

# DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



## **Congressionally Mandated Report: Caring for Women Veterans Training Module for Non-VA Health Care Providers**

**March 2023**

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## **Introduction**

The “Deborah Sampson Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-315 § 5203(a)) requires that no later than 1 year after the date of enactment, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) establish and make available to community providers a training module that is specific to women Veterans. Pursuant to section 5203(b), this module is to provide the same training materials relating to the treatment of women Veterans that is provided to VA health care providers “to ensure that all health care providers treating women veterans have access to the same materials to support competency throughout the community.” Section 5203(e)(1) section defines “community provider” as “a non-Department of Veterans Affairs health care provider who provides preauthorized health care to veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.” This statutory provision also requires, in subsection (d), that VA submit a report to Congress not later than 1 year after the creation of the training, which was April 1, 2021, and annually thereafter on: (1) the utilization by community providers of the training module; and (2) the effectiveness of the training module.

The number of women Veterans enrolling in the VA health care system is steadily increasing, placing new demands on the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Women account for over 30% of the increase in Veterans served over the past 5 years. Women consistently receive authorized care through a community care provider at a higher rate than men. More than one of every three women received some portion of their care in the community.<sup>1</sup> Community health care clinicians may not be aware of special areas of concern that need to be addressed when caring for women Veterans which, if not appropriately addressed, may lead to negative outcomes for the Veteran. VA is committed to ensuring that women Veterans receive high quality, equitable care at all facilities, including authorized care that Veterans receive in the community.

## **Training Module**

In response to section 5203(a) of the Deborah Sampson Act of 2020, the VHA Office of Women’s Health (OWH) in partnership with the Institute for Learning, Education and Development (ILEAD), formally known as Employee Education Services, created a training module titled Caring for Women Veterans which trains community care clinicians to provide gender-specific Veteran care. The training module, established and made available to authorized community providers, gives the same training materials relating to the treatment of women Veterans that is provided to VA health care providers as required. Furthermore, the training is open to community providers not enrolled as authorized community providers to promote knowledge needed to provide high quality care for women Veterans. This gives the opportunity for all health care providers treating women Veterans to have access to the same materials to support competency. Clinicians who take this course will learn the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Sourcebook: Women Veterans in the Veterans Health Administration. Volume 4: Longitudinal Trends in Sociodemographics, Utilization, Health Profile and Geographic Distribution (fee). Frayne SM, et al. (2018).

- Recognize how the evolving role, increasing number and diversity of females in military service impacts their changing medical care needs.
- List the key components of a military history while understanding how a woman Veteran's service might affect her current or future health.
- Recognize the gender-specific, clinical manifestations of common Veteran health issues including pain syndromes and mental health disorders.
- Apply strategies for integrating patient-centered, trauma informed care into the pelvic exam of a woman Veteran who has experienced military sexual trauma (MST).

### **Administration of Training Module via Website**

The training program is administered through the VHA Training Finder Real-time Affiliate-Integrated Network (TRAIN) system, a VA internet website which is available to community providers (non-VA providers), thus complying with the requirement in § 5203(c). The course was made available April 1, 2021.

Training participation was low among community providers in the first months after the module was available on TRAIN. Because of these initial low numbers, OWH worked to increase authorized community providers' awareness of the course in several ways throughout 2022. For example, promotional materials for the course were created such as posters, flyers, blog articles, graphics and banners for social media. These materials have been shared in multiple venues such as the Vantage Point blog and the VA Provider Advisor, which is an online publication that reaches more than 102,000 community-based clinicians monthly.

An analysis of data related to learners who initiated the training course allows for targeting of marketing to certain demographics that appear likely to take the course. Moving forward into 2023, the OWH will continue to communicate about the course availability; the importance of the content; and how to access the course through the Office of Integrated Veteran Care and ILEAD channels. The communication plan for this effort will be further developed to include the following: identifying new partners to which to disseminate this training information, and engaging with medical professional societies (e.g., Society of General Internal Medicine, American College of Gynecologists, Association of Military Surgeons of the United States) and other Federal organizations (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Indian Health Service, GovDelivery) to expand the reach of this training opportunity. We will review and assess utilization quarterly to enhance the numbers of community providers accessing this training.

## Annual Reporting

As described in section § 5203(d) of the Deborah Sampson Act of 2020, no later than 1 year after the establishment of the training module, and annually thereafter, the VA shall submit to Congress a report on (1) the utilization by community providers of the training module and (2) the effectiveness of the training module.

Since the training was released in April 2021, 775 community providers enrolled to take the course. Of these, 464 completed the training. The community providers represented all 50 states, in addition to the District of Columbia and abroad. Of the 464 community providers who completed the course, 346 completed the post-training survey (response rate of 74.6%). The survey respondents consistently rated the program above both the ILEAD goal of 4.0 (representing agreement with the statements, on a one to five scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree), and above the average score of other programs on TRAIN (on the five standard questions asked of every TRAIN program). The survey results produced an above average evaluation of this training module for satisfaction and meeting learning objectives (see Appendices 1 and 2) as well as for the utilization and effectiveness outcomes as requested by this section:

The utilization by community providers of the training module is as follows:

- 464 community providers have completed the training in TRAIN.
- 346 community providers completed the post-training survey.
- 339 community providers responded positively on the following questions of utilization (on a one to five scale with one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree):
  - I will be able to apply the knowledge and skills learned to improve my job performance. (4.33 out of 5)
  - The educational activity advanced my knowledge, attitudes and skills to
  - contribute to my practice care of female Veterans. (4.61 out of 5)

The effectiveness of the training module is as follows:

- 321 Community Providers responded positively on questions of effectiveness (on a one to five scale with one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree). For example:
  - I learned new knowledge and skills from this learning activity. (4.68 out of 5)
  - The training environment (face to face, video conference, web-based training) was effective for my learning. (4.60 out of 5)

For the 12 questions on the specific training objectives the average score was 4.63 out of 5.

## Conclusion

This report provides data about the training module established by VA that is available to community providers to ensure they have access to training on the unique needs of

women Veterans. The course is highly rated for utilization of the material and effectiveness.

To disseminate course information, OWH will continue to communicate through the VHA Office of Integrated Veteran Care and ILEAD channels to reach providers authorized to care for women Veterans. To continue to expand the reach of this training opportunity, we will explore partnering with medical professional societies and other Federal organizations. An annual report will be prepared and submitted, as required, that includes future utilization and effectiveness data generated from ongoing trainings.

## Appendix 1. Overall Training Satisfaction and Effectiveness

The training module went live on the VHA Training Finder Real-time Affiliate-Integrated Network (TRAIN) system which is available to community providers. Four hundred sixty-four community providers completed the course from April 1, 2021, to October 31, 2022. Of these, 346 completed a post-training survey respectively. The survey results produced above average scores for this training module compared to other E-Learning programs on the TRAIN system.

Post Training Survey	Caring for Women Veterans	TRAIN Average
	04/01/2021-10/31/2022	04/01/2021-10/31/2022
Overall, I was satisfied with this learning activity.	4.73	4.45
I would recommend this training course to others.	4.74	-
I learned new knowledge and skills from this learning activity.	4.68	4.43
The educational activity advanced my knowledge, attitudes, and skills to contribute to my practice care of female Veterans.	4.55	-
The scope of the learning activities was appropriate to my professional needs.	4.50	4.33
The content was presented in a manner that was fair and unbiased.	4.69	-
I will be able to apply the knowledge and skills learned to improve my job performance.	4.33	4.30
The training environment (face to face, video conference, web-based training) was effective for my learning.	4.60	4.34

## Appendix 2. Specific Learning Objectives

The survey also asked the participants to rate the success of the program on their ability to meet 12 specific objectives. For every objective, the community providers rated over 4.0 (agreeing that they would be able to do/know each objective).

Program Objectives	Average
	04/01/2021-10/31/2022
At the conclusion of this educational program, you are able to identify three essential components of a military history and how it pertains to female Veterans.	4.66
At the conclusion of this educational program, you are able to list two challenges female Veterans face during reintegration to civilian life.	4.66
At the conclusion of this educational program, you are able to define MST and list two medical conditions associated with a history of MST.	4.69
At the conclusion of this educational program, you are able to identify one potential strategy for integrating patient-centered, sensitive care into the pelvic exam of a female Veteran who has experienced (MST).	4.68
At the conclusion of this educational program, you are able to list two components of a social history that are important to obtain while interviewing female Veterans.	4.66
At the conclusion of this educational program, you are able to identify at least one comorbidity compounding mental illness in female Veterans.	4.66
At the conclusion of this educational program, you are able to identify two common physical manifestations experienced that can be experienced by female Veterans with mental illness.	4.63
At the conclusion of this educational program, you are able to list at least three reproductive services provided to female Veterans at the VA.	4.65
At the conclusion of this educational program, you are able to identify three resources available to assist female Veterans through the VA.	4.60
The educational activity advanced my knowledge, attitudes and skills to contribute to my practice care of female Veterans.	4.61
I learned information and strategies I will utilize in my diagnosis and treatment of female Veterans with Pain Disorders, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Suicide.	4.51
I learned information and strategies I will utilize in my diagnosis and treatment of female Veterans with MST.	4.51

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