pending Legislation

- Make available special needs funding at the same time as application for Grant and Per Diem Program funding
- Funding for Employment assistance at for homeless women only under Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program

Contact

You can access homeless information on the internet at:

www.va.gov/homeless

Or by contacting: homelessvet@va.gov

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At the end of life we will not be judged by the number of diplomas we have received, how much money we have, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by 'I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in.

Mother Teresa