

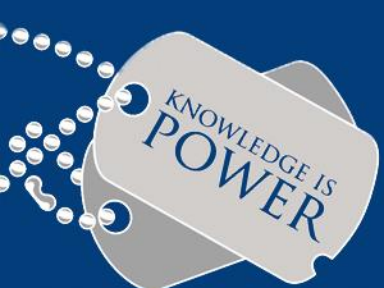


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**WOMEN  
VETERANS**

# VHA Mental Health Services for Women Veterans

July 28, 2010  
Washington, D.C.





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# **Office of Mental Health Services (116)**

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Services Officer for Mental Health  
Department of Veterans Affairs**



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## VA's Commitment: Quality Care



- **Our nation's commitment to a new generation of Veterans, for their lifetime:**
  - Treat returning Veterans early in the course of mental health problems
  - Provide holistic, integrated care for physical and mental health problems:

***Mental health is an essential component of overall health care***

- **Being there for the lifetime of all Veterans we are serving, from all eras**



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## Brief Recent History of MH Care in VA



- **Attrition of VA MH services, late 1990s to about 2003**
- **Major Rebuilding & Innovation since 2004**
  - **VHA Comprehensive MH Strategic Plan**
    - **Developed in 2003-04 and approved November, 2004**
    - **Major rebuilding efforts for MH began with this document**
  - **Uniform MH Services Handbook**
    - **Completes implementation of Strategic Plan**
    - **Defines mental health services that must be provided to all enrolled Veterans**
      - **Delineates essential components of mental health care that are to be implemented nationally**
      - **To ensure that all Veterans, wherever they obtain care, have access to needed mental health services**



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## **Gender Sensitivity in the Uniform Mental Health Services in VA Medical Centers and Clinics Handbook**

- Gender-specific issues can be important component of care
- Strongly encourage sites to give any Veteran
  - Treated for MST the option of same-sex provider, or opposite-sex provider if trauma involved a same-sex provider
  - Treated for other mental health (MH) conditions the option of a consultation from same-sex provider regarding gender-specific issues
- All VA facilities must accommodate and support women and men with safety, privacy, dignity, and respect
- All inpatient and residential care facilities must provide safe and secure sleeping and bathroom arrangements including, but not limited to, door locks and proximity to staff



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## Mental Health Services for Women Veterans



- Women can receive a wide range of mental health services including treatment for
  - Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
  - Substance use disorder
  - Depression
  - Conditions associated with military sexual trauma (MST)
  - Psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery
  - Homelessness or At risk to become Homeless



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## Mental Health Services for Women Veterans



- VA offers a continuum of mental health care services which includes
  - Psychological assessment and evaluation
  - Outpatient individual and group psychotherapy
  - Residential care
  - Inpatient care





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## Onboard VHA Employees, end of FY09



	Male	Female	% Female
0180 Psychology	1,509	1,855	55.14%
0185 Social Work	2,186	5,667	72.16%
0602- 31 Psychiatrist	1,546	1,081	41.15%



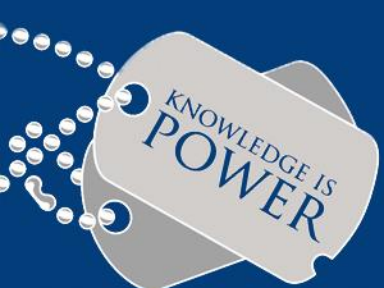


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## Military Sexual Trauma



- Both men and women experience military sexual trauma
- On screening, 21% of women seen in VHA in 2009 report to their VA healthcare provider that they experienced MST
- VA provides all physical and mental health care for conditions related to MST free of charge and has created specialized outpatient and residential/inpatient programs for such care
- Veterans interested in learning more can contact the MST Coordinator at their local VA facility or speak with their existing VA healthcare provider



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## Treatment for Mental Health Problems That May Be Associated with MST

- VA's Office of Mental Health Services funds several national training initiatives in evidence-based psychotherapies for PTSD, anxiety, depression, and serious mental illness
- Several of these therapies were originally developed and tested with survivors of sexual abuse and assault
- Because these conditions are commonly associated with MST, these national initiatives have been an important means of expanding MST survivors' access to cutting-edge treatments



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## MST: In 2009, VA Focused On

- Veteran outreach materials and activities to ensure that Veterans know about MST-related services available to them
- Ensure every site has an MST Coordinator
- Ensure that annual reports on MST are generated and made available
- Ensuring that VA providers were knowledgeable about MST-related issues



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# MST: In 2010, Further Steps



- Increase information on MST on the Internet and elsewhere
- Make it easier for Veterans to connect with MST Coordinators and other individuals who can assist them in accessing free MST-related care
- Events for Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April); VA's theme for Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2010 was "Making Connections to Help MST Survivors"
- Developing mandatory training for primary care providers and mental health providers on working with Veterans who report MST



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## Services for Women Veterans Who Are Homeless or At Risk for Homelessness

- VA's *Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups (CHALENG) FY 2008 Annual Report* estimated
  - 131,000 Veterans were homeless on any given night
  - of that number, 5% were women
- VA's continuum of care includes homeless services for special populations, such as women and families
- Programs range from temporary and transitional housing to permanent housing with supportive services



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# Services for Women Veterans Who Are Homeless or At Risk for Homelessness

## Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP)

- Provides 24-hour, 7 day per week, supervised therapeutic milieu for Veterans with mental illnesses and addictive disorders
  - FY 09: Safety and Security of Women Veterans enhancements defined and funded
  - FY 09-10: 100% site visit of all MH RRTPs to monitor implementation with specific focus on women Veterans



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# Services for Women Veterans Who Are Homeless or At Risk for Homelessness



## VA Homeless Providers Grant & Per Diem Program (GPD)

- Funds grants to community agencies to offer transitional housing and supportive services for homeless Veterans.
  - Women have been a funding priority in GPD Notices of Funding Availability since 2007





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# Services for Women Veterans Who Are Homeless or At Risk for Homelessness



## HUD-VASH

- Provides for permanent housing for homeless Veterans and their families with VA supportive services
  - Currently, 11% of Veterans who have received HUD-VASH vouchers are women.