



WOMEN VETERANS

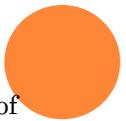
"I am an American Woman and I served
the people of the United States"

I am a **Veteran**

WOMEN VETERAN'S DEMOGRAPHICS



- ❖ Women represent nearly 15% of today's active duty military and 18% of guard and reserve forces
- ❖ 20 % of all military recruits are women
- ❖ One of the fastest growing subpopulations based on active duty and recruiting numbers
- ❖ Median female Veteran's age is 49; male Veteran's age is 64 (as of 9/3/12)



WOMEN VETERAN'S DEMOGRAPHICS



- ❖ Women serve in every branch of the military
- ❖ By 2020 VA projects that 10.5 % of Veterans we serve will be women
- ❖ Women soldiers see intense combat and receive combat-related injuries
- ❖ Of the 22.3 million living Veterans 2.24 million are women (VetPop as of 9/30/12)



WOMEN VETERANS OF OEF/OIF/OND

- ❖ Women comprise nearly 12% of soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan
- ❖ More than 79% of them are younger than 40
- ❖ 88% are enlisted; 12% are officers
- ❖ Approximately 55% OEF/OIF/OND Women Veterans currently use VA



WOMEN VETERANS CHALLENGES



- ❖ More likely to have a service-connected disability rating, 50% or more female veterans have a current service connected rating
- ❖ Enrolled women Veterans represent 6.7 percent of the total enrolled Veterans population
- ❖ Less likely to use VA health care at all but more likely to use **only VA health care**
- ❖ Less likely to be insured, and
- ❖ More likely to have no earnings or income, and live in poverty



WOMEN VETERANS CHALLENGES



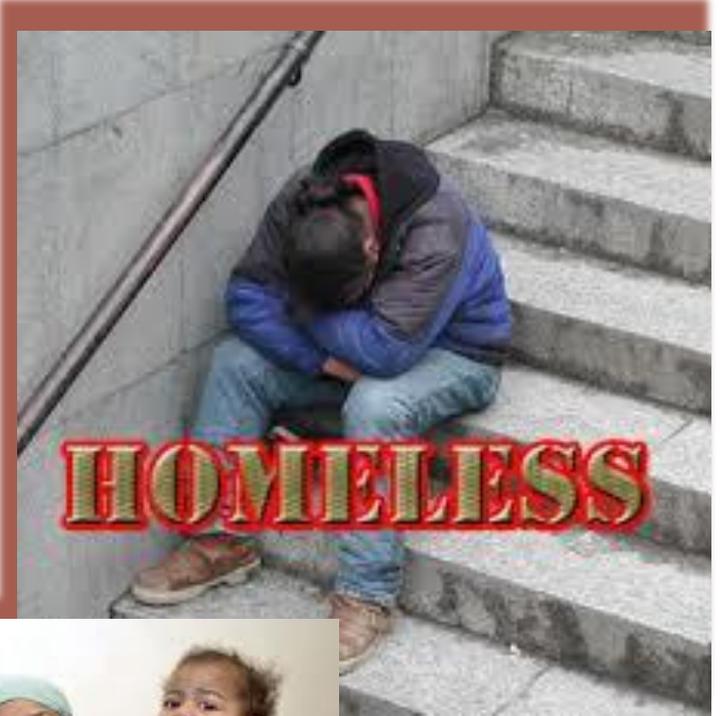
"Hear the news? We can now serve in certain specialties with men in a combat zone."

- ❖ Women are seeing combat action
- ❖ Many are not aware of and do not apply for VA's benefits and services. Women who served during Peacetime are less aware of what's available.
- ❖ Women Veterans should feel free to ask to meet with a provider of the same sex or opposite sex if it would make them feel more comfortable.



HOMELESSNESS

- ❖ Over the past decade the number of female veterans who have become homeless has nearly doubled to roughly 6,500 according to the VA
- ❖ Most of them are younger than 35 and a large number of them have children.



HOMELESSNESS



- ❖ Returning servicewomen are facing a battlefield of a different kind
- ❖ Male returnees become homeless largely because of substance abuse and mental illness
- ❖ Female veterans face these problems and more including the search for family housing
- ❖ More than 60 percent of transitional housing programs receiving grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs did not accept children, or restricted their age and number



HOMELESSNESS

- ❖ Issues impacting homeless women veterans include:
 - Betrayal trauma
 - Rape
 - Exposure to combat artillery and missiles
 - Lack of social supports
 - Substance abuse
 - Mental illness
 - Premature discharges
 - Ineligibility for VHA benefits.
 - Feeling unsafe.
- ❖ Women veterans are up to four times more likely to be homeless than non-veteran women



HOMELESSNESS



- ❖ Five predominant "roots" (precipitating experiences) that could initiate pathways toward homelessness:
 - childhood adversity
 - trauma and/or substance abuse during military service
 - post-military abuse
 - adversity and/or relationship termination
 - post-military mental health, substance abuse, and/or medical problems
 - unemployment



PTSD, ANXIETY AND MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA (MST)



- ❖ Women in the military have proven themselves to be brave, disciplined professionals
- ❖ People underestimate what anyone is exposed to in combat
- ❖ Across all ages and all career paths, trauma is trauma, regardless if that person is male or female
- ❖ Many don't know that service connection or disability compensation is not required to receive free treatment for conditions resulting from MST



PTSD, ANXIETY AND MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA (MST)



- ❖ Compared with those without a history of sexual assault, women veterans were
 - 9 times more likely to have PTSD if they had a history of MST(Military Sexual Trauma)
 - 7 times more likely if they had childhood sexual assault (CSA) histories
 - 5 times more likely if they had civilian sexual assault histories
- ❖ An investigation of medical charts revealed that PTSD is diagnosed more often for women with a history of MST than CSA
- ❖ Women veterans have differential rates of PTSD due to sexual assault, with higher rates found among those assaulted while on active duty
- ❖ Although women with MST are more likely to have PTSD, results suggest that they are receiving fewer health care services



WHY ARE VSO'S SO IMPORTANT?



- ❖ Knowledgeable Veterans Service Officers(VSO's) understand problems, which confront veterans, widows, widowers, and children and can help them navigate a complex system
- ❖ VSO's know the extent, the meaning and the application of laws that have been passed by the U.S, Congress in the interests of veterans and their dependents , critical to successful case outcome
- ❖ VSO's apply specialized knowledge in the best way suited to the needs of every individual veteran or other beneficiary who comes to the office for assistance

A VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER

- ❖ The service officers learn, through the military records and through personal conversations, many intimate details concerning the veterans life.
- ❖ Any confidential information - whether it is supplied by a veteran, the VA, or another party, is something that remains confidential and is not discussed or released except to people who are personally connected to the case and have a, 'need to know'
- ❖ VSO's provide services for veterans, they do so without prejudice related to the veteran or family member's race, class, gender, or ability
- ❖ They will assist veterans in preparing claims which are entirely honest. They will prepare claims in order to put the best light on the claim. Any information which is known to be dishonest will not be included



A VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER



- ❖ The service officer maintains high professional standards in his dealings with other service officers or veteran's counselors, never being critical of them
- ❖ They are non-partisan between veteran's organizations. They will render service to any veteran or any veteran's organization. Racial and Religious preferences have no bearing on the cases they handle



WOMEN ARE MEANT TO BE APPRECIATED NOT UNDERSTOOD

- ❖ The number one thing to know about women is you can't understand them
- ❖ Feelings can't be understood
- ❖ Women want you to be there for them not try to fix them



HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL ENCOUNTER



FACT :Women can be more emotional than men

Helpful Suggestions for VSO:

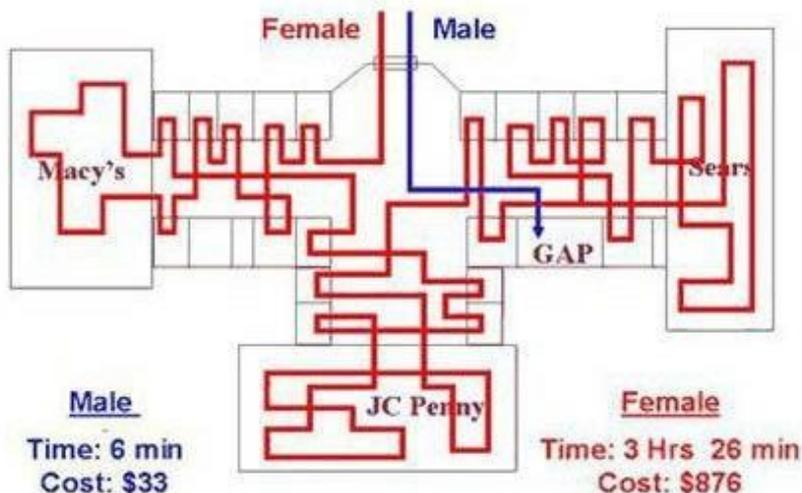
- ❖ **DON'T PRESUME ANYTHING!**
- ❖ When a couple walks in acknowledge both parties equally
- ❖ Help her recognize what she is trying to accomplish to help her keep her sense of control



PROBLEM SOLVING

- ❖ Men tend to focus on facts and seek immediate resolution
- ❖ Women desire more introductory time to develop trust and feel more comfortable with a VSO
- ❖ VSO's need to allow female veterans extra time in the initial visit to work through their thoughts

Mission: Go to Gap, Buy a Pair of Pants



When Women Pack



When Men Pack



“I’M LISTENING”



Helpful Hints for VSO’s:

- ❖ Let the woman go through the process of explaining her situation to you
- ❖ Don’t just listen, tell her that is exactly what you are going to do
- ❖ Use “reflective listening”
- ❖ Ask specific questions and show them you care about what they want



NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION



FACT:

- ❖ Women tend to speak with animated faces, hands in motion and often touching others

Helpful Hints for VSO's:

- ❖ Nod your head when she is speaking
- ❖ Make eye contact and face the person speaking to you
- ❖ Appear in charge by using your body to control the discussion space
- ❖ Preserve calm and prevent emotional escalation





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The Invisible Soldier

You can tell her by the twinkle in her eye,
At parades when the flag marches by.
She served our country and she served it very well.
Some have even served a tour or two in Hell.
She suffered hardship and never ceased to care.
It gave us strength just to know that she was there.
She was a leader, you could tell by the rank she wore,
But she became the invisible soldier after the war.
She can march, she can fly, and she can sail.
She proved that bravery isn't exclusive of the male.
She did every job she was asked and more,
But she became the invisible soldier after the war.
Now, it is finally time to right a wrong.
Honor our sister soldier; hear her song.
It's very clear that she's a patriot to the core.
Don't let her be the invisible soldier anymore.





*"Women are like
teabags; you never
know how strong
they are until they're
put in hot water."*

Eleanor Roosevelt

