

The background of the slide features a photograph of two hands clasped together in a supportive gesture. One hand is light-skinned and the other is dark-skinned, symbolizing unity and care. The hands are positioned in the upper left and center of the frame, with the dark-skinned hand resting on a metallic surface, possibly a medical table.

NATIONAL  
ACADEMIES

*Sciences  
Engineering  
Medicine*

# Improving Access to High- Quality Mental Health Care for Veterans

*SESSION ONE*

# Veteran Experiences on Accessing Mental Health Care: Concerns and Best Practices



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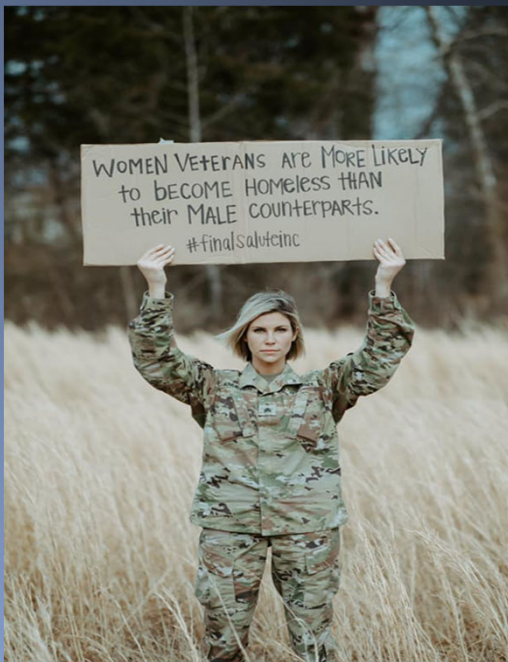
# Prevalence of Women Veterans

A blue silhouette map of the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii, serving as a background for the text.

MORE THAN **2 MILLION**  
WOMEN VETERANS IN THE  
U.S. TODAY



# Women Veterans Mental Health Concerns



## Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

- 1 in 3 women veterans experience MST
- MST is an experience, not a diagnosis, so treatment needs will vary
- Women who experience MST are at increased risk for PTSD

## High rates of post traumatic stress symptoms, depression, anxiety

- MST combined with combat exposure increases incidence and impacts civilian readjustment

## Women veterans have a higher incidence of substance use disorder (SUD) than civilian women

- Lifetime SUD is higher for women veterans with a history of sexual assault (64% vs 44%)

## Suicide

- Women veterans are 6x more likely to die by suicide than women who did not serve

## Homelessness

- Women veterans 3x more likely to be homeless

# Barriers to Care



## *Logistical*

- Transportation/distance
- Availability of clinicians at convenient times
- Long wait-times
- Access to childcare during clinical appointments
- Cost
- Lack of understanding of how to access care

## *Organizational*

- Lack of gender-specific services or providers
- Clinic Environment
- Staff Interactions
- Lack of trauma informed clinicians
- Lack of culturally aware clinicians

## *Attitudinal*

- Desire or belief in self reliance
- Identity (avoid being seen as weak)
- Beliefs about mental health care
- Stigma

# *How Can We Address these Challenges?*

*BEST PRACTICES*



# Access Mitigation Strategies



[bit.ly/toolsforstress](https://bit.ly/toolsforstress)

# Types of Services – Comprehensive Care



- Individual Counseling
- Couples Therapy
- Family Therapy
- Case Management
- Telehealth & Satellite Clinics
- Clinical Groups
- Medication Management
- Peer to Peer Support Groups
- Skill-Building Workshops/Groups





# Warm Inviting Settings





# Holistic Care: Eight Dimensions of Wellness

*The key is community partnerships  
to expand available resources!*



# Questions?



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