



## **Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series**

**September 2022 CCSS: Transformative – Innovation Based Updates in Modern Health Care Practice, S04:**

**Using a Trauma - Informed Approach to Care for Active-Duty Women**

### **Resource List**

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2022)** noted Trauma is a physical, cognitive, and emotional response caused by a traumatic event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced as harmful or life-threatening.(2) Trauma can have lasting effects, particularly if untreated. A trauma-informed approach to emergency response is about acknowledging past trauma and showing sensitivity to the effects it can have on the survivors of present events. Knowing how to approach a person or group of people after a traumatic event can reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization.

**The Women’s Bureau within the U.S. Department of Health (2011)** created a guide for providers to assist in treating trauma in military women as the number of women in the military – both active duty and veteran populations – is growing rapidly. They face unusual challenges because of their military experiences and for many, multiple roles as breadwinner, parent, and spouse. Often their return to civilian life is difficult. An estimated 75,609 veterans are homeless, sheltered or unsheltered, on any given night. Women were 10,214 (7.5%) of the 136,334 homeless veterans who were sheltered sometime between October 1, 2008, and September 30, 2009 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs). Female veterans have a greater risk of homelessness compared to their civilian counterparts. Risk of homelessness for recent veterans, particularly women who served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan, is increasing.

The experience of trauma prior to enlistment coupled with trauma experienced while in uniform is a Common denominator among homeless female veterans. Research suggests that 81-93% of female veterans have been exposed to some type of trauma, significantly higher rates than the civilian population (Zinzow et al., 2007). Traumatic experiences include childhood abuse and neglect, domestic violence, military sexual trauma, and combat-related stress. These experiences have a significant impact on mental and physical health, family relationships, and housing and job stability.

**The National Center for PTSD** noted that the increased public attention to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and growing likelihood of survivor disclosure stimulated interest in integrating IPV screening and intervention practices into routine health care (1). Although early research focused on elucidating IPV against women at the hands of male partners, more recent studies highlight the occurrence and impact of IPV experienced by men and the lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) community (e.g., 2-4).

Despite decades of foundational research on IPV and its health effects, studies suggest that practitioners often don't know how to address IPV in ways that are consistent with the research findings—this is true across disciplines and services, including mental health (5). It is therefore important that clinicians, health care leaders and policy makers are knowledgeable about IPV, including its definition, prevalence, health consequences and best clinical practices for screening and intervention. This article summarizes the current knowledge to guide clinical care for individuals who experience IPV, as the need for effective dissemination and implementation is urgent for this population.



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### References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022). *Building Trauma-Informed Communities*.

[Building Trauma-Informed Communities | Blogs | CDC](#)

PTSD: National Center for PTSD (2022). *Addressing the stress and trauma of experiencing intimate partner violence*. [Addressing the Stress and Trauma of Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence - PTSD:](#)

[National Center for PTSD \(va.gov\)](#)

Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health (2011). *Trauma-informed care for women veterans*

*experiencing homelessness: A guide for service providers*. [Trauma-Informed Care for Women Veterans](#)

[Experiencing Homelessness: A Guide for Service Providers \(air.org\)](#)