



# *SUMMIT* 2011 National Training Summit on Women Veterans



## **Mental Health**

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# Mental Health (MH) Services for Women Veterans

- VHA offers a full continuum of MH services for women Veterans
  - Women Veterans can receive MH treatment from any VHA facility.
  - Range of services include
    - Assessment and evaluation
    - Medication treatment for mental health problems
    - Individual, group, and family psychotherapy.
  - Specialty services target problems such as PTSD, SUD, depression, and homelessness

# OEF/OIF/OND Veterans

- The most common mental health disorder for female OEF/OIF/OND Veterans using VA health care was Adjustment Reaction, including PTSD (32.3%)
  - 22.0% of female OEF/OIF/OND Veterans evaluated at a VA health care facility had a diagnosis of PTSD
- For OEF/OIF/OND Veterans using VA health care, Adjustment Reactions and Depressive Disorders were two of the most frequent diagnoses
  - Female Veterans: 32.3% and 25.0%, respectively
  - Male Veterans: 33.8% and 19.2%, respectively
- PTSD among women from OEF/OIF/OND
  - Research suggests: Women as resilient to effects of combat stress as men, in the year following return from deployment

# Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

- 1720D of Title 38, US Code defines MST as “psychological trauma, which in the judgment of a VA mental health professional, resulted from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred while the Veteran was serving on active duty or active duty for training”
- Sexual harassment is further defined as “repeated, unsolicited verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which is threatening in character”

# MST Clinical Reminder

“While you were in the military...

- a) Did you receive uninvited and unwanted sexual attention, such as touching, cornering, pressure for sexual favors, or verbal remarks?”
- b) Did someone ever use force or threat of force to have sexual contact with you against your will?”

An affirmative response to either item is considered to be a positive screen for MST

- A positive screen does not indicate the Veteran’s current subjective distress, diagnosis, interest in, or need for treatment

# MST Screening within VHA, FY 2010

	% of Veterans who screen positive for MST	
	Females	Males
All VHA Users	22.4%	1.2%
OEF/OIF/OND VHA Users	18.5%	0.8%
Homeless VHA Users	38.7%	3.2%

# MST-Related MH Care, FY 2010

	% of Veterans with at least one MST-related MH Encounter	
	Females	Males
All Veterans	54.4%	37.6%
OEF/OIF/OND Veterans	58.4%	48.3%
Homeless Veterans	87.2%	77.5%

# MST-Related Mental Health Conditions

- VA's national monitoring data reveals that the diagnoses most commonly associated with MST among users of VA healthcare are:
  - PTSD
  - Depression and other mood disorders
  - Psychotic disorders
  - Substance use disorders



# MST-Related Services

- Every VA Medical Center has a designated MST Coordinator
- Every VA Medical Center provides MST-related care and has providers knowledgeable about treatment for the aftereffects of MST
  - Many have specialized outpatient mental health services focusing on sexual trauma
  - Vet Centers also have specially trained counselors
- Programs nationwide offer specialized treatment in residential or inpatient settings
- Every VA Medical Center offers evidence-based therapy for conditions related to MST
  - VA is currently conducting national rollouts of evidence-based therapies to VA MH providers

# MST and Overall Satisfaction with VHA Care

- The OMHS MST Support Team recently investigated satisfaction with VA healthcare among Veterans with and without experiences of MST.
- Overall satisfaction ratings were high. Both men (78.5%) and women (72.3%) rated satisfaction with VHA care as very good or excellent.
- Overall satisfaction ratings did not significantly differ among Veterans who did and did not report MST, after adjusting for patient characteristics.

# Simplifying Access to MST Coordinators

- VA's OMHS started a campaign to support efforts by MST Coordinators to work with key frontline staff in their facility, like telephone operators and clinic clerks
- The goal is to streamline the experiences of Veterans calling with MST-related questions
- Campaign will help ensure frontline staff are familiar with the terms "military sexual trauma" and "MST," readily able to identify and direct callers to the MST Coordinator, and sensitive to Veterans' privacy concerns