Improving Outcomes: Working with Military Veterans in Correctional Settings

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)
Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) Program for State Prisoners
Training and Technical Assistance Resource
Housekeeping: FUNCTIONS

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Housekeeping: COMMUNICATION

Q&A and Technical Issues
If you have questions for either the presenters or our Technical Support Staff, enter them in the Q&A box.

Our support staff will assist you with your technical issues, and our moderator will present as many questions as possible to the presenter.

Chat with us!
If you have general comments, please post them in the participant chat box.
Veterans in Jails and Prisons
Michelle Cleary, M.A.
Senior Program Associate
Advocates for Human Potential, Inc.

Peter J. Koutoujian
Sheriff
Middlesex County, MA
Poll # 1 & 2

What's your position/title?

a. RSAT Program Staff
b. Clinical Staff
c. Medical Personnel
d. Corrections Officer
e. Grant Administrator
f. Other Prison/Jail Personnel
g. Other

One answer per person!

Have you served or are you serving in the US Military?

a. Yes
b. No
Learning Objectives

After completing this webinar, participants will be able to:

• Identify three common characteristics of justice involved Veterans
• Recognize at least three elements of military culture awareness
• Outline the benefits to the staff and incarcerated individuals of Veterans specific programming in correctional settings
Demographics

• Of the people who are in jail/prison, it is estimated that 7% served in the military
  • Approximately 77% were honorably discharged
  • The majority are older than non-Veterans
• May not self-report

Female Veterans
• Projected to represent 18% of the Veterans population in prison by 2020
Common Veteran-related Health Concerns

- Approximately 40% of Iraq/Afghanistan utilizing VHA services were diagnosed with:
  - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
  - Traumatic brain injury
  - Chronic pain

Greater likelihood of addiction
Veterans and Trauma

• NOT all post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
• NOT just PTSD from military service
• 2015 study of over 1200 veterans who intersected with the justice system:
  • 95% reported a history of non-military trauma
  • 73% experienced trauma under the age of 18
  • 56% went through a traumatic event within the year of arrest
• Military Sexual Trauma
“An essential component of being trauma-informed is to understand these behaviors not as character flaws or symptoms of mental illness, but as strategies or behavioral adaptations developed to cope with the physical and emotional impact of past trauma.”

(K. Stainbrook, et al. 2015)
Military Culture

• Rituals and Traditions
• Chain of Command - Leadership
• Branch Matters
• Sense of Purpose
Peer Supports
Why Establish Veterans’ Specific Programming

- Public safety
- Reduction of recidivism
- Better outcomes
- Possible tie between military service that contributed to their involvement in the justice system
Poll # 3

How many Veterans are in your custody?

a. Less than 10%

b. 10-30%

c. 30-50%

d. I don’t know
Leave No Man Behind: The Housing Unit for Military Veterans (HUMV)

Peter J. Koutoujian
Sheriff
Middlesex County, MA
HUMV Guiding Principles

• Direct reflection of the military values that these veterans learned during their time in the service:
  
  RESPECT
  HONOR
  DUTY
  INTEGRITY

• Many of the men accepted to this treatment program come to it feeling broken and disheartened with fractured support systems.
  – Culture of camaraderie was key towards their past service and is key to their future rehabilitation.
Veterans: A Population Overview

- 350,000 veterans in Massachusetts – 5% of state population

- Approximately 50 veterans in Middlesex Jail & House of Correction on average - 6% of our facility population

- Veteran Reentry Search Services is a critical tool for identifying veterans
  – 136% increase in identified veterans compared to self-reporting
“One thing about this place is that we stick together as veterans. We know each other from the sense that we made that commitment to serve our nation, and we don’t allow the prison politics or the jail politics to come into the middle of what we’re doing here. What we do is more of a positive course of life that helps us better ourselves. We don’t allow none of the negativity to direct where we’re trying to take the unit...I feel real peaceful, knowing that with the group of gentlemen that I am here with that there is a shoulder to lean on. Once you make good friends here and also the good case workers, you know that there’s always a helping hand willing to lead you to success.”

~United States Navy Veteran
HUMV By The Numbers

Recidivism Percentage of HUMV Vets

- HUMV Recid (Yes): 12%
- HUMV Recid (No): 88%

Recidivism Percentage of Non-HUMV Vets

- Non-HUMV Recid (Yes): 21%
- Non-HUMV Recid (No): 79%

HUMV Vets (Sentenced and Pre-Trial Populations)

- Sentenced: 58.10%
- Pre-Trial: 41.90%
“Vision without data is a hallucination.”
-Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian
What is a Veterans service organization or Veterans advocacy group active in your county?

Type your answer in the chat box below!
References

- Barracks Behind Bars In Veteran-Specific Housing Units, Veterans Help Veterans Help Themselves

- Barracks Behind Bars II: In Veteran-Specific Housing Units, Veterans Help Veterans Help Themselves
  https://nicic.gov/barracks-behind-bars-ii-veteran-specific-housing-units-veterans-help-veterans-help-themselves

  https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/vpj1112.pdf


QUESTIONS

Type your questions in the Q&A box on your screen.

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“By housing veterans together in an environment that inspires military culture, values, and a sense of brotherhood or sisterhood, these units are not only promoting safety improvements, but also restoration, healing, and growth in a way that may not have been possible via general population housing.”
Resources

- PsychArmor Institute: [https://psycharmor.org/courses/15-things-veterans-want-you-to-know/](https://psycharmor.org/courses/15-things-veterans-want-you-to-know/)
Military Culture Resources

• Understanding Military Culture: https://www.apaservices.org/practice/good-practice/military-culture.pdf

• Uniformed Services University – Military Culture Course Modules: https://deploymentpsych.org/military-culture-course-modules
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