

Fact Sheet: Veterans' Victimization and Mental Health

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Veterans' Victimization and Mental Health: The Facts

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Who is Considered a Veteran?

A veteran is a person who has served in the active military, air service, or naval and was discharged honorably.¹

Have You Heard?

- ◇ 6,000 veterans kill themselves every year²
- ◇ The suicide rates for veterans is 1.5 times greater than that of non-veterans²
- ◇ Approximately 20 to 30% of female veterans have experienced sexual assault or attempted sexual assault during their military service³
- ◇ Intimate partner violence rates among veterans varies from 13% to 58%, dependent upon correlated factors, such as mental health disorders⁴
- ◇ Veterans are more likely to report using alcohol and illicit drugs with 65% of veterans being admitted for treatment for alcohol and 17% for substance use⁸

Barriers Veterans Face

There are four main barriers that stand in the way of many veterans seeking mental health or other services. First, there are personal and professional stigmas surrounding mental health and victimization. Many veterans believe that asking for mental health support will cause damage to their careers or they fear they will lose respect from coworkers after seeking assistance.⁵ Second, veterans lack trust in the mental health services provided to them with many believing their friends and family would be of better help than a professional. Additionally, veterans fear that their treatment will not be kept confidential.⁵ Third, bureaucracy is a barrier veterans face as the average wait time for treatment at a Veterans Assistance (VA) facility is up to 18 days. Further, some veterans are ineligible for benefits.⁵ Finally, some VA facilities are far from where most veterans live, limiting their access to these services.⁶

Prevention Strategies ⁷

- ◇ Professionals assisting veterans should increase public awareness campaigns aimed at stigmas surrounding mental health and support.
- ◇ Community partners of veterans should participate in gatekeeper training, in which individuals are trained to identify and refer those at risk for suicide.
- ◇ Primary care providers should be trained to screen veterans for risks of mental health disorders and suicide.



Resources

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Texas

- ◇ Samaritan Center—samaritan-center.org (512-277-5804)
- ◇ East Texas Veterans Resource Center—helpforvets.com (903-291-1155)
- ◇ Homeless Veterans Services of Dallas—hvsvd.org (214-372-8822)

National

- ◇ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Crisis Line—mentalhealth.va.gov (1-800-273-8255)
- ◇ National Call Center for Homeless Veterans—va.gov/homeless/nationalcallcenter.asp (1-877-424-3838)
- ◇ Wounded Warrior Project—woundedwarriorproject.org (1-888-997-2586)

References

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Resources

- Texas Abuse Hotline (suspicions of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, adults with disabilities, or people 65 years or older) <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/>
1-800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673
- Victim Connect Resource Center 1-855-484-2846

