



Department of Veterans Affairs Response to Military Sexual Trauma

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Presented April 22, 2010 as part of the Defense Centers of Excellence monthly Webinar Series

What Is Military Sexual Trauma (MST)?

- Definition in US Code:
“Psychological trauma, which in the judgment of a mental health professional employed by the Department, resulted from a **physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment** [“repeated, unsolicited verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which is threatening in character”] that occurred while a veteran was serving on active duty or active duty for training.”

Title 38 US Code 1720D



VA Is Legally Mandated To Address MST

Beginning in 1992, Congress passed a series of laws mandating that VA....

- Monitor MST screening and treatment
- Provide care for physical and mental health conditions related to MST
- Provide staff with training on MST-related issues
- Provide outreach to Veterans about services available



MST Screening

All Veterans are screened for experiences of MST by a healthcare provider using the following questions:

- While you were in the military, did you ever receive uninvited or unwanted sexual attention such as touching, cornering, pressure for sexual favors or inappropriate verbal remarks?
- While you were in the military, did anyone ever use force or the threat of force or punishment to have sexual contact with you when you did not want to?



How Many Veterans seen in VA Have Experienced MST?

	Female Veterans	Male Veterans
% screened positive	21.9%	1.1%
# screened positive	53,295	46,800

What treatment is available through the Department of Veterans Affairs

- Every VA facility has an MST Coordinator
- Every veteran is screened for experiences of MST and offered a referral to mental health care
- Every facility provides free care for mental and physical health conditions associated with MST
- Specialized residential care for treatment of conditions associated with MST is also available



MST-Related Mental Health Care

Every VA facility provided MST-related care to both women and men in FY 2008:

- 474,966 MST-related encounters
- 314,128 encounters were to female Veterans
 - 80.2% mental health care
- 160,838 encounters were to male Veterans
 - 78.0% mental health care

Primary Diagnoses for MST-Related MH Encounters, FY 08

% of MST-Related MH Encounters	Females	Males
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	46.60	44.30
Major Depression	20.10	14.20
Schizophrenia and Psychoses	5.60	12.60
Mania/Bipolar Disorders	7.70	6.10
Substance Use Disorders	4.00	10.00

Total # Encounters: 251,864 Females; 125,481 Males



Education Targeted to VA Providers


- VA internet site:
<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp>
(accessible to all)
- VA intranet site:
<http://vaww.mst.va.gov>
(accessible only to VA providers)



Outreach to Veterans Who Experienced MST

MST Services Brochure

Military Sexual Trauma



VETERANS:
 Did you experience any unwanted sexual attention, uninvited sexual advances, or forced sex while in the military?
 Does this experience continue to affect your life today?

Information Sheet For Veterans



VETERANS:

- DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION, UNINVITED SEXUAL ADVANCES, OR FORCED SEX WHILE IN THE MILITARY?
- DOES THIS EXPERIENCE CONTINUE TO AFFECT YOUR LIFE TODAY?

Both women and men can experience sexual harassment or sexual assault during their military service. VA refers to these experiences as military sexual trauma, or MST. Like other types of trauma, MST can negatively impact a person's mental and physical health, even many years later. Some problems associated with MST include:

- Deteriorating memories or nightmares
- Difficulty feeling safe
- Feelings of depression or numbness
- Problems with alcohol or other drugs
- Feeling isolated from other people
- Problems with anger or irritability
- Problems with sleep
- Physical health problems

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) HAS SPECIAL SERVICES AVAILABLE TO HELP MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA (MST).

People can recover from trauma. To help veterans do this, VA provides free, confidential counseling and treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to experiences of MST. You do not need to be service connected and may be able to receive this benefit even if you are not eligible for other VA care. You do not need to have reported the incident(s) when they happened or have other documentation that they occurred.



MST Outreach Poster

MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA



VETERANS:
 DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION, UNINVITED SEXUAL ADVANCES, OR FORCED SEX WHILE IN THE MILITARY?
 DOES THIS EXPERIENCE CONTINUE TO AFFECT YOUR LIFE TODAY?

Both men and women can experience Military Sexual Trauma (MST) during their service. MST can affect someone's physical and mental health, and many are unaware. The VA provides free, confidential counseling and treatment for conditions related to experiences of MST. You do not need to be service connected or eligible for other VA care. You do not need to have reported the incident(s) when they happened or have other documentation that they occurred.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN OR THE MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA COORDINATOR

Name: _____ Contact Information: _____



Increasing Awareness of MST

- Raising the profile of MST in VA Medical Centers
- Increased focus on awareness every April during Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- This year's theme is

~Making Connections~

To Help Survivors of Military Sexual Trauma



Contact Information

Thank you for your concern for
military sexual trauma survivors.

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**VA Cares About
Military Sexual Trauma**

