Veterans and Addictions: Homelessness and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

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Veterans
Agenda

- Stigma surrounding addiction treatment for veterans.
- Causes of Homelessness among veterans.
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/Mental Health Disorders
- Case Management
- Self-Care
Veterans

- What would you like to discuss?
- Briefly tell your interest in working with veterans.
Veterans

THE SOLDIER’S CREED

I am an American Soldier.
I am a Warrior and a member of a team.
I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.
I will always place the mission first.
I will never accept defeat.
I will never quit.
I will never leave a fallen comrade.
I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my Warrior tasks and drills.
I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.
I am an expert and I am professional.
I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.
I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.
I am an American Soldier.
Veterans

Definition of veteran:

Under Federal Law a veteran is person, who served honorably on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Is it true? Do you believe it? Are there others?

Are you a veteran?

Have you served in the Military?

Some persons do not consider themselves a veteran because they didn’t serve in wartime or in a war zone.
Veterans
Military Acronyms

- OIF - Operation Iraqi Freedom
- OEF - Operation Enduring Freedom
- OND - Operation New Dawn
- Operation Desert Shield/Operation Desert Storm
- AWOL - Absent Without Leave
- MOS - Military Occupational Specialty
- FOB - Forward Operating Base
- IED - Improvised explosive devise
Veterans and Addictions

- SAMSHA Reports;
  - 23.4 million veterans in the United States
- Between 2004-2006 7.1% of U.S. Veterans met criteria for Substance Use Disorder.
- Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) report;
  - Nearly 76,000 veterans were homelessness on any night in 2009.
  - Approximately 136,000 veterans spent at least one night in a shelter in 2009.
- Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) report;
  - 21% of veterans in substance abuse treatment were homeless.
  - 70% of homeless veterans experienced a substance use disorder.
Veterans and Addictions

SAMHSA, The CBHSQ Report May 7, 2015

2013 National Survey on Drug Abuse and Health reported,

- 1.5 million veterans age 17 or older had a substance use disorder in the past year, 1 in 15 veterans.

- National average is 1 in 11 in the same age group.

- The rate of substance use disorders among veterans ranged from 3.7% pre-Vietnam-era to 12.7% among those who served since September 2001.
Veterans and Addictions

- Active Duty Military have a zero tolerance for illicit drug use.
- 99% of the time illicit drug use will result in a dishonorable or other than honorable discharge.
- Driving Under the Influence of alcohol will most likely result in a other than honorable, dishonorable. In rare occasions it may be a general under honorable discharge.
- Service men and women who have served their country in peacetime and war are being discharged for substance use disorders. Some without benefits.
- The United States was actively involved in a war from 2000-2014.
- Some members of the military were deployed to a war zone 2-5 times within those 14 years.
Veterans

One VA Healthcare Users Study showed:

- More than 11 percent of OEF and OIF veterans have been diagnosed with a substance use disorder.
- Almost 22 percent of OEF and OIF veterans have Post-traumatic stress disorder and a substance use disorder.
Veterans and Addictions

"I used to save lives and now I am a drunk."

Specialist Joshua Aaron Smart

Richard Johnson/The Washington Post/Getty Images
Veterans and Addictions

- Screening Instruments that can be used to determine if a person has a substance use disorder.
  - CAGE- Empirically supported and shown to accurately predict 70%-80% of soldiers with a substance use disorder.
  - C-Have people ever felt that you should **CUT** down on your drinking?
  - A-Have people ever **ANNOYED** you by criticizing your drinking?
  - G- Have you ever felt bad or **GUILTY** about your drinking?
  - E- Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover (i.e., as an **EYE-OPENER**)?
Veterans and Addictions

- Substance Use Disorder DSM-5

- A problematic pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by at least two of the following, occurring within a twelve month period:
  - Substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended.
  - There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control use.
  - A great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance, use the substance, or recover from its effects.
  - Craving, or strong desire or urge to use the substance.
  - Recurrent substance use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home.
Veterans and Addictions

- Continued substance use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the substance.
- Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of the substance use.
- Recurrent substance use in situations which are physically hazardous.
- Substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance.
Veterans and Addictions

- Tolerance, as defined by either of the following:
  - A need for markedly increased amounts of alcohol to achieve the intoxication or desired effect.
  - A markedly diminished effect with continued use of the same amount of alcohol.

- Withdrawal, as manifested by either of the following:
  - The characteristic withdrawal syndrome for the substance (refer to Criteria A and B of the criteria set for the substance withdrawal). All are listed after the substance in DSM 5.
  - The substance or a closely related substance is taken to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms.
Veterans

- Barriers to Substance Use Treatment;
- Homelessness.
- Distrust of the VA and government.
- Veterans with Comorbid Disorders.
- Persons who served in the Military and were discharged under other than honorable conditions, this includes veterans of war.
- A sign of weakness. What will other people think of me?
- I will lose my VA benefits.
- Nobody understands someone like me.
- Your thoughts?
Veterans and Addictions

- Outpatient Treatment Approaches;
- Seeking Safety
- Seeking Strength. Designed for military and veterans.
- Motivational Interviewing
- Stages of Change
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy
Veterans and Addictions

- Treatment Options
- Safe Medical Detoxification, if needed. Detox is not treatment.
- Residential treatment in an inpatient setting for Dual Diagnosis or Substance Use Disorders.
- Intensive Outpatient Treatment.
- Dual Diagnosis Outpatient Treatment.
- Aftercare Program.
Veterans and Homelessness
Veterans and Homelessness

- Causes of Veteran homelessness:
- Difficult culture transition from military to civilian life.
- Lack of social support.
- Lack of self-advocacy skills.
- Domestic Violence among women.
- Physical, sexual, and emotional trauma.
- Substance Use Disorders.
- Mental Health Disorders.
- Traumatic Brain Injuries.
Veterans and Homelessness

What some veterans in Louisville say about being homeless;

- Fear of living indoors.
- Fear of people.
- Lack of trust for people and institutions.
- I can’t get help me because of my discharge status.
Veterans
Veterans and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- SAMHSA-Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- PTSD is characterized as the development of debilitating symptoms following exposure to a traumatic or dangerous event.

- PTSD can be the result of war, car accidents, sexual trauma, physical trauma, emotional trauma, natural disasters.
Veterans and PTSD

- Common Reactions
- Recurrent thoughts of the event.
- Flashbacks and/or nightmares/bad dreams.
- Emotional numbness (Don’t feel anything); reduced interest or involvement in work or outside activities (Not caring about anything, loss of interest in things once enjoyed).
- Intense guilt or worry/anxiety.
- Angry outbursts and irritability
- Feeling “on edge”, hyperarousal/hyper-alertness.
- Avoidance of thoughts/situations that remind person of the trauma.
- Depression.
Veterans and PTSD

- PTSD’s possible negative impact on the person
  - Relationship problems.
  - Diminished self of wellbeing. Isolation.
  - Alcohol and substance use/abuse.
  - High risk behavior.
  - Misconduct. Legal problems.
  - Employment problems.
  - Functional Impairment.
  - Homelessness
Veterans and PTSD

- Veterans with PTSD and Concussion/Traumatic Brain Injury.
- The same event that caused the TBI/concussion can also produce the trauma for PTSD reactions.
  - Depression/anxiety.
  - Insomnia.
  - Irritability/anger.
  - Trouble concentrating.
  - Fatigue,
  - Hyperarousal.
  - Avoidance.
Veterans and PTSD

- PTSD is a risk factor for substance use disorders.
  - Use of alcohol and/or drugs may reduce the anxiety component of PTSD and thus be reinforced.
  - Withdrawal from substances may exacerbate PTSD symptoms.
  - Prolonged exposure as a treatment for PTSD does not increase the craving for substance use.
  - Persons prefer that both be treated at the same time.
Veterans and Mental Health Disorders

- Co-Occurring Disorders
- Mental Health Disorders
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Suicidal ideation
Veterans and Mental Health Disorders

- Barriers to seeking mental health treatment
  - Lack of trust for mental health professionals
  - It will work itself out
  - Getting mental health treatment is a last resort
  - I don’t believe I have a problem.
  - Military culture vs mental health culture- resistance to engage with mental health professionals is counter to Warrior identity.
  - Mentally tough
  - Self-reliance
Female Veterans
Veterans and Mental Health Disorders

- Suicide
  - According to Stars and Stripes, Military Newspaper, from 2009-2011;
  - About 22 veterans commit suicide daily. A suicide every 65 minutes.
  - Male veterans under 30 saw a 44% increase in suicide.
  - Older veterans saw a slight decrease.
  - Female veterans saw an 11% increase.
  - Female veterans commit suicide nearly 6 times the rate of other women.
Veterans and Mental Health Disorders

http://maketheconnection.net/conditions/ptsd
Veterans
Veterans and Case Management

- What is case management?
- Is case management important for veterans?
- Who are case managers?
Veterans and Case Management

What types of case management do veterans need and will be of benefit?
Case Management

- Housing options
- Phone options
- VA Disability
- SSI/SSDI Disability
- Food Stamps
- Dental/Glasses/Hearing Aids
- DD 214
- Birth Certificate
- Social Security Card
Case Management

- ID
- Clothing
- Furniture
- Bus passes
- Transportation
Case Management
Self-Care and Trauma

- Secondary Trauma is commonly referred to as the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.

- Vicarious Trauma describes the cumulative transformative effect of working with persons who have survived traumatic events.
Self-Care

Who is at risk for secondary trauma?

- Psychotherapists
- Counselors
- Case Managers
- Nurses
- Physicians
- Social workers
- Veterans
- Mental Health Counselors
Self-Care

- Symptoms of secondary trauma
  - Intrusive thoughts
  - Chronic fatigue
  - Sadness
  - Anger
  - Poor concentration
  - Second guessing
  - Detachment
  - Emotional exhaustion
Self-care

- Symptoms of secondary Trauma
  - Fearfulness
  - Shame
  - Physical Illness
  - Absenteeism
Self-care

- Ways to care for you.
  - Discuss your feelings in supervision.
  - Leave work at work.
  - Join a support group.
  - Talk to a therapist.
  - Do things you enjoy when not at work.
  - Change client population.
Self-care

- The work we do can be both rewarding and detrimental to us.
  - Let’s talk about it.
Questions?

Thank you!
Reference


Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration