

Incarcerated Veterans Outreach & Reentry

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Prologue

- During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln affirmed our nation's commitment "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan." His eloquent words live on today as the motto of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the federal agency responsible for honoring our nation's debt of gratitude to America's patriots.

Mission

- The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) mission is to serve America's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion and to be their principal advocate in ensuring that they receive medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials promoting the health, welfare, and dignity of all veterans in recognition of their service to this nation.

Underlying Theme?

- Do incarcerated veterans have specific penal and post-release treatment needs vs. the general inmate population?
- Incarcerated veterans appear to represent a unique subgroup of the general inmate population based upon veteran's status, military experiences, injuries and deployments (e.g. PTSD, TBI, SCI, Agent Orange, Gulf War Syndrome) coupled by penal treatment needs, pre-release planning reentry dynamics and VA/community service resources/needs.

Historical

- The VA has been addressing the needs of the homeless veteran population since the advent of Public Law 100-6 in 1987, which authorized appropriations to support clinical teams to conduct outreach to homeless veterans and with community providers.
- As an outgrowth, the VA has launched a reentry initiatives, engaged in justice and Veterans Courts to address the needs of incarcerated veterans via a homeless prevention measure.
- Like veteran homeless and substance abusers; some incarcerated veterans link their criminality and incarceration to their military service.

Introduction

- There are a variety of VA Medical Centers and Vet Centers that have coordinated agreements with local penal institutions to provide reentry outreach services.
- BJS Report: “Veterans in Prison or Jail” (Mumola, 2004) estimates the number of veterans in penal institutions at 140,000.
- Veterans are less likely than non-veterans to be in prison and usually 1st time offenders.
- Like America’s homeless veterans, incarcerated veterans have served in every campaign from World War II to the present with nearly half serving during the Vietnam era.

Background

- Veterans under charges, incarceration or on parole do not forfeit their eligibility for VA medical care, but VA does not, and never has, operated health care facilities which are equipped to care for individuals who require criminal incarceration. Under 38 U.S.C. 1710(g).
- The Secretary of Veterans Affairs is not required to furnish care to a veteran to whom another agency of Federal, State, or local government has a duty under law to provide care in an institution of such government.
- VA may provide (through a contract or enhanced sharing agreement) medical services while the veteran is institutionalized. References: IL 10-2006-007 for State/Federal and IL 2009-005 for Local Jails.

Overarching Goals

1. Identify veterans with 6 months<
2. Provide general support for 6 months>
3. Reduce Criminal & Homeless Recidivism
4. Reintegrate Veterans Into the Community
5. Provide/Coordinate Healthcare/Benefits
6. Provide Short-term Case Services Post-release

Overarching Objectives

1. Assess veteran's treatment needs & transition.
2. Demographic and statistical data are collected to determine incidence and prevalence of incarcerated veterans.
3. Formation of a profile of male and female incarcerated veterans.
4. Enhance partnership and collaboration efforts between VA, county jails, community & DOCs.
5. Services for veteran reentry is a nascent have development and outcome data has only been analyzed at a few sites and therefore program effectiveness for incarcerated veterans has not been established.

Services

- Therapeutic programming and/or educational services provided to incarcerated veterans.
- Prerelease services provided by VA staff to help veterans transition back to the community via the HCHV/G&PD Program.
- Post-release linkage to G&PD programs to assist the veteran in seeking housing, employment, vocational, substance abuse and mental health treatments for transition back to the community upon discharge from forensic settings.

Outreach Sites (n=399)

- State Prison (209), Jail (190)
- Warren & Lebanon SCI's, 2003 - 2006
- River City CBCF - Monthly
- Butler Co. Jail – Monthly
- Resolutions – Bi-Monthly
- Turtle Creek CBCF – Bi-Monthly
- York Street House – Bi-Monthly
- Transitions CBCF – Two Rivers, Monthly
- Adult Parole Authority (APA), Cincinnati

The Evaluation: Treatment Needs of Incarcerated Veterans at Re-Entry

- Descriptive & Exploratory Program Evaluation
- Sample: 399
- Demographic Data Form
- Questionnaire:
 - Military History
 - Convictions
 - Homeless Status
 - Physical
 - Psychological

Sites

- Jail 42%
- Prison 45%
- Community Based Corrections 13%

Demographics

- Age Range: 20-80
- Mean Age: 46, SD = 9.65
- Gender: Male 98%, Female 2%
- Race:
 - White 54%
 - Black 41%
 - Hispanic 4%

Demographics

- Educational Level:
 - High School 61%
 - GED 16%
 - College 17%
 - Graduate 1%
 - Vocational 4%

Demographics

- Marital Status:
 - Married 12%
 - Divorced 48%
 - Widowed 4%
 - Separated 11%
 - Never Married 25%

Military Service

- Army 55%
- Navy 23%
- Marines 16%
- Air Force 6%
- Coast Guard 1%

Periods of Service

- Korean .5%
- Vietnam 40%
- Post-Vietnam 35%
- *Persian Gulf War 24%

*PGW to current OIF/OEF wars

Military Service

- Honorable Discharge 77%
- Under Honorable Discharge 13%
- Other Than Honorable Discharge 9%
- Bad Conduct Discharge 1%
- Non-Service Connected 88%
- Service Connected 12%
- Seen Combat 19%
- Never Seen Combat 81%

Homeless Status

- Homeless 68%
- Never Homeless 26%
- Slept Last Night
 - Jail or Prison 88%
 - Homeless Provider 7%
- 50% Homeless 2 or more times

Categories of Offenses

1=Violent Offense (example: murder, manslaughter, assault, sexual assault, including rape or child molestation, robbery or other violent offense)

2=Property Offense (example: burglary, breaking & entering, larceny, motor vehicle threat, fraud, stole property, arson, shoplifting, vandalism, other property offense)

Categories of Offenses (Cont'd)

3=Drug Offense (example: possession, trafficking, other drug offense)

4=Public Order Offense (example: weapons offense, prostitution, public intoxication, disorderly conduct, DWI, other public order offense, child support)

5= Probation/parole violation

6=Other/unspecified

Avg. Sentence = 5.17 Years

Categories of Offenses

Offense	Frequency	Percent
Violent Offenses	180	45%
Property Offenses	47	12%
Drug Offenses	87	22%
Public Order Offenses	50	13%
Parole/Probation Violation	25	6%
Other	10	3%

Medical

• Medical	62%	• Liver	12%
• Oral	56%	• Seizure	8%
• Eye	28%	• Ortho	29%
• Hypertension	34%	• Skin	12%
• Heart	17%	• Trauma	17%
• COPD	9%	• Diabetes	13%
• TB	5%	• Other	32%
• Gastro	17%		

Substance/Domestic Abuse

- Alcohol Now 35%
- Alcohol Past 60%
- Hospital 37%
- Last *30 Days 10%
- Drugs Now 31%
- Drugs Past 55%
- Hospital 43%
- Last *30 Days 10%
- *=County Jails
- DV Now 10%
- DV Past 23%

Psychiatric and Employment

- Current Psych 57%
- Past Hospital 37%
- Last 6 mo. VA 26%
- Depression 58%
- Anxiety 54%
- PTSD 14%
- Hallucinations 13%
- Understanding 45%
- Violent Behavior 18%
- Suicide Ideations 7%
- Suicide Attempts 18%
- Psych Meds 29%
- Unemployed 29.8%
- Employed 42.6%
- Disability 12.7%
- SC/Psych 5%
- SC/Other 10%

Suicide & Incarcerated Veterans

- 28 Veterans attempted suicide
- 61% White Black 32%
- 50% High School; 28% College; 4% Graduate
- 86% Homeless
- 71% Previous Psychiatric Hospitalization
- 86% Past History Drugs
- 14% History of DV
- 50% History of Violent Behavior
- 79% Psychotropic Medication
- 29% Experienced Trauma

Identified General Needs

- Healthcare
- Housing Options
- Transitional Support
- Employment
- VA Pensions
- Psychiatric
- Medical
- Medication
- Dental
- Optical
- Family Reunification
- Domestic Abuse
- Child Support
- PTSD
- Alcohol
- Substance Abuse
- Upgrades/Appeals
- Clothing

Difficult Cases

- Sex Offenders
- Arson

Challenges and Opportunities

- Access/Consistent Point of Contact
- Security Issues
- Seamless Communication
- Developing Sustained Interest
- Sharing Agreements/MOU's
- Coordination within the VA/VBA/Vet Center
- Funding/Insufficient Resources
- Grants/Research Opportunities
- Partnerships
- Diversion & Veterans Court Pilots

Notes

Implications, Next Steps & Discussion



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