



The prevention of homelessness: A comparison of risk and protective factors for Veterans and non-Veterans

American Public Health Association

November 10, 2010

Denver, Colorado

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Outline

- Focus on prevention
- General risk factors for homelessness
- Comparing risk and protective factors for Veterans and non - Veterans
- Homeless Women Veterans
- Prevention initiatives
 - Veterans
 - Community

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Context of Focus on Prevention

- Economy and housing crisis, the current administration has responded with legislation designed to prevent or cut short homelessness
- Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs has committed to the same so that we do not see returning Veterans homeless



Strategic Prevention

- Need for optimal resource allocation and use to prevent and/or minimize homelessness
 - Most persons avoid homelessness or move quickly out of the crisis precipitating homelessness
 - Not possible to provide housing and housing services to everyone in need
- Successful prevention efforts depend on the targeted, effective use of resources

Culhane & Meltraux, 2008



General Individual Risk Factors for Homelessness

- Having an income less than 50 percent of poverty level;
- The presence of mental health, substance abuse, and chronic physical health problems;
- History of incarceration;
- Adverse childhood experiences including :
 - Physical and sexual abuse and
 - Out-of-home placement

Burt, Aran, and Lee, 2001



Homelessness and Veterans

- A greater proportion of homeless persons are Veterans
- Risk of homelessness differs by age cohort
- Compared to non-Veteran peers:
 - Vietnam era Veterans are at slightly greater risk
 - Post Vietnam All Volunteer Force (1973-1980) are at four times greater risk
 - Preliminary of increased risk factors for homelessness among OEF/OIF Veterans

Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2009

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Homelessness and Veterans

- Current cohort - Post 9/11 - may be at greater risk of the behavioral health and criminal justice issues associated with homelessness due to higher rates of
 - Traumatic Brain Injury
 - PTSD
 - Military Sexual Assault
 - Extended and Repeated Deployments
 With the current economy, suggest they are becoming homeless sooner after deployment

(Fairweather, 2006)

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Homelessness and Veterans: Protective factors

- All Veteran cohorts, as compared to non-Veterans, have similar or higher levels of:
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Income
- Veterans have access to special benefits:
 - VA home loan guarantees
 - Pensions
 - Disability payments
 - Education assistance
 - Medical services (including behavioral treatment)

(Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2009)

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Homelessness and Veterans: Causes of Increased Homelessness

- Higher rates of homelessness primarily attributable to:
 - Higher rates of mental health disorders
 - Higher rates of substance use disorders
 - Higher rates of *co-occurring* disorders
 - Associated behavioral health issues
 - Criminal justice involvement
 - Disrupted support systems

(Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2009)

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Homeless Women Veterans

- Women Veterans are 3 to 4 times more likely to become homeless compared to non-Veteran women
- Risk factors for homelessness among women Veterans
 - Military sexual assault
 - Being unemployed
 - Being disabled

(Washington et al., 2010)

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Homeless Women Veterans, cont.

- Risk factors for homelessness among women Veterans
 - Having worse overall health
 - Screening positive for anxiety disorder or PTSD
- Protective factors
 - Being a college graduate
 - Being married

(Washington et al., 2010)

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Similarities in risk factors, differences in response

- Veterans and non-Veterans share similar risk factors but have different systems for:
 - Preventing homelessness
 - Responding to homelessness
- Better prevention efforts require understanding of the response to homelessness at:
 - The national level, Veterans Affairs level, and how they interact

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National Prevention Efforts: HEARTH Act of 2009

- Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009.
 - Changed definition of homelessness and chronic homelessness;
 - Created the Rural Housing Stability Program;
 - Consolidated HUD's competitive grant programs;
 - Simplified matching requirement;
 - Increased amount of prevention resources; and,
 - Increased performance emphasis

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National Prevention Efforts, cont.

- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
 - Includes \$1.5 billion for a Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program
- Eligible activity categories:
 - Financial assistance
 - Housing relocation and stabilization services

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Department of Veterans Affairs Prevention Efforts

- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
- The Health Care for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Program
- Veteran Justice Outreach
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program



Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program

- New VA program
- Provides supportive services to very low-income veterans and their families who are in or transitioning to permanent housing.
- Award grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives
- Providing a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability



Enhancing Community and VA Relationships

VA has long made it a priority to work with communities in addressing homelessness, for example

- The Grant Per Diem programs,
- The current program – SSVF will require a new level of cooperation with communities



Enhancing Community and VA Relationships

- Information flow – information from the VA on Veterans and Veterans services
- Identification – Only some community systems identify participants by Veteran status, for example:
 - HMIS does
 - Jails do not consistently

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