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Women Veteran's Access to VA: Who they are, What they need, and How we provide care

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VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System

Center for the Study of Healthcare Innovation, Implementation, and Policy

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Disclosures

- No financial or non-financial conflicts of interest
- Views expressed are my own and do not represent those of the federal government



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- VA Palo Alto Women's Health Evaluation Initiative (WHEI)
- VA Women's Health Research Network & Practice Based Research Network
- Women Veterans
- My family



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Overview

WHO

- Women in the Military
- Women Veterans

WHAT

- Health & Women Veterans

HOW

- Comprehensive Care
 - Definition & Services
 - Providers
 - Culture
- Strengths and Challenges



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Women in the Military 1

Historical Documents and Narratives

- Heroine in Revolutionary War -“Molly Pitcher”
- 1st Girl Marine Lucy Brewer (War of 1812)
- Women assisted both sides of the Civil War
- Groundbreaking Nurse Corp (1901, 1908)
- 1st Army Woman Physician (WWI)
- Full Recruitment of Women (WWII)
 - Overseas Deployments, Separate by Race and Gender



Women in the Military, An Unfinished Revolution by Major Gen Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret)
To Serve My Country, To Serve My Race by Brenda L. Moore



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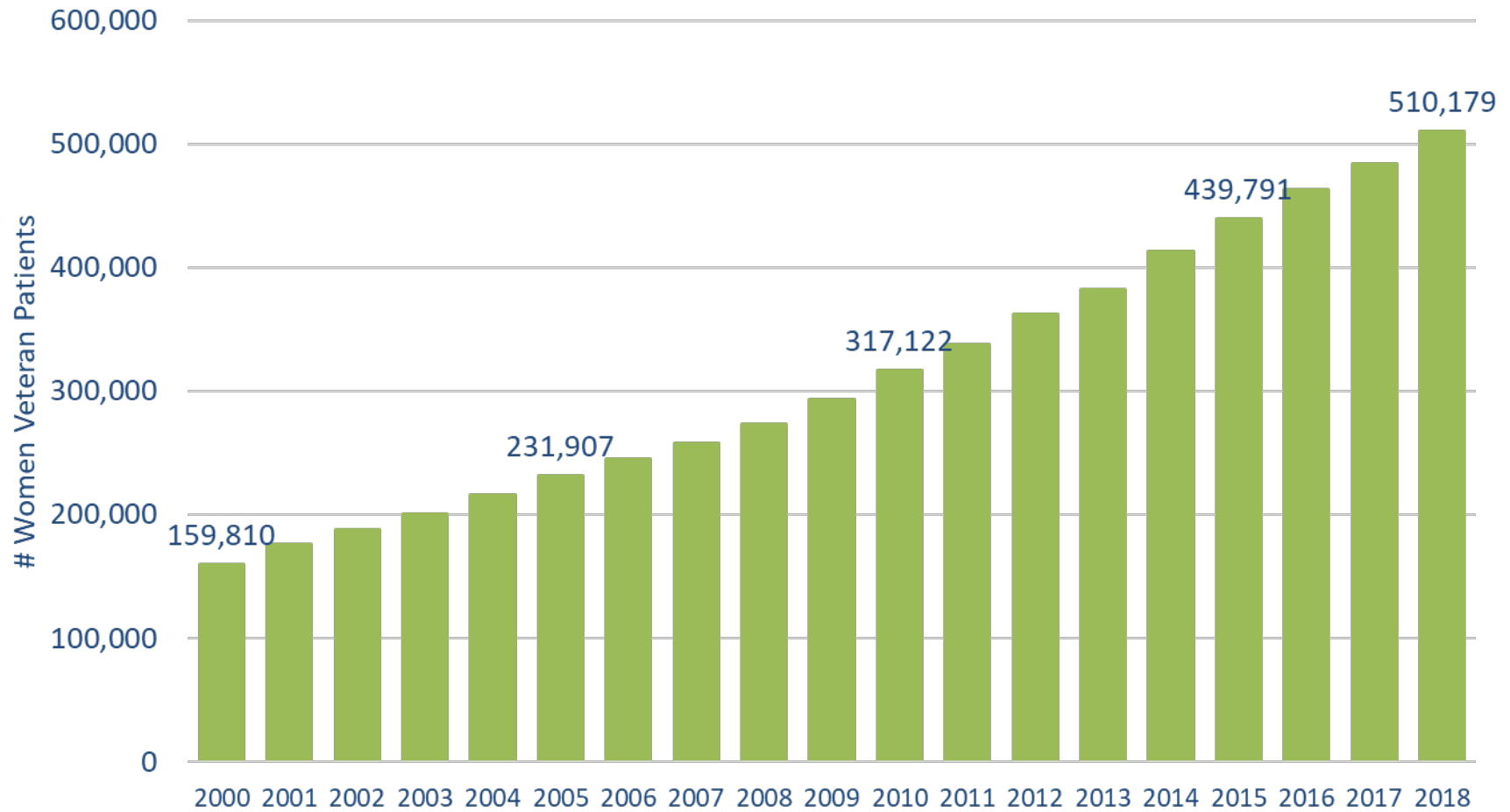
Women in the Military 2



Number of Women Veteran VHA Patients

Fiscal Year 2000-2018

The number using VHA services has more than tripled since 2000, growing from 159,810 to 510,179 from FY00 to FY18, representing a 219% increase over 19 years.

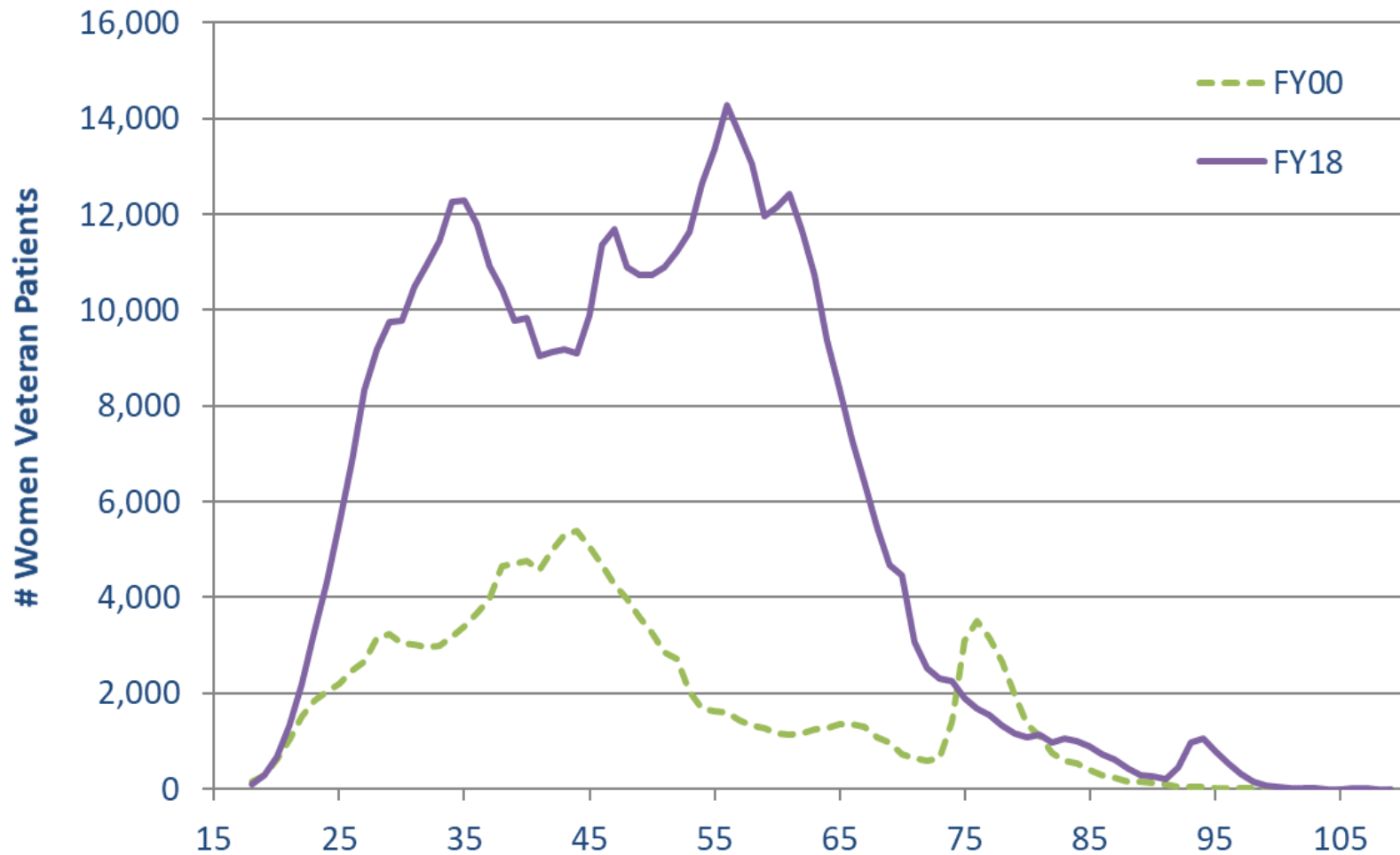


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Age Distribution of Women Veterans in VHA



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VHA Utilization By Women Veterans

- **501,112 unique women Veterans received care from the VHA in FY18**
- Of those women, 74,831 were from the Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OIF/OEF/OND) cohort
- Age of women Veterans receiving care from the VHA in FY18:

Age Range	Number of Unique Women Veterans Receiving Care from VHA ⁴
Under 29 years old	41,227 (8%)
30-44 years old	156,829 (31%)
45-64 years old	229,568 (45%)
65-84 years old	65,995 (13%)
Over 85 years old	7,493 (2%)

³Per VSSC Report for FY18:

<https://biooffice.pa.cdw.va.gov/default.aspx?bookid=5f3dd9b4-f143-4a17-a57a-e1a769ac8812|ispasFalse|report7eae112f-0fc9-448f-8292-ed63ccee9a9a|ws1|wsb0|isDisabledAnalyticsFalse|isDashboardPanelOnTrue>

⁴Note: numbers here might not match WHEI data



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Health Needs of Women Veterans

TOP 10 CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN USING VA

- Hypertension
- Depression
- Lipid Disorders
- Joint Disorders – Lower Extremity
- Spine Disorders - Lumbrosacral
- Dermatologic Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- Overweight/Obesity
- Refraction Disorders
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



Sourcebook 4, Women's Health Evaluation Initiative, Center for Innovation to Implementation, VA Palo Alto, Palo Alto, California



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Medical Diagnoses for Recent WVs

149,452 Women Veterans seen in VA (2002-2015)

Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn

• Musculoskeletal (MSK)	62%
• Mental Disorders	57%
• Nervous System/Sense Organs	51%
• Genitourinary System	46%
• Digestive System (Dental)	41%
• Endocrine System	40%
• Respiratory	38%
• Skin Diseases	32%
• Injury/Poisoning	31%
• Infectious/Parasitic Diseases	23%
• Circulatory	21%

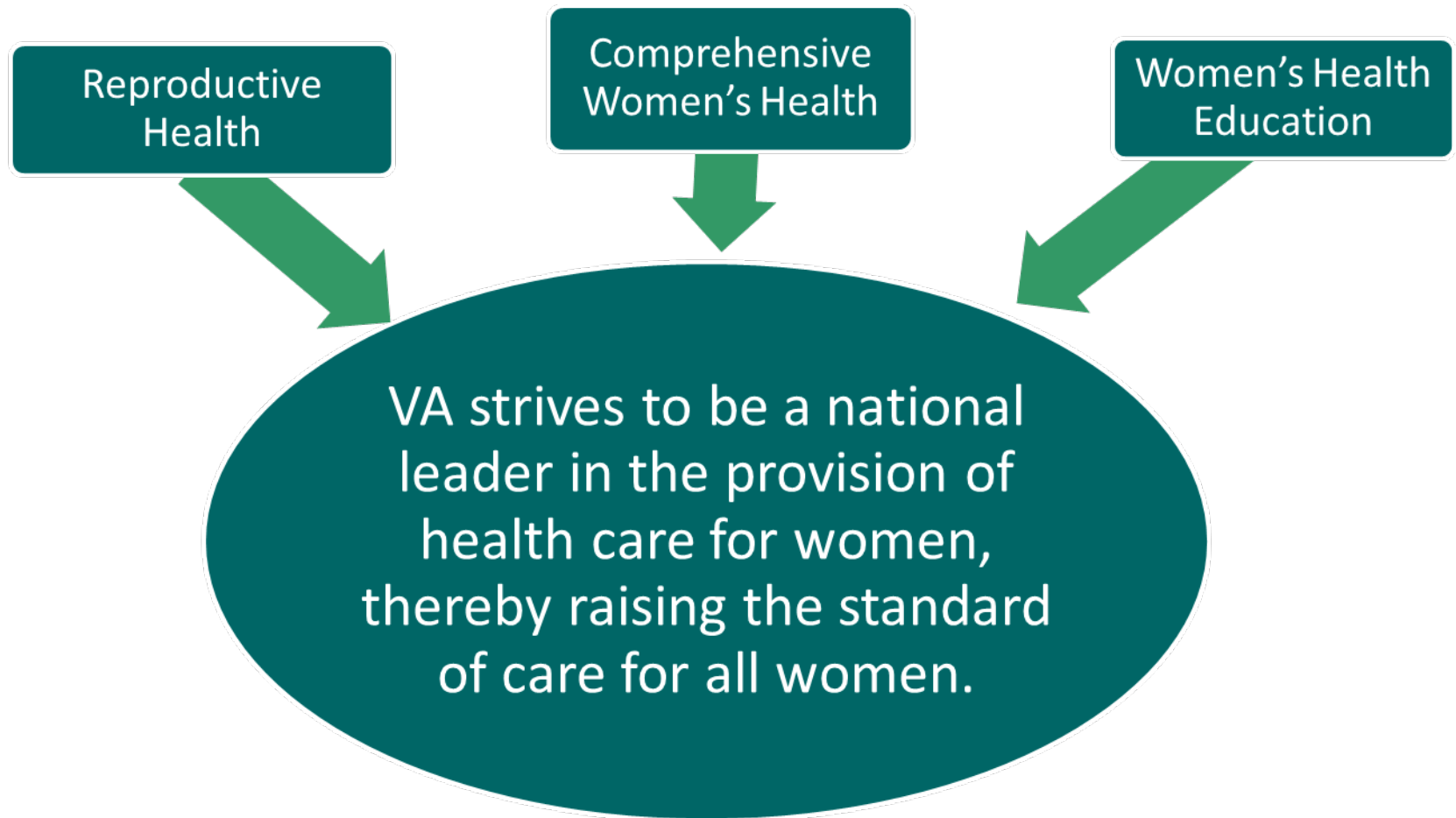


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Vision: Office of Women's Health Services, VHA



VA Services for Women Veterans

VA Provides Complete Care for Women Veterans

- Comprehensive Primary Care
- Preventive Care
- Gynecology
- Maternity Care
 - Prenatal, Delivery, and 7 days of newborn care
 - Provided off site through Community Care, paid by VA
- Mental Health Care
- Specialty Care Services



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VA WH Models of Care

Comprehensive Primary Care should be delivered by a designated WH-PCP in one of three models:

Model 1: General Primary Care Clinics

Model 2: Separate but Shared Space

Model 3: Women's Health Center (WHC)*



*VA nationally was an early adopter of comprehensive women's health in 1990s



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VA WH Primary Care Providers

Designated WH Primary Care Providers (WH PCPs)

VA Definition:

- PCP who is trained and experienced in women's health
- Preferentially assigned women Veterans to their primary care panels

Provision of complete primary care and care coordination at 1 site by designated WH-PCP and Women's Health PACT Team



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VA Policy to create WH-PCPs

- To increase comprehensive primary care for women Veterans, VHA in 2010 established designated Women's Health Primary Care Providers in VHA Directive 1330.01, Health Care Services for Women Veterans
- Goal to have WH-PCPs at all sites of care and to offer all women Veterans assignment to WH-PCP for their primary care needs.



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VA Commitment to Educate Clinicians

- VA Women's Health Education includes
 - Mini-Residency Programs (2.5 day in-person conference)
 - for PCPs, nurses, PACT Teams, and ER staff
 - 2018 expansion to rural community clinics; refresher course

	Total Trained as of Jan 1, 2020
Primary Care Providers	4,776
Primary Care Nurses	2,207
Emergency Care Providers	270
Emergency Care Nurses	287
Total	7,540



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Satisfaction with WH-PCPs

- Analysis of FY 2012 data on VA women's health providers and data from VA Survey of Healthcare Experience of Patients (SHEP)
 - Women assigned to WH-PCPs had higher overall experiences with care compared to women assigned to other primary care providers.
 - Women assigned to WH-PCPs were more satisfied on 6 composite scores including access, communication, shared decision making, self-management support, comprehensiveness, and office staff.

Bastian et al WHI 2014;24:605.



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Quality of Care with WH-PCPs

- VA's External Peer Review Program (EPRP) data were compared for women receiving care from WH-PCPs to those receiving care from other primary care providers
 - Women assigned to WH-PCPs were more likely to receive age appropriate cervical cancer screening (94.4% vs. 91.9 %) and breast cancer screening (86% vs 83.3%)
 - VA rates substantially exceed breast and cervical cancer screening rates in other health care data sets such as Medicaid, Medicare and commercial plans.

Bean-Mayberry et al Med Care 2015;53(4 Suppl 1):S47.



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Comprehensive Services: Breast Care

- Women Veterans have full access to breast cancer screening and treatment
- VA offers on-site digital mammography at 65 VA sites and pays for breast care in the community for women receiving care at other sites
- VA exceeds U.S. private sector in rates of breast and cervical cancer screening



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Comprehensive Services: Reproductive Care

- VA has onsite gynecologists at 133 VAMCs
- VA pays for maternity care and delivery off site
- And 7 days of newborn care for eligible women Veterans
- **Maternity Care:**
 - National policies for Maternity Care Coordination (MCC)
 - MCC at each VAMC facilitates communication between non-VA and VA
 - Provides support/education, assist with lactation, screen post –partum
 - Electronic Record alerts providers to medication risks during pregnancy
- **Infertility Care Services:** VA provides basic infertility evaluation, management and treatment (not IVF) to all Veterans enrolled and eligible for VA health care. IVF is covered under specific conditions.



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Comprehensive Services: Women's Mental Health

- VHA policy requires that mental health services be provided in a manner that recognizes that gender-related issues are important components of care
- VA offers a full continuum of mental health services for women
 - General outpatient
 - Specialty services (e.g., PTSD, substance use disorders, homelessness)
 - Evidence-based therapies (e.g., prolonged exposure therapy for PTSD)
 - Inpatient and residential treatment options (mixed-gender & women-only)
 - **NEW: VA Reproductive Mental Health e-Consult**
- *In fiscal year 2018, 44.1 percent of women Veterans who used VA healthcare accessed mental health services*



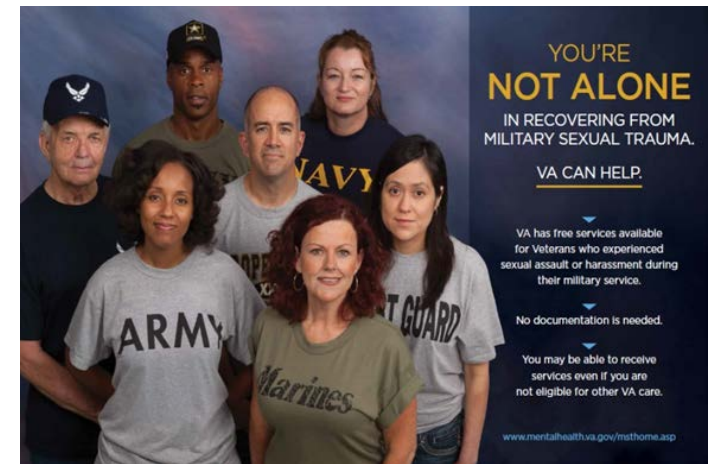
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Comprehensive Services: Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Related Health Care

- Military sexual trauma, or MST, is a term used by VA to refer to experiences of sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment that occurred during an individual's military service
- VA provides all MST-related care free of charge
 - Treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to MST
 - Outpatient, inpatient, and residential care
 - Medications
- All Veterans are screened for experiences of MST
- MST Coordinator at every VA Medical Center



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Challenges & Growth: Culture Change in VA

In 2017, WHS launched the national “Its Our Responsibility to End Harassment” campaign:

- Involved staff training
- Improving awareness locally
- Patient data collection at VA clinics
- 85% felt welcome at VA healthcare system (n=1303)

Please don't call **me** mister.

Think twice about how you address **her**. It's **our** job to give **her** the best care anywhere.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

CAT CALLS
WHISTLES
STARES

it's **NOT** a
COMPLIMENT
it's
HARASSMENT

For help or to report: **1.855.829.6636**
1.855.VA.WOMEN

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

which one is the **veteran?**

Both.
It's **our** job to give **every vet** the best care anywhere.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

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Challenges & Growth: Targeting Areas for Women Veteran Care

- Primary and Specialty Care:
 - Vaccine Prevalence
 - Cardiovascular Prevention
 - Chronic disease management
 - Musculoskeletal Services and mobility support
 - Criteria for Non-VA services paid by VA
- Cancer Care/Precision Oncology
- Maternal Morbidity
- Culture Change/Harassment



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Thank you and Questions!

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