

# Trauma-Informed Care for Women Veterans



Women's Bureau

U.S. Department of Labor

# Listening Sessions & Standdowns

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- ❑ Women's Bureau held 17 listening sessions with former and current homeless female veterans and an additional 11 listening sessions with service providers.
- ❑ Held three standdowns for women veterans in Kansas City Missouri, Long Beach California, and Austin Texas.

# Why Women Veterans

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- ❑ Of the 2.2 million post 9/11 veterans, 19% are women
- ❑ 12% of military women are single mothers (vs. 4% military men)
- ❑ 24% of post-9/11 female veterans served in combat (vs. 7% of pre-9/11)

# Why Women Veterans

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- 1.8 million women Vets currently
  - 8% of all Vets now, growing to **15%** by 2036\*
  - 33,622 Indiana women vets – 9/30/2011
- Prior to recession, unemployment rate of 16% (double of female civilians)\*\*
- 4 times the risk for homelessness (than civilians)\*\*\*

\*VA estimates.

\*\*Foster & Vince, 2009.

\*\*\*Foster, 2010

# Why Women Veterans

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- ❑ Equally likely to experience post-traumatic stress, irritability, strains in family relationships upon return.
- ❑ 20% of female veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been identified as experiencing Military Sexual Trauma or MST.\*
- ❑ Approximately one in three military women has been sexually assaulted – double the rate of civilian women.\*\*

\*VA.

\*\*DOD.

# Why Women Veterans

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## **Factors contributing to homelessness for women veterans:**

- ❑ Lack of knowledge about benefits/services.
- ❑ Trauma, especially Military Sexual Trauma (MST), can lead to other problems if left untreated.
- ❑ Issues affecting women before joining the military are problems that do not go away after returning from the military.

# What did we learn?

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- ❑ Less likely to perceive themselves to be veterans.
- ❑ Want peer-to-peer services
- ❑ Need childcare
- ❑ Would like emotional support in a community-like setting
- ❑ Want transitional housing that is more inspirational
- ❑ Look for signals of understanding and support of their needs.

# What is Trauma-Informed Care?

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“Trauma-Informed Care is a **strengths-based** framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the **impact of trauma**, that **emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety** for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to **rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.**”\*

\* See *Shelter from the Storm: Trauma-Informed Care in Homelessness Settings*, 2010

# Evidence for Trauma-Informed Care

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- Reduction in trauma-related symptoms\*
- Other preliminary outcomes:\*\*
  - Improved functioning and a decrease in psychiatric symptoms and substance abuse
  - Increased housing stability
  - Decreased use of intensive services

\*SAHMSA, Women, Co-Occurring Disorders, and Violence Study, 2005

\*\*See *Shelter from the Storm: Trauma-Informed Care in Homelessness Settings, 2010*

# What we offer

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- The Trauma Guide includes
  - User's Guide & Background Data
  - Organizational *Self-Assessment* for Service Providers
  - Resource Lists
  - Web-based training modules

# On the Self-Assessment

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- ❑ Concrete practices that reflect needs of women veterans
- ❑ Specific recommendations for policy & practice changes as identified in practitioner best practices and academic literature

# On the Self-Assessment

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- 6 areas for organizational assessment
  - Supporting Staff Development
  - Creating a Safe & Supportive Environment
  - Assessing & Planning Services
  - Involving Consumers
  - Adapting Policies
  - Working with Children

# Excerpt from Self-Assessment

## A. Establishing a Safe Physical Environment

<b>II. Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment</b> <b>A. Establishing a Safe Physical Environment</b>	Strongly Disagree (This rarely or never happens)	Disagree (This usually does not happen)	Agree (This happens some of the time)	Strongly Agree (This happens most of the time)	Do Not Know	Not Applicable to My Program
1. The organizational facility has a security system.						
2. Agency staff monitors who is coming in and out of the program.						
3. The environment outside the organizational facility is well lit.						
4. The common areas are well lit.						
5. Bathrooms are well lit.						
6. Bathroom doors can be locked.						
7. The organization has a space that is only for women.						
8. The organization incorporates military-related decorations and materials that include and are relatable to female veterans.						
9. When applicable, there are private, locked spaces for belongings.						
10. The organization provides consumers with opportunities to make suggestions about ways to improve/change the physical space.						

# Excerpt from Self-Assessment

## A. Training and Education

Staff serving female veterans at all levels of the organization receive training and education (e.g., face-to-face trainings, on-line courses, special presentations) on the following topics:

<b>I. Supporting Staff Development</b> <b>A. Training and Education</b> Trauma and Mental Health	Strongly Disagree (This rarely or never happens)	Disagree (This usually does not happen)	Agree (This happens some of the time)	Strongly Agree (This happens most of the time)	Do Not Know	Not Applicable to My Program
1. Traumatic stress and its impact on the brain and body						
2. Intimate partner violence and its impact						
3. Military sexual trauma and its impact						
4. Combat-related trauma and its impact						
5. Complex trauma and its impact						
6. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)						
7. Traumatic brain injury (TBI)						
8. How trauma affects development						
9. How trauma affects attachment to caregivers and others						
10. The relationship between childhood trauma and adult challenges and/or re-victimization (e.g., intimate partner violence, sexual assault, homelessness)						

# Web-Based Training

- Designed to help community-based service providers who serve female veterans to become trauma-informed, and to apply this research to better serve their clients.
- [www.dol.gov/wb/trauma/wbt\\_intro.html](http://www.dol.gov/wb/trauma/wbt_intro.html)



The screenshot shows the homepage for the "Trauma-Informed Care" course on the Women's Bureau website. The page features a red header with the Department of Labor logo and navigation links. The main content area is white with a teal sidebar on the left. The course title "TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE" is prominently displayed in a teal box. Below the title, the "Course Goal and Objectives" section is visible, including a paragraph about the course's purpose and a bulleted list of learning objectives. A large graphic on the right side of the page features the word "OBJECTIVES" in a stylized font within a circular design. The footer contains navigation links and page information.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Women's Bureau

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

**Course Goal and Objectives**

The goal of this course is to enable community-based service providers who serve female veterans to become trauma-informed, and to apply this research to better serve their clients.

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Describe the ways female veterans experience trauma and the impact it has on their ability to function, to trust others, and to use available services
- Employ the foundational principles of trauma-informed care, ensuring desired outcomes in the service of female veterans
- Provide service to female veterans using the six domains of trauma-informed care
- Assess your organization's readiness to provide trauma-informed care to female veterans

OBJECTIVES

MENU RESOURCES HELP

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Freedom of Information Act | Privacy & Security Statement | Disclaimers | Customer Survey | Important Web Site Notices | Plug-ins Used by DOL

# Why work with us?

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Being Trauma-Informed & the WB Trauma Guide can help you:

1. Increase your program participation
2. Increase your program completion rates
3. Service an under-served and deserving population

# How we want to work with you

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WB will help you to work through the guide, analyze your areas for growth, and take steps to create a more fully trauma-informed organization.

# Suggested Steps

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- ❑ Review the Trauma Guide ([www.dol.gov/wb/trauma](http://www.dol.gov/wb/trauma))
- ❑ Talk internally about the guide and brainstorm what areas of your program could benefit from it.
- ❑ Take the organizational self-assessment
- ❑ Schedule a meeting with the WB to discuss the results and suggested action steps

# Contact Information

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