

# WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE



## Mental Health Services for Women Veterans

The VA has responded to the growing number of women Veterans by developing a continuum of mental health services to meet their unique needs. For example, women can receive a wide range of mental health services from VA Medical Centers including formal psychological assessment and evaluation, outpatient individual and group psychotherapy and residential/inpatient care. Specialty services are available to target problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, depression, and homelessness.

Military sexual trauma (MST) can be an issue for women as well, with 21 percent of women seen in VHA in 2008 reporting to their VA health care provider that they experienced MST while in the military. Recognizing this, VA provides all physical and mental health care for conditions related to MST free of charge and Veterans may be able to receive these services even if they are not eligible for other VA care. In addition, Vet Centers are available across the nation to provide readjustment counseling services for Veterans and their families. The VA has also founded a national suicide prevention hotline to ensure that Veterans who are in crisis have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. Veterans can call the Lifeline number, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), and press "1" to talk to a professional counselor at any time.

Mental health care through VA adopts a strengths-based, recovery orientation, focusing on Veterans' personal values and goals in order to assist them in developing a life that feels meaningful to them. It also recognizes that women may face unique issues in treatment and in seeking care at the VA. As such, VA facilities pay special attention to ensuring women's safety, privacy, dignity and respect. For example, all inpatient and residential care facilities must provide separate and secured sleeping accommodations for women. Veterans can also ask to meet with a clinician of a particular gender if it would make them feel more comfortable.

For more information, Veterans can speak with their existing VA mental health or health care provider, contact the Women Veterans Program Manager and/or contact the Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator, if appropriate, at their nearest VA Medical Center, or contact their local Vet Center. A list of VA and Vet Center facilities can be found online at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) and [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov). Veterans can also call VA's general information hotline at 1-800-827-1000.

### References:

<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx>

<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/VAMentalHealthGroup.asp>

[http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/OEFOIF/OEF\\_OIF\\_Women\\_Veterans.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/OEFOIF/OEF_OIF_Women_Veterans.asp)

<http://vawww.mst.va.gov>