Welcome

A Collaborative Model for Housing and Services for Veterans
Presenters

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Overview

Working with Veterans

Ansell Horn
Facing the Facts

- As of 2008, 107,000 homeless veterans were in shelters (twice the rate of homelessness in general adult population)
- 16-23 percent of homeless people are veterans
- In 2010, over 144,000 veterans spent at least one night homeless
Limitations of Data

- Numbers excluded from VA care
- Self-reporting
Disparities

- African Americans make up 11% of the veteran population, but are 34% of homeless veterans (2008)
- Fifty percent of homeless veterans are concentrated in California, Florida, New York, and Texas
Efforts to house veterans

- Obama Task Force established in 2009.
- Initiates plan to end homelessness among veterans within 5 years
- Legislative amendments in 2010 to expand McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness
- Major steps to end homelessness
Results

- On single night in January 2014, 49,333 veterans were homeless
- Nationwide drop of 32.6% decline in homeless veterans 2009-2014
- New Orleans, Las Vegas, and Houston claim to have effectively eliminated homelessness among veterans
- New York City claims to have reduce chronic street homelessness among veterans from 4677 to 477 (2011-2016)

The 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, Chapter 5
Total Veterans

As of 2014

- Number of Veterans: 19,386,589
- 8% of the population
- 5,857,490 use VA health care

Source: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics
“Profile of Veterans: 2014 Data from the American Community Survey”
Many choose not to use VA
Experience barriers to access (wait times, distance)
Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act gives options for insurance and health care
Preference for HCH clinics over other health centers
Healthcare Utilization

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has 9.1 million enrollees (out of approximately 21 million veterans)

Less than half of enrollees use the VA for regular care
Homeless Veterans

- Less likely to access VA healthcare services than housed counterparts
- Homeless veterans have an age-adjusted mortality 3 times higher than their housed peers (2014)
Homelessness and Disability

- Fifty-three percent of veterans live with disability
- Mental Health, Physical, Substance Abuse
Health Issues

Homeless veterans are more likely to live with:
- Major Depression and other co-occurring psychiatric diagnoses
- Two or more chronic medical conditions
- Hepatitis C/Cirrhosis
- PTSD
Veterans Choice Act

- Signed into law in 2014
- Allows contracted Health Centers to serve some veterans
- Goal is to increase access to care
- Private sector cared paid for by VA
- Requires comprehensive, independent assessment of VHA care delivery and management
Distinct Needs of Women Veterans

- Are less likely to use VA healthcare services than male counterparts
- Experience of a male-oriented health program
- High rates of PTSD
- Forty percent of women veterans have children and 30,000 are single parents
Military Sexual Trauma

- At least 26% of women service members experience military sexual trauma (MST)
- MST is associated with increased risk of homelessness
Women who served

- 41,000 women served in the Gulf War
- 200,000 have served in OEF/OIF (post-911 forces)
- Number of female veterans to increase 17% in two decades
Veteran women and veteran families experienced 24% increase in homelessness

Women comprise 7.2% of veteran population, 9.5% of veterans facing homelessness

Women veterans are at four times greater risk of homelessness, with highest risk in OEF/OIF
In 2014, 121 patients in NYU Lutheran’s HCH Clinics identified as veterans.

“Given the complexity surrounding VA benefits...barriers present an opportunity for providers to serve as partners and facilitators to help homeless veterans navigate this process and receive the proper care for which they are entitled.”
The Bridge Veterans Services

Kevin Fisher
The Bridge

A nonprofit that assists vulnerable New Yorkers including the homeless
Trauma-informed
Mental health integrated with Health services
Addiction services
Forensic program
Community case management
Urban Farm
Client-focused

Beds in development
350
2,300 clients annually
850+ housed
300 in Vocational
25 Wellness program groups
100 in Arts program
“Report Finds Sharp Increase in Veterans Denied V.A. Benefits”
By DAVE PHILIPPS
New York Times
MARCH 30, 2016
Joshua Bunn was in the bloodiest infantry battles in Afghanistan
Lost more comrades than any other Marine battalion
After deployment went AWOL, suffering suicidal thoughts and nightmares
Less than honorable discharge
As a consequence, the VA does not consider him a veteran
Now working as part-time dishwasher
“Former members of the military like Mr Bunn are being refused benefits at the highest rate since the system was created at the end of WWII”

More than 125,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans (6.5% of all war veterans) have what are known as ‘bad paper’ discharges
In local experience 30% to 45% are excluded from VA care

A jigsaw puzzle to access needed care

Feel “abandoned,” ‘left out’, “discriminated against,” “betrayed”

Military “justice” has lifelong effects
Denied VA Disability

Those denied VA Disability Compensation and Pension, compared to veterans granted benefits, have poor health, greater poverty, unemployment, social isolation, homelessness, and premature mortality
Veterans with ‘bad paper’ are more likely to commit suicide, be homeless, or be incarcerated than their peers.
Bridge Veterans Services

Director of Veterans Services hired in January, 2015

-Bridge initiative to reach out to veterans and coordinate housing, substance abuse, mental health, and other services

-Oversee Veterans Residences at the Bridge
Funding Source

- 4-year $400,000 grant from the Oak Foundation
- Based in Geneva, Switzerland
- Oak Foundation commits resources to address issues of global, social and environmental concern, particularly those that have a major impact on the lives of the disadvantaged. With offices in Europe, Africa, India and North America, making grants to organizations in approximately 40 countries worldwide.

http://oakfnd.org/
Defining ‘Veteran’

Anyone who had discharge papers (DD214), regardless of length of service or discharge status
Program Principles

- Collaborative practice
- Build outreach network
- Chaplaincy model of service
- Every human story is a sacred text
- Open to all veterans
Results to date

Since February, 2015 we have served over 300 veterans.
Supportive Housing

- Collaboration with NYC Department of Homeless Services and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYU Lutheran and other agencies
- On-site case management
Bridge Gardens Veterans Residence, the Bronx
Requirements

- Application for Supportive Housing
- Psychiatric evaluation, psychosocial assessment, PPD, health assessment
Tim
Jeffery
The Van

Home and workplace
Street Vendor

Air Force veteran, completed basic training only. Focuses on art work ‘Idol Portraits’ – grand scale portraits. Sells smaller prints and t-shirts. Referred to NYU Lutheran Health for psychiatric and health evaluation to obtain supportive housing.
Spike and Me

Was living in a ¾ house in Jamaica, Queens. Collaborated with NYU Lutheran for initial evaluations. Housed in studio apartment steps from Central Park West.
Dan
Dan

- USMC, 4-year tour
- Two combat tours in Iraq
- Honorable discharge
- Receives VA care, but complex issues require support outside VA system
- PTSD, TBI
- Legal involvement
Intensive Care

- TBI treatment
- Supportive housing
- Inpatient substance abuse
- Inpatient PTSD
- Veterans Court – diversion program in lieu of jail
Stephen
Stephen

- USMC Four years
- Referred by Dr. Kenneth Marx, NYU Lutheran, Community Medicine, MD
- Two combat tours in Iraq
- Two Purple Hearts
- Dishonorable Discharge for striking Marine officer (who had made disparaging remarks about his best friend killed in combat)
- PTSD/TBI
Overall, VA provides excellent care to those who are eligible, particularly psychiatric care. VA has taken major steps to improve access and service. Some who are eligible do not apply because of perceived stigma, perceived difficulties dealing with ‘the government’. Reducing barriers caused by geography, paperwork, and stigma.
Veterans may challenge discharge status
Attorneys provide pro bono service, but wait to resolution is about four years
Recent directives from DOD to review discharges based on behaviors that may have been related to PTSD
The Challenge

Less than one percent of the population is serving on active duty

Veteran community comprises approximately eight percent of the national population

Given that the burden of war is placed on so few for so long, how do we as a society help to shoulder that burden?
NYC Department of Veterans Affairs

- Led by Commissioner Loree Sutton, Brigadier General, psychiatrist
- Drive to create “VA” type services at the local level
VA Homeless Services
VA Crisis Help

- [https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/)
- Website offers online chat option
- Call 1-800-273-8255 press 1
AmericaServes

- [http://americaserves.org/](http://americaserves.org/)
- Growing, nationwide network of veteran provider agencies
- The Bridge Veterans Services member of NY Serves network
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

http://www.nchv.org/

Serves as the primary liaison between the nation’s care providers, Congress and the Executive Branch agencies charged with helping them succeed in their work. NCHV's advocacy has strengthened and increased funding for virtually every federal homeless veteran assistance program in existence today.
National Service Officers

- Represent veterans in service-connected disability claims
- Disabled American Veterans
- American Legion
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
Veterans Treatment Courts

- http://www.justiceforvets.org/
- Currently 170+ Veterans Treatment Courts
- Diverts veterans to treatment rather than incarceration
If you read but one book......

Published 2010 Globe Pequot Press
Very good, articulate, intended for veterans, their families, caregivers of all disciplines. Vignettes from veterans of their experiences, discussion of PTSD, TBI, and other issues, resource list
Greek tragedy gives insight into modern situation
Greek tragedy functioned by helping “those who’d been to war make meaning out of their fragmented memories AND (my emphasis) to evenly distribute the burden of what they brought back from battle upon the shoulders of ALL Athenians” (76).
ACHILLES IN VIETNAM
COMBAT TRAUMA AND THE UNDOING OF CHARACTER

Published 1994
Scribner
Classic text on combat trauma
Handouts available

Bibliography of books and scholarly articles, resource list, brochures, pamphlets