



# National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

## Challenges Faced by Female Veterans

### WEBINAR QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

On January 12, 2011 Anu Bhagwati, Executive Director, Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), Rachel Natelson, Domestic Violence Staff Attorney, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and Star Lara, Women Veteran Coordinator, Swords to Plowshares presented the webinar session "Challenges Faced by Female Veterans." The following information outlines the questions that were posed by participants during the webinar session and the presenter's responses. This webinar focused on the challenges experienced by female service members and veterans as well as some of the services that are currently available to this population. It also provided participants with valuable information aimed at increasing their understanding when working with female veterans within the context of violence against women. Presenters shared their perspectives as veterans' advocates and services providers. To access the PowerPoint presentation accompanying this webinar visit:

[http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc\\_Files\\_VAWnet/NRCWebinar\\_TraumaticImpact.pdf](http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/NRCWebinar_TraumaticImpact.pdf)

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#### **Q: What is a Family Care Plan?**

**Rachel Natelson:** A Family Care Plan is a "blueprint" that shows how the family of a service member will be cared for in this person's absence -- whether the person is deployed, on temporary duty, or otherwise unavailable because of military obligations. It allows for a smooth transition of responsibilities to a caregiver when a service member must leave for short or long periods of time, demonstrating to the commander that unit members will be ready to accomplish the mission of the unit. The plan is comprised of instructions written by the service member and certain legal documents, such as a power of attorney.

For more information click here:

<http://www.militaryonesource.com/MOS/FindInformation/Category/Topic/Issue/Material.aspx?MaterialTypeID=9&MaterialID=13529>

#### **Q: Does Military Sexual Trauma (MST) happen more to female soldiers than male soldiers?**

**Anu Bhagwati:** 3,230 military sexual assaults were reported in 2009, an increase of 11% from fiscal year 2008. 163 sexual assaults were reported in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2008. 79% of women serving in the military since Vietnam have reported experiences of sexual harassment.

MST is the primary causal factor of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for women, whereas combat experience is the strongest predictor of PTSD for men. While sexual assaults are notoriously under-reported, this problem is exacerbated in military settings. The Department of Defense (DoD) estimates that 80% of sexual assaults in the military go unreported. For more information, go here: <http://www.servicewomen.org/advocacy.asp?Field=advocacy>

**Q: I'm interested in learning about remedies for vets who were traumatized or otherwise harmed by being discharged from the service for being LGBT, especially those with less than honorable discharges.**

**Anu Bhagwati:** Please, go to the Service Members Legal Defense Network (SLDN): SLDN will remain dedicated to dismantling DADT and assisting service members who are harmed by it during the transition. SLDN will work to ensure that evenhanded policies and regulations, providing equal treatment and opportunity for all, regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity or militarily appropriate gender expression, are established and effectively implemented in the armed forces, including active duty, National Guard, reserve and officer training programs.

For more information about this organization click here: <http://www.sldn.org/>

**Q: Does Swords to Plowshares serve population nationwide or just in California?**

**Star Lara:** Founded in 1974, Swords to Plowshares is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that provides counseling and case management, employment and training, housing and legal assistance to veterans in the San Francisco Bay Area. This organization promotes and protects the rights of veterans through advocacy, public education and partnerships with local, state and national entities.

For more information about this organization click here: <http://www.swords-to-plowshares.org/>

**Q: Is it possible to get the data that Rachel Natelson used when sharing stats regarding rate of unemployment for veterans vs. non-veterans? I'm writing an article on readjustment obstacles and could use that data and where she got it.**

**Data sources:**

**Census Study Shows Women Veterans Earn More and Work Longer Hours**

Women veterans had higher salaries than nonveterans in 2005, but they also worked more hours in a week and more weeks out of the year, according to a new analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau. For more information click here:

<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/women/cb08-cn61.html>

**Joining Forces for Women Veterans Employment and Careers Issue Brief. October 2010.**

Women veterans are a growing and important part of the U.S. Labor Force. In 1980 there were 1.1 million women veterans; by 2008, there were 1.8 million and by 2020, there will be an estimated 1.9 million women veterans, 10 % of the veteran population. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports that more than 150,000 women will be transitioning out of the military over the next few years. Many of these women will be disabled, and will be seeking jobs that capitalize on their skills and talents beyond their disabilities. For more information, click here:

[http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/final\\_employment\\_and\\_careers\\_issue\\_brief.doc](http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/final_employment_and_careers_issue_brief.doc)

**Employment and earnings of recent veterans.** Monthly Labor Review. July, 2010.

Recent male veterans and male nonveterans ages 18 to 54 years had similar unemployment rates in 2009, and earnings of full-time male veterans and nonveterans were likewise similar; by contrast, the unemployment rate of recent female veterans was higher than that of female nonveterans. For more information, click here:

<http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2010/07/art1full.pdf>

**Employment Situation of Veterans.** Bureau of Labor Statistics. May, 2010.

In the charts that follow, veterans are defined as men and women who previously served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and who were civilians at the time they were surveyed. Nonveterans are those who never served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces. Veterans are grouped according to the era during which they served. Veterans who served in more than one wartime period are classified in the most recent one, and those who served during a wartime period and another period are classified in the wartime period. To access the full report, click here: <http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2010/veterans>

**Q: Is there a list of organizations nationwide that provides services to homeless women veterans?**

**NRCDV & webinar participants:** Although these varied greatly by geographic area, we are including some of the existing services designed for this population:

- May E. Walker House. A 30-bed transitional residence for homeless women veterans. Located on the grounds of the Coatesville VA Medical Center in Eastern PA. For more information click here: <http://www.pvmsec.info/site/modules/edito/edito.php?idedito=43>
- Veterans shelter in Fayetteville, NC. A 4-bed facility that assists female veterans of domestic violence and sexual assault. Call (910) 977-2303.

**Military Sexual Trauma / Sexual Trauma Residential Treatment Resources**

This list consists of programs identifying themselves as having expertise with MST and/or sexual trauma more generally and the ability to provide treatment targeting these issues in a residential or inpatient setting.

**Programs vary widely.**

For example:

- Some programs identify as “MST programs” and MST-related care is a core part of their programming; others do not identify as MST programs, but do have staff with expertise in MST. In these latter programs, staff can often work individually with veterans who need MST-specific care as an adjunct to the care they receive through the more general program. In these programs, veterans may also be able to receive specialized MST-related group or individual therapy through a local outpatient clinic.

- Some programs serve women only; only one (Cincinnati) has a men's-only program, although other programs serve very few women and often end up with men's only cohorts. Others see both men and women concurrently but may have single-sex groups or other programming.

Please consider these variables as you think about which program will be the best fit when you are making a referral.

### **MST/Sexual Trauma Treatment Programs (Includes Specialized Women's Treatment Programs)**

\*\*Note: Specialized women's treatment programs are included here, as sexual trauma treatment is often integrated into or a strong component of these programs.

#### **TRUST House.** Boston, MA (Jamaica Plain)

Trust (Transitional Residence Utilizing Support and Treatment) House is a therapeutic residential program that offers secure and affordable housing along with a communal atmosphere in a treatment-focused setting in Jamaica Plain. The residence is home for seven women veterans and two house managers. Each resident participates fully in the daily operations of the house (including food shopping, cleaning, gardening, laundry, and cooking). For additional information, click here:

[http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=veteransterminal&L=2&L0=Home&L1=Housing&sid=Eveterans&b=terminalcontent&f=housing\\_women&csid=Eveterans](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=veteransterminal&L=2&L0=Home&L1=Housing&sid=Eveterans&b=terminalcontent&f=housing_women&csid=Eveterans)

#### **Women's Integrated Treatment & Recovery Program.** Boston, MA (Brockton)

This treatment program is designed to help women veterans who have both Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and a Substance Use Disorder (SUD).

Designed to fill the gap between short-term inpatient and long-term outpatient and residential programs, the program offers approximately eight weeks of specialized, intensive treatment based on individual needs and strengths. The primary goal is to help women develop skills to maintain abstinence and manage PTSD symptoms. Veterans will have the opportunity to address specific trauma issues, including military sexual trauma. Other important issues such as medical, vocational, housing, family, and interpersonal problems will also be addressed as participants are encouraged to develop short- and long-term plans for their own recovery. For more information click here:

[http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=veteransterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Outreach+%26+Counseling&L2=Counseling&sid=Eveterans&b=terminalcontent&f=treatment\\_witrp&csid=Eveterans](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=veteransterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Outreach+%26+Counseling&L2=Counseling&sid=Eveterans&b=terminalcontent&f=treatment_witrp&csid=Eveterans)

**Women Veterans' Residential Program.** Batavia, NY

The Women's Residential Program (WRP) provides state-of-the art treatment for women veterans who have experienced military-sexual and/or combat trauma. The all-female in-house treatment team includes psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, and social services assistants. The team works closely with other VA clinicians and makes referrals to Vet Centers, veterans' organizations, and other federal, state, and local agencies to ensure that the needs of the female veteran are met. The program is a drug and alcohol-free environment. For additional information click here:

<http://www.visn2.va.gov/VISN2/bh/womenrtp.asp>

**Women's Trauma Recovery Treatment Center (WTRC).** Temple, TX

WTRC is located at the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System in Temple, Texas. The WTRC is an intensive 7-week, patient centered, [residential treatment program](#) for women Veterans with a history of MST. Women Veterans are admitted to the WTRC in classes, or cohorts, of no more than eight. Women from any state in the USA are eligible for admission. For more information go here:

<http://www.centralextexas.va.gov/services/womenstraumarecoverycenter.asp>

**Women's Trauma Recovery Program (WTRP).** Menlo Park, CA

The WTRP was designed to treat Women Veterans, active duty service members, National Guard, and Reservists with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is the first residential program of its kind and is open to women across the country. Many of the women who are referred to the program have experienced traumas that include but are not limited to military sexual trauma (MST), combat trauma, and training accidents.

For more information, click here: <http://www.womenvetsptsd.va.gov/>