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U.S. CHILDREN OF VETERAN PARENTS WITH PTSD

By Red Philanthropy

Introduction

We know negative consequences can often occur as a result of military service, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In this paper, we will look at the effect of PTSD on veterans' children. Our goal is to understand the scale and impact of children of veterans with PTSD and the responses led by the government and the nonprofit sector. Additionally, we want to understand where success has occurred in creating positive support and where the opportunities remain to further impact.

Scale of issue

According to the U.S. Census in 2018, there are 18 million veterans in the United States. Among veterans, the frequency of PTSD is not uncommon. Research shows that in a given year, the occurrence of PTSD is as follows (by conflict):

- Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF): About 11-20 out of every 100 Veterans (or approximately 2 million to 3.6 million veterans)
- Gulf War (Desert Storm): About 12 out of every 100 Gulf War Veterans (or 2 million veterans),
- Vietnam War: About 15 out of every 100 Vietnam Veterans (or 2.7 million veterans) were currently diagnosed with PTSD at the time of the most recent study in the late 1980s.[1]

Additionally, about 1.7 million or nine percent of veterans are women. By 2040, it is projected that number will jump to 17 percent.[2] Military Sexual Trauma (MST) is approximal to PTSD and occurs often. The frequency of MST among Veterans who use VA health care is as follows:

- 23 out of 100 women (or 391,000 female veterans) reported sexual assault when in the military.
- 55 out of 100 women (or 935,000 female veterans) and 38 out of 100 men (or 6.2 million male veterans) have experienced sexual harassment when in the military.

While the effects of PTSD have been studied for more than four decades, the effects on children have become more recently studied and more research is underway. Research has shown that families in which a parent has PTSD are characterized by more anxiety, unhappiness, marital problems and behavioral problems among children in the family as compared to families where a parent does not have

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[1] How Common is PTSD in Veterans? - PTSD: National Center for PTSD (va.gov)

[2] Who Are the Nation's Veterans? (census.gov)

PTSD.[3] According to the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), early research showed that Vietnam Veterans have more marital problems and family violence. Consequently, their children have more behavior problems than those of Veterans without PTSD. Veterans with the most severe symptoms had families with worsening behavioral issues. The most common negative responses by children of veterans with PTSD range from sympathy, feeling negative emotions such as lack of security or belief that the parent cannot provide safety, avoidance, depression from the parent's detachment mechanism, guilt or fear in response to random acts of anger expressed by a parent, behavioral mirroring of the parent, and health issues such as heightened drinking or drug use. [4]

Research from the International Handbook of Traumatic Stress Syndromes identified three modes of negative behavior among children of veterans with PTSD. These include:

1) the Over-Identified Child: the child experiences secondary traumatization and comes to experience many of the symptoms the parent with PTSD is having;
2) the Rescuer: the child takes on parental roles and responsibilities to compensate for the parent's difficulties; and
3) the Emotionally Uninvolved Child: this child receives little emotional support, which results in problems at school, depression and anxiety, and relational problems later in life.[5]

There are approximately 2.3 million children under the age of 18 living with a disabled veteran.[6] This is the first-ever statistical analysis of the likely number of children of veterans with PTSD. While this data is imperfect, it demonstrates just how much information gathering there is to do in this area. As long as PTSD occurs, support services will be needed to serve partners (known as informal caregivers) and children of survivors to prevent these coping mechanisms from developing.

Responding to the need- *Government*

The government has undertaken a large-scale effort to understand and provide services for veterans with PTSD, many of which offer support services to the family members of the survivors of PTSD. Family therapy is more effective if the veteran with PTSD has first received some type of trauma therapy.

While there are many programs focused on healing survivors of PTSD, focus and service to the children of survivors are still burgeoning. PTSD treatment programs exist across the country serving veterans and, in some cases, the families. Each medical center within a VA has PTSD specialists who provide

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[3] Christie H, Hamilton-Giachritsis C, Alves-Costa F, Tomlinson M, Halligan SL. The impact of parental posttraumatic stress disorder on parenting: a systematic review. *Eur J Psychotraumatol.* 2019;10(1):1550345. doi:10.1080/20008198.2018.1550345

[4] When a Child's Parent has PTSD - PTSD: National Center for PTSD (va.gov)

[5] Children of Veterans and Adults with PTSD (aaets.org)

[6] EDF-HiddenHelpers-Commitments.pdf (hiddenheroes.org)

treatment for veterans with PTSD. There exist nearly 200 specialized PTSD treatment programs throughout the country. Some large Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) also offer PTSD care. Here you can find a PTSD program locater across the country. These programs are offered to veterans who completed duty under all but dishonorable discharge. As we know, PTSD can result in dishonorable discharge. The government programs focused on this issue are missing a significant number of PTSD survivors and thereby, their children, as well.

In 2021, the White House convened a Children in Caregiving Families cross-agency working group to explore existing data and programs to support children of injured veterans. Additionally, the Department of Defense, the VA and Department of Health and Education are devoting new resources to better understand and respond to children in these veteran households.[7]

Responding to the need – *Nonprofit sector*

General programs-

The nonprofit sector has responded to fill the gap in social services offered by the government. Examples of nonprofits offering a variety of services for children of parents with PTSD include:

- MilitaryKidsConnect (MKC) is an online community for military children (ages 6-17) with resources for children to give support before, during, and after a parent's deployment.
- Sesame Street for Military Families offers resources to help with deployments, military transitions, relocations, injuries and more.
- "Finding My Way: A Teen's Guide to Living with a Parent Who has Experienced Trauma" is an interactive workbook for teens to teach how a parent's PTSD symptoms are not their fault.[8]

Retreats-

Various nonprofit organizations have developed retreats or camps to serve veterans, many of which include programs specific to families and children. In addition to Project Sanctuary, examples include:

- Gratitude America (FL)– provides healing retreats for veterans and their families focused on post-traumatic growth, regardless of discharge status.
- The Independence Fund (NC) – provides individually customized art and outdoor experiences for the whole family based on the trauma experience of the physically and mentally wounded.
- No Barriers (CO) – provides adventure-based trips for veterans and a separate camp experience for youth to overcome the obstacles they have experienced by overcoming obstacles in the wild.
- Travis Mills Foundation (ME) – offers several retreats, including family camps, for veterans and their families who have experienced military trauma in an oceanside environment.

[7] EDF-HiddenHelpers-Commitments.pdf (hiddenheroes.org)

[8] Help for Family and Friends - PTSD: National Center for PTSD (va.gov)

- Wounded Warrior (US)- a pilot program this year called Project Odyssey, consisting of a 12-week mental health program using adventure-based learning that includes all members of the family.

However, the most well-known and successful organization offering retreats focused solely on children of veteran families is Camp Corral. Camp Corral has established retreat experiences across the country with a singular focus on transforming the lives of children of wounded, ill, and fallen military by providing camp, advocacy, and enrichment programs. Its Impact Report states that 70 percent of parents saw an immediate and sustained improvement in their child's mental health after returning from camp.[9]

Research, funding and coalition building-
Recently, funders have become acutely aware of the need to serve children and informal caregivers (often the spouse) of veterans with PTSD. The most prominent philanthropist working to create more understanding and impact in this area is the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. The Foundation focuses exclusively on the military informal caregiver and the impact this role has on the children, referred to as Hidden Helpers. This focus on Hidden Helpers has reinvented the work and conversation regarding how the philanthropic community can serve children of veterans with PTSD.

Some of the Foundation's achievements include a commissioned study to explore the impact and opportunities of children of informal caregivers in military families. This study raised nationwide attention and garnered resources to increase support for children of veteran families. By far, the most interesting source is this comprehensive summary of outcomes from the research found here. This summary consists of a list of commitments made as a result of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation including resources and nonprofit organizations that have increased their funding, programs and research. The innovative influence of the Foundation is tremendous and illustrates just how powerful philanthropy can be in raising awareness and creating strides toward inspiring change.

Conclusion
Historically, the focus on children of veterans with PTSD has not been widely researched and supported. Presently, there are key actors in this space such as Camp Coral and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation.

In recent years the funding and focus have shifted thanks to the initial efforts of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. Now, widely adopted as an area of importance among dozens of organizations, the U.S. will likely see a high level of activity from the government and the social sector in the coming years. Some recognizable names that are leaning into this area include the YMCA, the Red Cross, USAA Foundation, the Wounded Warrior Project, and the Bob and Dolores Hope Foundation, among others.

[9] Summer-Camp-Outcomes-Research-Report.pdf (campcorral.org)

Should more funding be dedicated to this area, the recommendation is as follows:

- Conduct an exploratory meeting with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to learn from their experiences and where opportunities for impact remain;
- Fund a pilot partnership with Camp Coral to increase concentrated support for children of veterans with PTSD;
- Explore the lessons learned here with our existing partners and discuss the opportunities to increase focus on children of veterans.

This is an area of significant need and, while momentum is building, the scope of the problem is not fully known or served. This is an area prime for significant impact.

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A comparison of services for homeless veterans in Colorado and Arizona

By Red Philanthropy

Summary

While offering housing for veteran care is a priority in both states, Colorado is advanced in veteran services in the areas of:

- Communicating services in a comprehensive and easy-to-access manner,
- Programs offering education and livelihood training with a strong mental-health component,
- Creating a sense of community building in partnership with housing development programs.

Background

Colorado and Arizona have similar numbers of vets who are or have experienced homelessness. Both the Phoenix and Denver Metro areas have experienced similar trends over the past couple of years.

Arizona:

According to the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, **16% of veterans report having experienced homelessness at least once in their lives, or approximately 1,195 individuals** (2019). A micro-level Point-In-Time survey revealed a **slight increase in homeless veterans in Maricopa County over a three-year span** (2019). Arizona's direct homeless services primarily focus on temporary and permanent housing. If a homeless individual wants information about education or job training, they are typically referred to an external organization such as their local library or university. The connections between the various organizations providing services to Arizona veterans have tended to be decentralized and disorganized.

Colorado

Meanwhile, in Colorado, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness reported that 1,068 veterans have experienced homelessness (2019). **76% of this population live in cities such as Denver. However, the Denver Voice reported a decrease in veteran homelessness from 2017 to 2018 (2018).** "Look around the nation, communities effective in creating a functional zero population have a common denomination: systematized entry," says Brenton Hutson, Division Director at Volunteers of America (VoA) Colorado, another one of the VA's community partners. This approach has already delivered results for Colorado's homeless veterans. In 2016, the Point-In-Time survey identified 551 homeless veterans. By 2018, that number dropped to 427, just over 12 percent of the total homeless population.

Variances

As for services offered to homeless veterans in Colorado and Arizona there is a significant gap between the states. In contrast to Arizona's services, Colorado's services are easier to access and understand. For example, the Colorado Veterans Project serves as a comprehensive clearinghouse of information for homeless veterans requiring assistance.

Both Arizona and Colorado embrace the "housing first" model of confronting homelessness. This is logical, as ensuring that basic needs such as shelter are met is a key component of remedying this social problem. However, the ways in which the states go beyond the provision of housing, and how effectively they do so, is key to understanding the differences. To better understand this, we need to examine the services Colorado's veteran-focused nonprofits offer directly as opposed to Arizona, which may create opportunities for intervention.

Theories

One reason for the difference between efficacy of service in Colorado versus Arizona may be the systemized nature of programs offered to veterans in Colorado versus the scattershot nature of nonprofit and government resources in Arizona. Perhaps this reflects the deep military roots in Colorado, creating a heightened level of support for veteran care. Or, perhaps Colorado's support for veteran services began earlier. According to the Denver Voice article previously referenced, other states have taken notice of Colorado's progress as well. Between 2011 and 2017, Denver cut its homeless veteran population by 59 percent, according to a 2018 report comparing homeless veteran population in major metropolitan areas published by Washington State's Department of Commerce. All of this supposition to say, Colorado serves as a strong case study of more advanced services to veterans within the nonprofit sector.

According to a 2018 article by Claire Caulfield for Phoenix-area news station, many formerly homeless veterans find themselves isolated in the apartments they are provided. One formerly homeless veteran, Ferrall Fritzbahe, said outright "if I had to make a choice between having a roof over my head or having my sense of community, I would choose being part of a community." This feedback is similar to what was shared by Catholic Charities. Having a social network is as important as providing housing.

The services offered in Colorado, particularly the Denver area, mitigate potential isolation. For example, the Stout Street Health Center in Denver provides both physical and mental health services in one location. It also contains 60 units of permanent, supportive housing which prevents feelings of isolation. Investing in partnership with organizations that are seasoned in providing comprehensive veterans services that facilitate wellness and self-sufficiency is key.

Mental health

Under the category of "Mental and Physical Health" the above-mentioned Colorado Veteran's Project provides links to services such as RehabCenter.net, which provides specialized PTSD and addiction treatment to veterans. This is not unique and often offered in Arizona programming through U.S. Vets and Catholic Charities. However, new trends in veteran services include ComebackYoga.org, which offers trauma-informed yoga classes to veterans and Project Sanctuary which is one of the only organizations serving veterans, spouses, caregivers, and children as a family unit.

Livelihoods

To create self-sustainability, educational and employment services are abundant in Colorado. It appears that the Colorado nonprofit community has invested in vocational training for burgeoning industries. Examples of these programs include University of Colorado's Veteran and Military Student Services, Veterans Green Jobs, and Mi Casa Resource Center. Moreover, investing in business development among veterans extends beyond job skills training into venture investments. The Support Warrior Project offers business loans and investment capital for veterans interested in launching their own businesses or starting one of the recommended franchises. Not only do many of these resources provide education and job training but they also nurture mental and emotional wellness and, perhaps most importantly, foster a sense of camaraderie among veterans. While this programming might exist in Arizona, it appears difficult to find and less abundant.

Recommendations

In addition to creating opportunities for housing, the goal is increase levels of self-sufficiency among veterans so they feel empowered to sustain their housing and re-integrate into society as well as they can. This strategy is paramount to sustaining long-term positive change for the veteran community.

Arizona's services appear difficult to navigate for the civilian, let alone a homeless veteran without reliable access to the internet. It is worth mentioning that the dedicated professionals who serve Arizona's homeless veterans have begun taking steps to remedy this, at least as of the time of the Caulfield article cited above. This means that there could be an opportunity to invest in creating a comprehensive portal of veteran care services as a starting point for veterans to seek the support they are needing.

Additionally, investment in employment and educational services for veterans could be bolstered in Arizona. There are a number of opportunities to either partner with an existing Arizona-based nonprofit or to inspire an existing Colorado program to expand into Arizona to bring more of these opportunities to the Arizona-based community. For example, with 78 solar manufacturers already established in Arizona, the state ranks number one nationwide in terms of having the most solar electricity installed. Colorado has a program that invests in a green jobs initiative for homeless veterans that trains them on careers within this field. Universities such as Maricopa Community College, Arizona State, and the University of Arizona have already shown an interest in working with the homeless veteran population so it may be worth exploring opportunities with these institutions. Moreover, Catholic Charities has

shared a commitment to “wrap-around” services and could be an excellent partner in filling the gaps that exist for veteran care.

Providing access to strategic employment, entrepreneurship and educational services seems to be needed in Arizona. Moreover, facilitating a sense of mental and emotional wellness among homeless veterans and, by extension, less isolation and more camaraderie is essential.

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MILITARY TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

By Red Philanthropy

Introduction

One of the benefits of joining the U.S. military is the job skills training provided during a soldier's service. Individuals can be trained in a myriad responsibility ranging from civil engineer and medical practitioner to data analyst and logistics specialist and everything in between. The training and the on-the-job experience build a cadre of professionals during and out of military service. However, what happens when active-duty personnel leave the military and transition into the civilian workspace? A well-known gap exists in which the credentials earned during military service do not directly translate into civilian qualifications for parallel work. We will examine the scope of this issue, the existing efforts to close that gap and the role that philanthropy is and can play to remedy this issue and advance work opportunities for American veterans.

Existing services

There are various types of services that currently exist to reduce this issue. The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was created to give employment and training information to armed forces members within 180 days of separation or retirement. TAP offers a three-day workshop that all ex-military job seekers can use consisting of exploring career options, job search strategies and deliverables such as building a resume, cover letter, customizing verbiage and descriptions to civilian customs and interview preparation.

Additionally, there are recruiters that specialize in helping military transition into civilian careers such as Lucas Group and Bradley Morris, two of the largest that claim serving more than 25,000 people each in successful job placements.

The Department of Labor has invested significant resources into helping with this transition including a complete guide, viewed here, listing dozens of government funded organizations focused on closing this gap. For example, one such organization funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration is the American Job Centers (AJCs), in which approximately 2,400 locations exist throughout the United States.[10]

[10] DOL VETS Resource Guide JAN2023 (Page 6)

Regarding credentials specifically, services exist to help veterans such as Credentialing-Opportunities-Online (COOL) created for each branch of the military as well as License Finder, Credential Finder and CareerOneStop. Additionally, support is offered to military spouses via the Department of Labor for those who are relocating and need support in transferring their licenses to new states and countries.[11] Military training and experience provide certification in the field, but not a license. The transition to the civilian workforce may be relatively seamless because certification and licensure requirements are often similar. However, the veteran may still need to obtain a license from the appropriate government agency.

[11] Military Spouse Interstate License Recognition Options | U.S. Department of Labor (dol.gov)