



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

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

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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

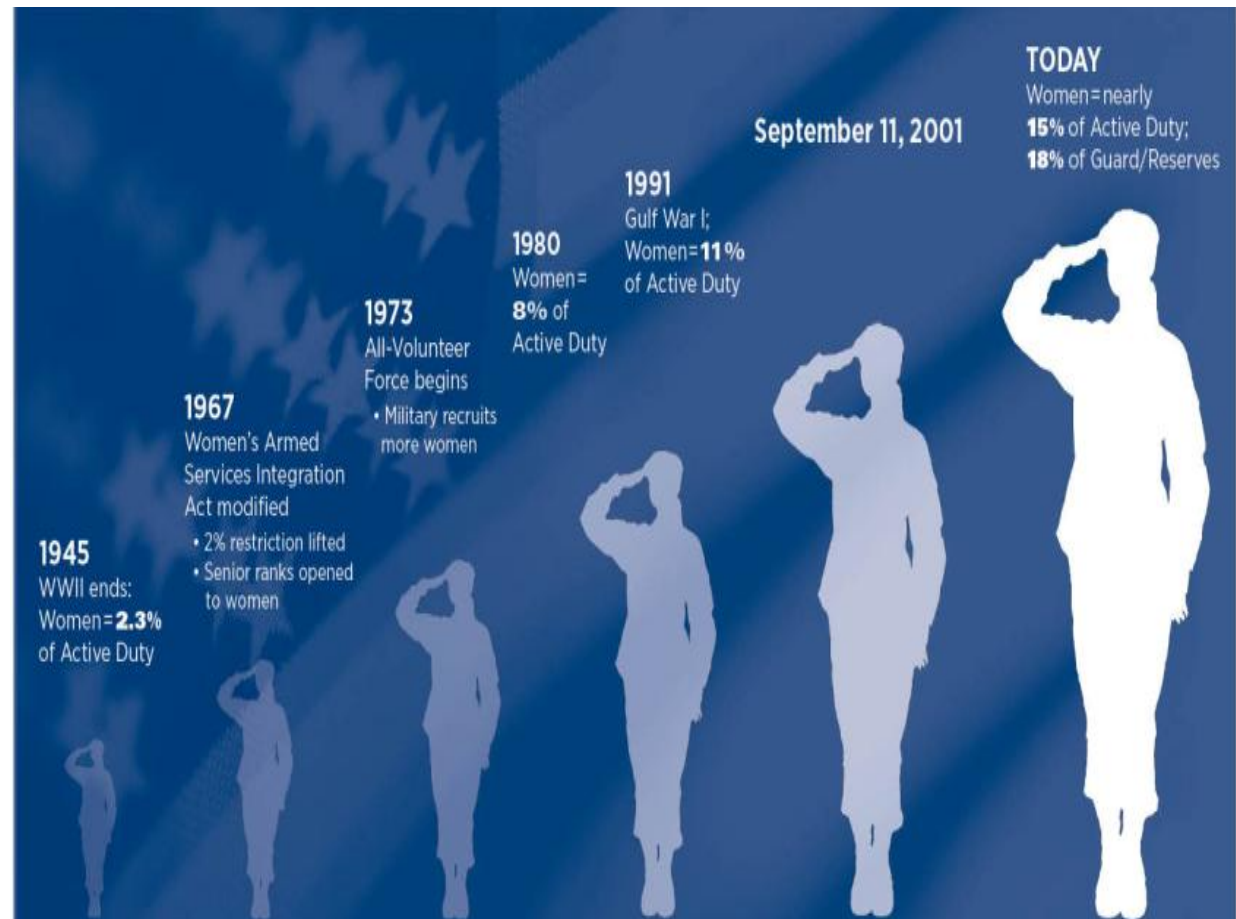
- **Monitor and coordinate** VA's administration of health care and benefits services, and programs for women Veterans.
- **Serve as an advocate** for a cultural transformation (both within VA and in the general public) in recognizing the service and contributions of women Veterans and women in the military.
- **Raise awareness** of the responsibility to treat women Veterans with dignity and respect.



*Did you know??*



## Demographics



Source: America's Women Veterans: Military Service History and VA Benefits Utilization Statistics, Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, Nov. 23, 2011;

[http://www.va.gov/VETDATA/docs/SpecialReports/Final\\_Womens\\_Report\\_3\\_2\\_12\\_v\\_7.pdf](http://www.va.gov/VETDATA/docs/SpecialReports/Final_Womens_Report_3_2_12_v_7.pdf)



## 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**



## Retention of Enrolled OEF/OIF/OND Veterans

- 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

Source: Leslie, Douglas. Women Veterans Cohort Study (2012 unpublished data).



# Younger Women's Needs



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





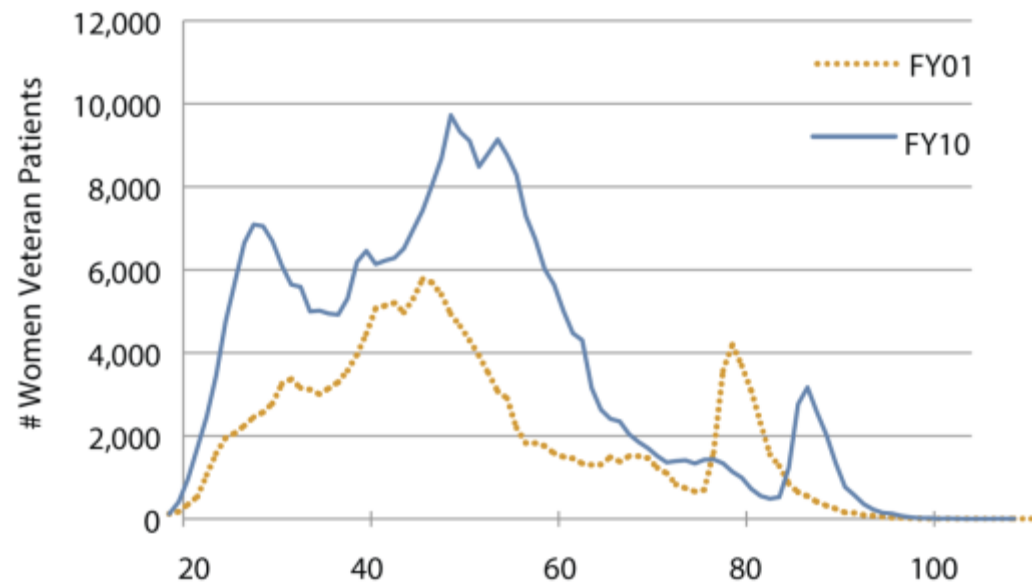
# Aging Population

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



Source: Women's Health Evaluation Initiative and VHA Women's Health Services.  
Sourcebook: *Women Veterans in the Veterans Health Administration. Volume 2. Sociodemographics and Use of VHA and Non-VA Care Fee.* 2012.



# Are We Ready?





## Ideal: Women Veterans Experience of VA

- 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







## Women Don't Identify Themselves as Veterans

*"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)



# Where to Get Help: Women Veterans Call Center

## 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

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

## Breast Cancer screening

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

Source: VA Office of Analytics and Business Intelligence 12-19-2011



# Gender Disparities Progress!

- 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





## Satisfaction

Survey results for FY13 show overall satisfaction rating of VA inpatient/outpatient care similar for women and men

Age	Gender	Overall Rating
18-49	Male	55.5
	Female	55.7
50-64	Male	65.7
	Female	65.4
65-74	Male	70.8
	Female	71.3
75+	Male	74
	Female	78

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**



# Culture Change Through Communications

- 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**





# eBenefits

The screenshot shows the eBenefits website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About, Help, Contact, Facility Locator, and Feature List. Below this is the eBenefits logo and a search bar. The main content area features a large banner with the text "Say Goodbye to Multiple Logins" and a "Find Out More" button. To the right of the banner is a section titled "Most Popular Features" with a list of links: "Download VA Letters", "Transfer Post-9/11 Education Benefits", "Update Direct Deposit and Contact Information", and "VA Home Loan Certificate of Eligibility". Below the banner is a section titled "How Can eBenefits Assist Me?" with three sub-sections: "I am a Veteran", "I am a Service Member", and "I am a Family Member". Each sub-section has a brief description of the benefits available and a "Learn More" link. At the bottom right, there is a "Veterans Affairs DeptVetAffairs" social media feed with several posts.

Home | About | Help | Contact | Facility Locator | Feature List | 10/17/19

**eBenefits**  
My Gateway to Benefit Information

A Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense

[Login](#) [Register](#)

[apply for BENEFITS](#) [view my STATUS](#) [access my DOCUMENTS](#) [browse benefits LINKS](#) [career CENTER](#) [search](#)

**Register now** to use all of the available features of eBenefits!

**Say Goodbye to Multiple Logins**  
Travel seamlessly between eBenefits and MyHealthNet.

[Find Out More](#)

**Most Popular Features**

[Login or register for a Premium Account](#) to access these features.

- Download VA Letters
- Transfer Post-9/11 Education Benefits
- Update Direct Deposit and Contact Information
- VA Home Loan Certificate of Eligibility

[View All Features](#)

**How Can eBenefits Assist Me?**

**I am a Veteran**  
With a Premium Account, Veterans are able to Apply for Veterans' Benefits Online (VONAPP), access VA Payment History, apply for VA Home Loan Certificate of Eligibility, check on Compensation & Pension Claims Status, and more. [Learn more.](#)

**I am a Service Member**  
With a Premium Account, Service Members have access to Service Member Civilian Employment Information, Service Member Personnel Information, DoD TRICARE Insurance, Education Benefits and more. [Learn more.](#)

**I am a Family Member**

**Veterans Affairs DeptVetAffairs**

New VA outpatient clinic opens in Prince George's County, Md. <http://t.co/KcH7129G>  
5 minutes ago · reply · retweet · favorite

MT @NEAarts In today's podcast, veteran @ron\_capps talks about how writing can be a tool to cope with PTSD and TBI. <http://t.co/4R8UpvY1>  
22 minutes ago · reply · retweet · favorite

Hiring Our Heroes: August Hiring Fairs Across the Country <http://t.co/S8Zm0XA cc>  
@HireOurHeroes  
27 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite



## 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>
- **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

## Staff Members:

- Ms. Elisa Basnight, JD, MPA
- Dr. Betty Moseley Brown
- Desiree Long
- Shannon Middleton
- Michelle Terry

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