“Updates from the Center for Women Veterans”
DAV – Women Veterans Seminar
Las Vegas, NV

August 11, 2014

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VA Center for Women Veterans
Who Knew?
Overview

- Congressional Mandate
- Our Mission – Did You Know?
- Women Veterans Demographics/History/Usage
- Are We Ready?
- Barriers to Care
- Where to Get Help
- Quality – Gender Disparities – Satisfaction
- Changing the Culture
- eBenefits
- Final Thoughts
Congressional Mandate

November 1994, Public Law 103-446 required VA to create The Center for Women Veterans, to monitor and coordinate VA programs for women.
Our Mission

- **Monitor and coordinate** VA’s administration of health care and benefits services, and programs for women Veterans.

- **Serve as an advocate** for a cultural transformation (both within VA and in the general public) in recognizing the service and contributions of women Veterans and women in the military.

- **Raise awareness** of the responsibility to treat women Veterans with dignity and respect.
Demographics

Women VHA Users Doubled Since 2000

FY00: 159,000

FY12: 360,000
Women Veterans Demographics

- Women are one of the fastest growing subpopulations of Veterans. Based on active duty and recruiting numbers, the percentage of female Veterans is projected to increase.

- 2,271,222 million women Veterans of the 21,972,964 million living Veterans, (VetPop as of 9/30/13) – 10.4 percent of the total Veterans population.

- By 2020, they are estimated to be 12.4 percent the total Veterans populations.

- As women Veterans populations increases, total Veterans population decreases.

- Median female Veteran’s age is 49 (male – 64, as of 9/30/12).
Growth Expected to Double Again Soon

12% of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Veterans

18% of National Guard/Reserves

6% of VA health care users

Women Veteran enrollment outpacing that of men—29% increase since 2009

58% of OEF/OIF/OND women Veterans have used VA care
1 year after separating from service, 62% of female OEF/OIF/OND Veterans and 56% of male Veterans remain in VA care

5 years after separating from service, 52% of female OEF/OIF/OND Veterans and 47% of male Veterans remain in VA care

Research-funded Collaborative Research to Enhance and Advance Transformation and Excellence (CREATE) New Attrition Study—examines factors related to staying in or leaving VA care

Younger Women’s Needs

- Maternity Care
- Mental Health
- Service-Connected Disabilities
- Privacy, safety, convenience
Aging Population

58% of women VA users are 45+

- Menopausal Needs
- Geriatric Care
- Inpatient/Extended Stays

Next 20 years ... more intensive health care services and support as caregivers

Age distribution of women Veteran patients, FY01 and FY10

Are We Ready?
• High-quality, equitable care on par with that of men
• Care delivered in a safe and healing environment
• Seamless coordination of services
• Recognition as Veterans
Barriers to Care
“We don’t know if it’s because they had different roles, because they felt like they didn’t do the same thing as some of our male Veterans ... whatever it is, they are still not self-identifying.”

General Allison Hickey
VA Under Secretary for Benefits
9/27/12
Lack of Knowledge of VA Services

- 39% have zero or almost no knowledge of needed information about VA
- Misperceptions in all cohorts about who is eligible for VA care
- OEF/OIF/OND more knowledgeable than other cohorts about available women’s health and readjustment services

Source: 2010 National Survey of Women Veterans, (D. Washington)
Women Veterans Call Center

A call center aimed at increasing women Veterans' knowledge, enrollment, and utilization of VA services available to women Veterans

• Outgoing call center provides women Veterans with information on VA health care services, benefits and eligibility

• Incoming call center, 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636), receives and responds to questions from Veterans, their families and caregivers about the many VA services and resources available to women Veterans
Answering The Need: Women Veterans Call Center

• Call Center created to increase women’s knowledge of VA benefits and services, increase enrollment, and increase utilization of health care services
• Outbound outreach Call Center moved to Canandaigua VAMC in 2012 and inbound Call Center launched April 2013
• As of March 2014, receiving approximately 50 inbound calls/day
• Staffed by trained operators to provide information on VA’s benefits and services
• Hours of operation M-F 8:00AM- 10:00PM, Saturday 8:00AM- 6:30PM
• Staff makes referrals to Women Veteran Program Managers (WVPM), Health Eligibility Center, Veterans Benefits Administration and suicide and homeless crisis lines as needed
• Referrals to WVPMs followed up within 5 days, 30-day follow-ups to Veterans
• Between February 2013 and January 2014, 64,000 calls have been made, with 41,000 successful contacts and 7,000 incoming calls have been received
Quality

 Gender-specific care to women Veterans in VHA facilities substantially exceeds that in other systems

**Cervical Cancer screening**

93.5%  
VA average (2010-11)  
Vs.  
77% private sector (2010)  
67% Medicaid (2010)

**Breast Cancer screening**

86%  
VA average (2010-11)  
Vs.  
71% private sector (2010)  
69% Medicare  
51% Medicaid (2010)

Source: VA Office of Analytics and Business Intelligence 12-19-2011
• VA has significantly reduced gender gaps and exceeds private sector on most performance measures for both men and women

• *Gender Differences in Performance Measures, VHA 2008-2011*, identifies best practices for eliminating gender gaps based on success in VA networks

  – Electronic 2013 update under development
Survey results for FY13 show overall satisfaction rating of VA inpatient/outpatient care similar for women and men.

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Source: VHA Office of Analytics and Business Intelligence, Internal Analysis, February 21, 2014
Overarching Goal: Changing the Culture
• VA-wide campaign to enhance the language, practice and culture of VA to be more inclusive of women Veterans
• Women Veterans Program : VA Center for Women Veterans
  – Tasked with developing strategies to reach women Veterans (inside and outside VA) and VA employees

Outcome: Needs of women Veterans are always considered across program offices and in policy and key decisions
• Women’s Health Services is leading a VA-wide communication initiative to enhance the **language, practice** and **culture** of VA to be **more inclusive of women Veterans**
Reasons to File Electronically and have an eBenefits Account

- Claims submitted online may be processed faster, helping VA meet the 125 day at 98% accuracy goal by 2015
- Veterans filing for disability benefits can initiate their claim online and preserve their date of claim. Veterans have up to 365 days to fully complete their claim, upload any supporting documentation and submit directly to VA
- Request and receive Official Military Personnel File including DD Form-214 within hours
- Search for state and county benefit programs for Veterans
- The Career Center enables Veterans to apply for federal and civilian jobs, build a resume and translate military skills to civilian jobs
- Request representation and assistance from a Veterans Service Organization
Final Thoughts
What Women Veterans Tell Us They Need and Want

- Recognition and respect
- Employment
- Suitable housing
- Access to and receipt of high quality health care
- Childcare options
- Opportunities for social interaction
- Want to make a difference
Where to Get Help

- **Health care**: Full-time women Veterans program managers (WVPM) at VA health care facilities across the country to outreach to women Veterans and assist them with accessing VA’s health care services. [http://www.womenshealth.va.gov](http://www.womenshealth.va.gov)

- **Women Veterans Call Center**: Incoming and Outgoing at 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)

- **Benefits**: Designated women Veterans coordinators (WVC) at all VA regional offices (RO); [www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isFlash-1](http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isFlash-1)

- **Homeless**: Homeless Veterans coordinators: [www.va.gov/homeless/index.cfm](http://www.va.gov/homeless/index.cfm)

- **Minority**: Minority Veterans program coordinator at every VA healthcare facility, regional office, and national cemetery: [www.va.gov/centerforminorityVeterans/](http://www.va.gov/centerforminorityVeterans/)

- Other coordinators such as OIF/OEF, mental health, MST, Vet Center, etc.
Journeys...
How to Contact the Center

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