

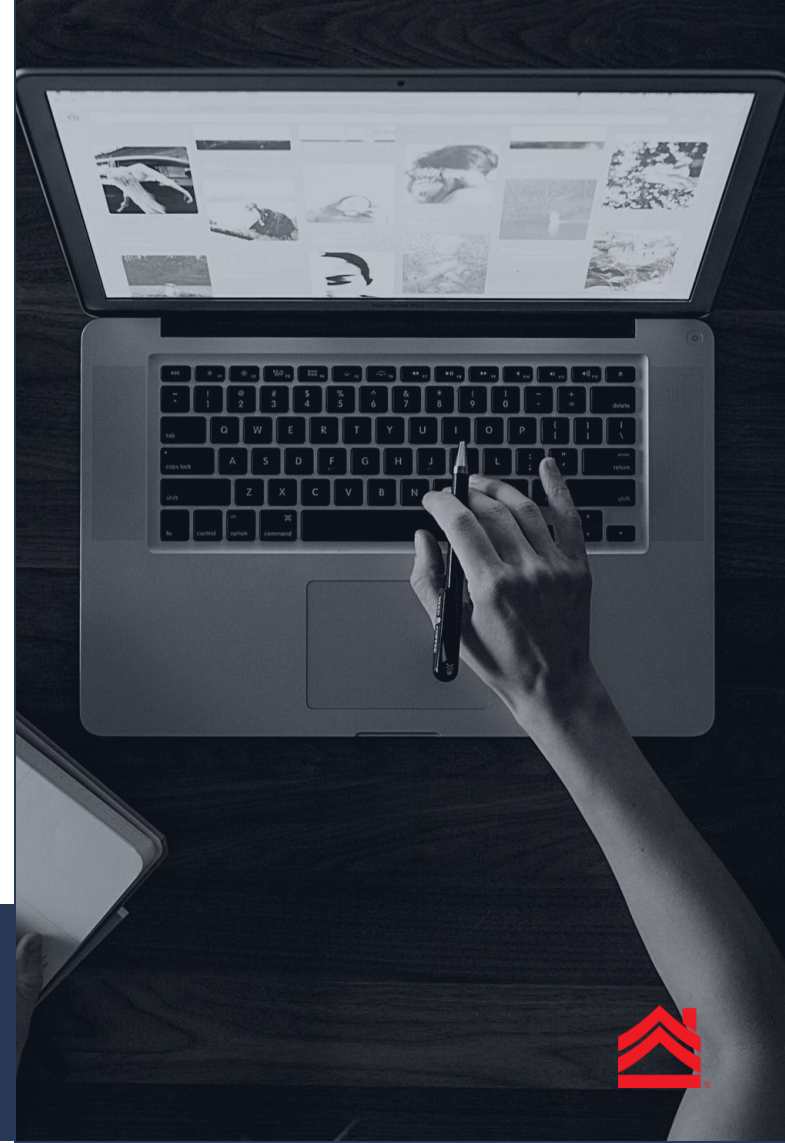
NATIONAL COALITION FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

2020 NCHV ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Virtual Edition



SP 2: SERVING DIVERSE GENDERS, IDENTITIES, AND ORIENTATIONS



Serving Diverse Genders, Identities, and Orientations



Panelists:

Ann Elizabeth Montgomery, PhD
VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans
Birmingham VA Medical Center
University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Public
Health

Dylan Waguespack
Public Policy and External Affairs Director
True Colors

Bob Alexander
Equal Justice Works Fellow
Swords to Plowshares

Serving Diverse Genders, Identities, and Orientations: Women Veterans & Transgender Veterans

Ann Elizabeth Montgomery, PhD

VA National Center on Homelessness among Veterans

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Women Veterans





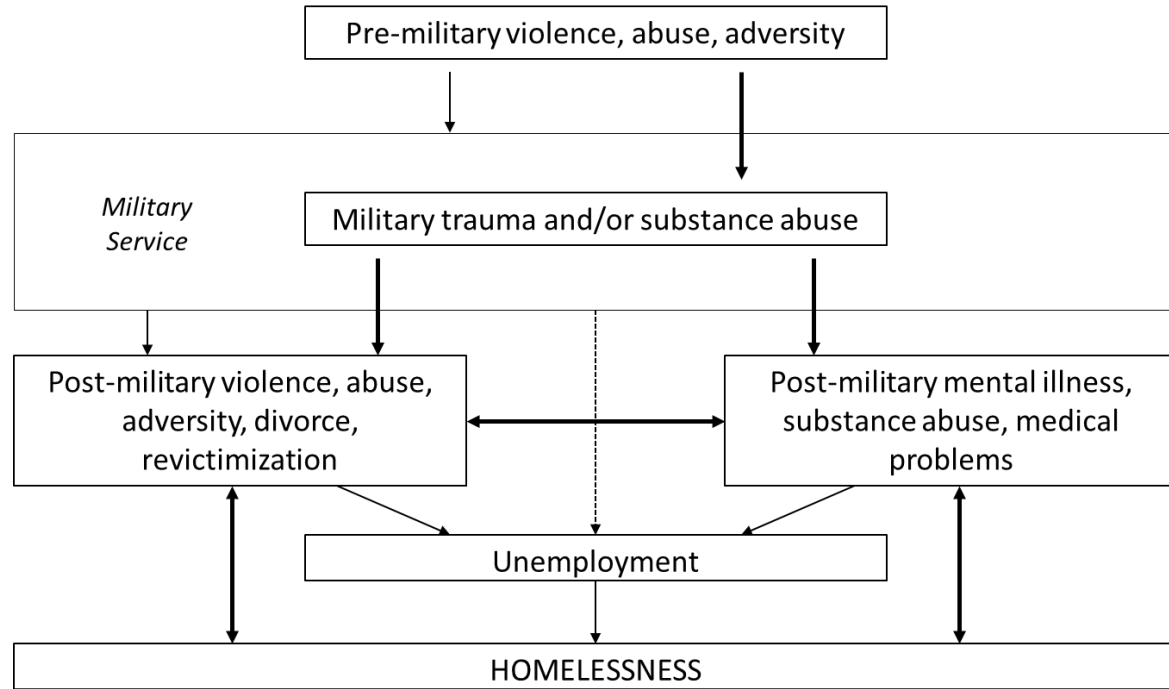
Women Veterans

- Number of women Veterans has nearly doubled in the past decade; fastest growing segment of Veteran population
- Women Veterans are 2.1–3.4 times as likely as their non-Veteran counterparts to experience homelessness
- 1–2% of all women Veterans, 13–15% of women Veterans living in poverty will experience homelessness over the course of a year
- 8.9% (3,292) of Veterans who were homeless at one point-in-time in January 2019 were female
 - 55% were sheltered
 - 45% were unsheltered





Web of Vulnerability





Pre-Military Service

- Compared with their non-Veteran peers, women Veterans report higher rates of childhood maltreatment: physical, emotional, sexual abuse
 - 1/3 enlisted women have a history of childhood sexual abuse
- Women Veterans generally—and homeless women Veterans, specifically—have reported joining the military to escape family violence or other pre-military adversity





Military Service

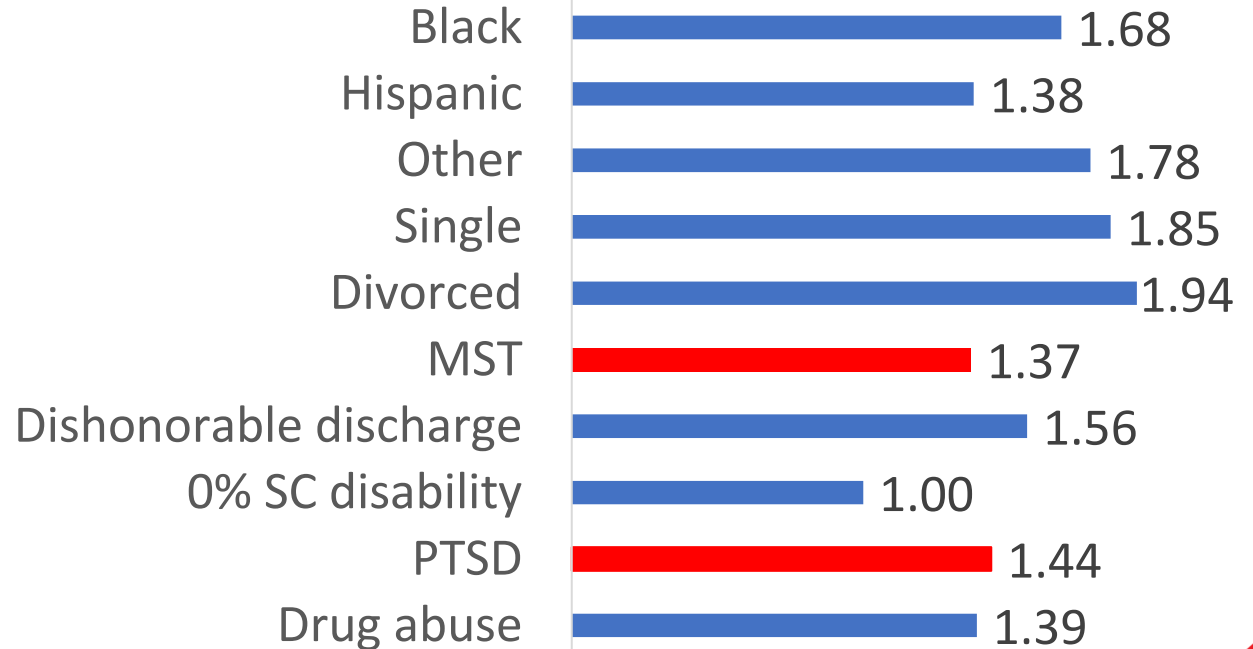
- Exposure to combat
- Military Sexual Trauma (MST): experiences of sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment that a Veteran experienced during his/her military service
 - 1/5 women Veterans accessing VHA healthcare has reported MST
 - MST is associated with 4-fold increase in odds of homelessness; 2/5 women Veterans experiencing homelessness have reported MST





Military Service

Increased odds
of becoming
homeless
among women
Veterans with
indicator of
MST, PTSD



Mulcahy, Szymkowiak, & Montgomery, under review





Post-Military Service

- PTSD
 - Women entering the military are often at high risk of PTSD due to early abuse and increased risk of assault while in the military
 - Sexual trauma is more influential than war trauma in the development of PTSD among women Veterans
- Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
 - Increases the odds of homelessness by a factor of 4
 - Experienced at a greater rate among women Veterans than non-Veteran peers
 - 1/5 women Veterans report experiencing past-year IPV
 - Consequences of IPV: substance use, mental health issues, economic hardship





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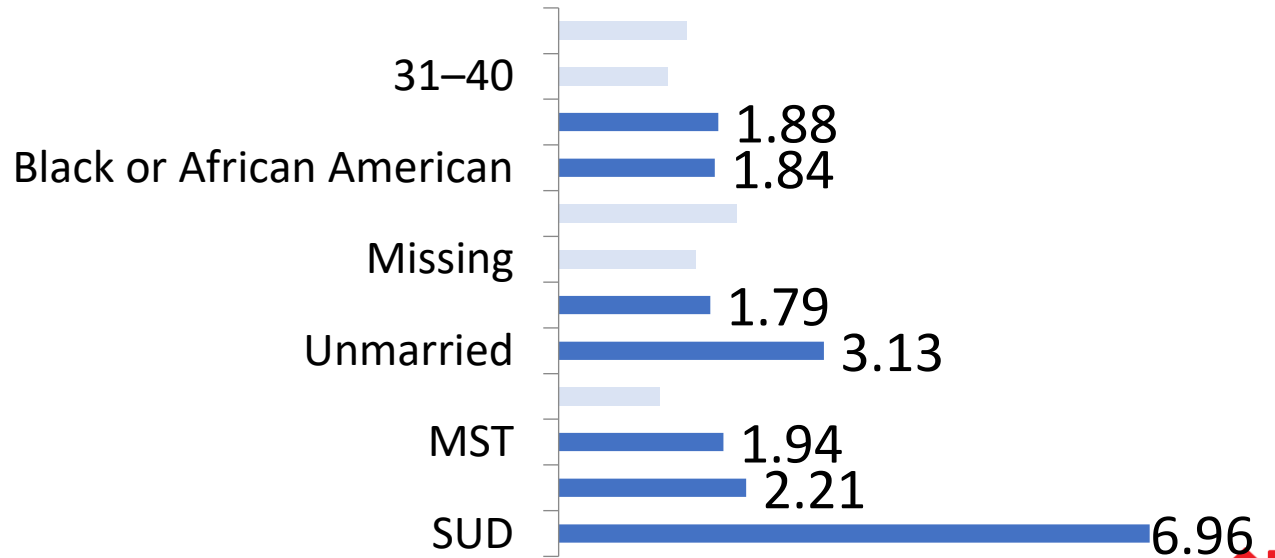




Post-Military Service

Women Veterans with IPV+ screen had **2.79** times the odds of housing instability

Correlates of Housing Instability Among Women Veterans with IPV+ Screen



Montgomery, Sorrentino, Cusack, Bellamy, Medvedeva, Roberts, & Dichter, 2018





Transgender Veterans





Terminology

- Sex = assigned at birth (female, male), defined by genitals or chromosomes
- Gender identity = internal sense of self as man, woman, both, neither
 - Does not depend on medical therapies or interventions or appearance
- Transgender = having a gender identity different from one's sex assigned at birth
 - Transgender woman assigned male sex at birth and identifies as female
 - Transgender man assigned female sex at birth and identifies as male





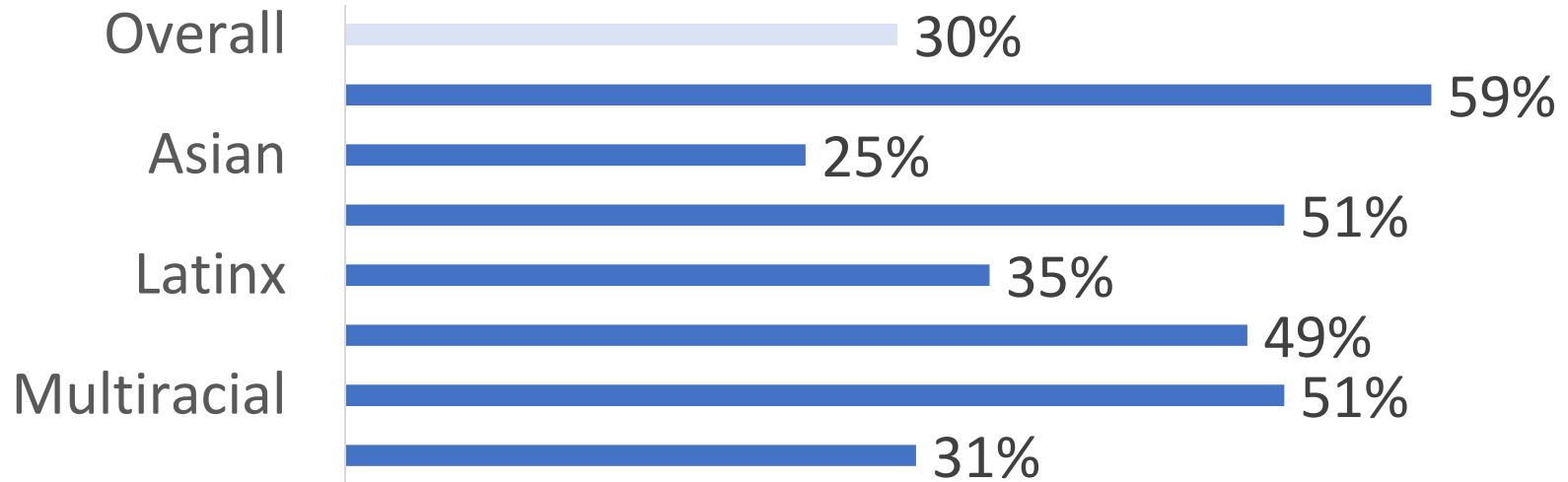
Risk Factors for Homelessness

Level of Influence	Examples
Intrapersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental health• Substance use
Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Familial conflict/rejection• Relationship breakdown
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sex-specific sheltering• Homophobia, transphobia, discrimination• Multiple layers of oppression• Inadequate legal protection, exclusion from benefits



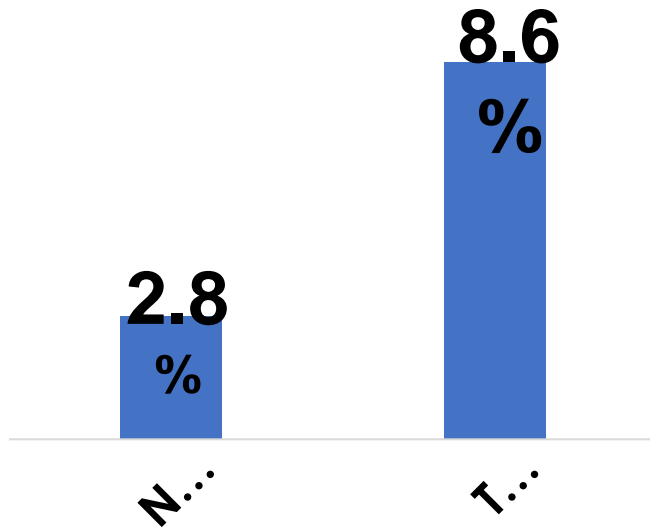


Lifetime Homelessness: Transgender Women





Housing Instability: Transgender Veterans



Controlling for age, sex, race, ethnicity, marital status, comorbidity, geographic location, transgender Veterans had more than **double** the odds

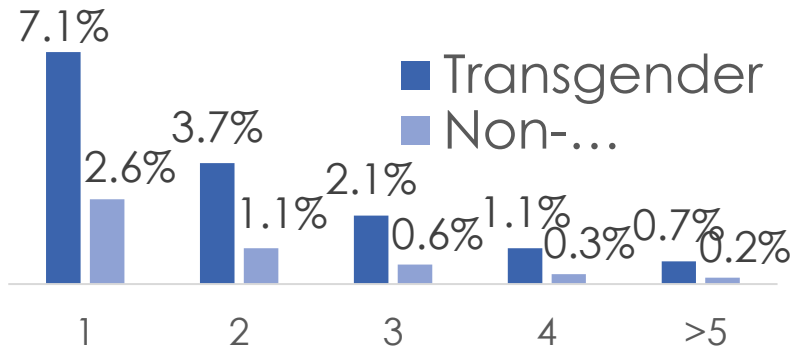
(aOR 2.32; 95% CI 2.09–2.57)

of screening positive for housing instability compared with non-transgender Veterans





Use of VHA Homeless Programs



Number of VHA Homeless Programs Used

Transgender Veterans are **more than twice as likely** to use VHA Homeless Programs compared with non-transgender Veterans

Transgender Veterans had increased odds of using **HUD-VASH**

(aOR 2.09; 95% CI 1.34 – 3.26)

and **SSVF**

(aOR 1.80; 95% CI 1.13–2.86)





Implications





- Women Veterans and transgender Veterans are at increased risk for housing instability compared to their male and cisgender counterparts, respectively
- Services for women Veterans need to assess for and address experiences of trauma and housing instability together
 - Ensure access to mental healthcare, especially related to MST, PTSD
 - Carefully assess for trauma
 - Use trauma-informed models of care
- Transgender Veterans more likely to use VHA Homeless Programs than non-transgender Veterans ☐
Train staff to work with transgender populations to address unique barriers: sex-specific sheltering, discrimination, violence
- The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on sex; HUD interprets this law to protect transgender people
 - Potentially prohibitive because individual must file
 - Complaint that could lead to litigation (cost, time)





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EQUAL ACCESS

DYLAN WAGUESPACK
TRUE COLORS UNITED

OVERVIEW OF EQUAL ACCESS RULE
CONDITIONS PRE-RULE
CURRENT STATUS

EQUAL ACCESS RULE

WHAT IS THE EQUAL ACCESS RULE?

The Equal Access Rule requires all HUD-funded housing services to be provided without discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Since 2016, the rule has protected transgender people from discrimination in homeless shelters by ensuring they are able to access HUD-funded shelter consistent with their gender identity.

The Equal Access Rule is a regulatory requirement, not a law, and can therefore be changed unilaterally by the Administration without the approval of Congress.

EQUAL ACCESS RULE

BEFORE THE RULE

In 2015, the US Trans Survey found that extraordinarily high numbers of trans people experience homelessness.

- 1 in 5 that year
- 1 in 3 over lifetime

Discrimination testing by CAP and Equal Rights Center in 2016 found very few shelters would appropriately house trans people.

EQUAL ACCESS RULE

CURRENT STATUS

- All federally funded shelters are required to adhere to Equal Access Rule.
- HUD is actively working to gut the rule with new anti-trans shelter rule.



Swords to Plowshares

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VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974





Swords to Plowshares



**Permanent &
Supportive
Housing**



**Health &
Social
Services**



**Transitional
Housing**



**Employment &
Training**



**Institute for
Veteran
Policy**



**Legal
Services**





Swords Legal Unit

- ❑ Department of Defense:
 - ❑ Discharge Upgrades
 - ❑ Military Record Corrections
- ❑ Department of Veterans Affairs:
 - ❑ Character of Discharge Determinations
 - ❑ VA Benefits Claims
- ❑ Targeted Outreach Programs
 - ❑ Women, LGBTQ, Justice-Involved





Overview

- Who I am
- What is the LGBTQ veteran outreach project
- Why LGBTQ veterans need targeted outreach
- What I found
- Lessons Learned





Me and My Project

- United States Air Force veteran
 - 22+ years of service, most under DADT
- Law school after retirement – social justice
- Found almost nothing regarding LGBTQ vets
- Equal Justice Works Fellowship
 - Teamed up with Swords to Plowshares
 - 2 years: 09/2018 – 09/2020
 - Medical-Legal Partnership with SF Vet Center





Why do LGBTQ vets need their own targeted outreach..?

- LGBTQ veterans are
 - ▣ **Over-represented** in all the risk categories experienced by veterans generally; but are
 - ▣ **Under-represented** in the receiving veteran-specific benefits and services.

Why is this..?

- LGBTQ veterans are hesitant to identify themselves and are notoriously difficult to access – **this requires active outreach.**





This is understandable...

- **Between the 1940's and 2011** when DADT was repealed, **about 114,000 troops** were involuntarily separated from the military for their sexual identity, **with countless more separated pretextually** for other reasons.
- DADT allowed LGBTQ servicemembers to be discharged with **downgraded discharge characterizations** and their **LGBTQ status prominently affixed** to their discharge paperwork.





Pre-DADT Military

- **What many people are not aware of is that the pre-DADT military was even worse:**
 - **Anti-sodomy regulations** were actively enforced,
 - **McCarthy era-like investigations** were common
 - Servicemembers were subjected to **harsh interrogations**
 - **Homosexuality itself was criminalized** and servicemembers could receive **punitive discharges** and **prison time**, just for being who they were...





Even after DADT was implemented...

- LGBTQ Veterans **were more likely than their military peers** to experience
 - inappropriate discipline,
 - harassment,
 - assault,
 - sexual assault, and
 - downgraded discharges affecting their ability to access VA services and employment.





As a result...

- LGBTQ Veterans, from all eras, **have significantly higher rates than Veterans generally of:**
 - mental health issues,
 - substance abuse,
 - PTSD and other mental health issues,
 - homelessness,
 - poverty, and
 - suicide





Even today...

- Transgender service members currently discriminated against in the military
 - ▣ Estimated 134,000 veterans identify as trans
 - ▣ Around 15,500 currently on active duty
- Trump's Trans Ban
 - ▣ Currently serving trans troops have to serve in their sex as assigned at birth & barred from taking hormones or getting gender-affirming surgery
 - ▣ Transgender Americans taking hormones or begun transition cannot enlist





What I Found...

- Why LGBTQ Vets hide
 - Traumatized
 - Double Closet
 - Shame

- As a result...
 - Actively avoid anything even tangentially associated with the military
 - Many are unaware they are or can be made eligible for VA benefits and services





Lessons Learned

- Does not work well... marketing services directly to the LGBTQ veterans themselves
 - Legal clinics
 - Festivals
 - Flyers
- Works better... marketing services through other service providers & LGBTQ organizations
 - Flyers & Festivals (for community awareness)
 - Direct contacts and referral relationships
 - Medical-Legal Partnerships





Thank You!

Q&A

