

4. Women Veterans

Introduction This topic provides information on the outreach program for women Veterans.

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a. Overview of Women Veterans Outreach The population of women Veterans has been growing and is projected to continue to grow, as well as to get older. This demographic fact, coupled with the special needs of women Veterans, drives the need to explore the characteristics which might be related to the need for and use of benefits, such as health status, race, education, income, employment and marital status.

There is a demonstrable need for increased outreach to women Veterans to ensure that they are aware of the VA benefits and services to which they may be entitled. Additionally, the number of military sexual trauma incidents has continually increased, necessitating the need for outreach to both male and female Veterans regarding their opportunity to claim service connection for a disability secondary to military sexual and/or personal trauma.

b. Definition: Women Veterans Coordinator A designated employee in each regional office who is responsible for outreach to women Veterans, who assists male and female Veterans with claims involving issues of a sensitive nature such as military sexual and/or personal trauma, and promotes the use of VA benefits, programs and services by women.

c. Coordinator Duties for Women Veterans Coordinator WVC duties include:

- participating in local events and provide training or briefings to organizations that may include women Veterans.

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4. Women Veterans, Continued

**c. Coordinator
Duties for
Women
Veterans
Coordinator**
(continued)

- conducting individual counseling or workshops to ensure that women Veterans have a clear understanding of VA benefits and services.
- acting as the point of contact for VA and other service providers and, in some instances, for women Veterans with special needs.

Note: Women Veterans who experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST) while on active duty should be referred to the WVC. Male Veterans that experienced military sexual or personal trauma may be more comfortable speaking with a female coordinator. VA should honor a request to speak with a female coordinator.

- establishing a network among community service providers and share information on claims processing with women Veterans' coordinators at VAMCs, vet centers, and other community organizations.
- developing a resource directory of service providers within the RO community that may provide services specifically to women and distributes the directory to appropriate VA personnel and others providing assistance to women Veterans.
- establishing a liaison with women Veterans' organizations or those with predominantly women members, e.g., the WACS (Women's Army Corps), maintain rosters of the primary contacts, and provide speakers for their meetings and for special events when appropriate.
- advertising information about VA benefits and services in places where women Veterans live or frequently visit.
- participating in conference calls held by VA Central Office.
- collecting and analyzing data generated by the RO for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

**d. VHA Women
Veteran
Program
Managers**

WVCs should liaison with Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) at the local VA Medical Center. This person is a valuable resource in the treatment and counseling of women Veterans.

**e. State Women
Veteran
Coordinators**

WVCs should also liaison with the State Women Veteran Coordinator, if available.

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4. Women Veterans, Continued

f. Sexual or Personal Trauma Claims

In most cases, the WVC is responsible for expediting and/or facilitating sexual or personal trauma claims.

Specific guidance on these claims may be found at:

- M21-1 Manual Rewrite (MR) Part IV, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, Section D.17 (or M21-1MR IV.ii.1.D.17)

Note: All WVCs and other employees processing MST-related claims must complete MST training. Please contact the local training coordinator regarding this requirement.

g. Sources for Women Veterans Outreach, Training and Information

The Women Veteran Coordinator's Outreach Intranet web page has various topics to help a WVC. The web page can be found at:

<http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/27/outreach/veterans/women/index.htm>

Topics include: Sexual or Personal Trauma Fact Sheets, Web links to State Women Veterans Coordinators and Center for Women Veterans, Frequently asked Questions and more.

For a complete list of coordinators, go to:

http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/27/outreach/veterans/women/wvc_index.htm

h. Women Veteran Coordinators Conference Calls

All coordinators should participate in the teleconference calls provided by the Benefits Assistance Service's Women Veterans Outreach Program Manager.

i. Women Veterans Outreach Tool

Once an outreach event is complete, the WVC must report the requested information in the *Outreach Submission Form* available at:

<http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/27/Outreach/default.asp>

The outreach event should be input into the form no later than two days after the event.

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4. Women Veterans, Continued

**j. Women
Veterans
Coordinator
Poster**

Each RO must post the Women Veteran Coordinator poster in the Public Contact Unit. The poster should indicate the name and telephone number of the RO's Women Veterans Coordinator. The template can be found at: <http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/27/Outreach/Veterans/Women/Docs/WVCPoster.pdf>.