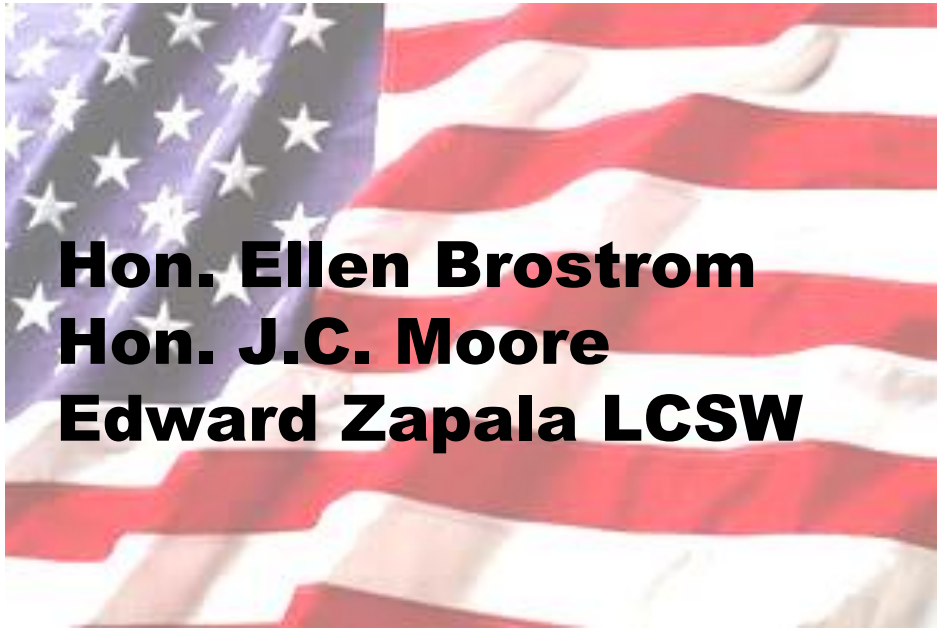
Representing America's Veterans: Lessons From the Milwaukee Veterans Treatment Initiative and What You Can Do In Your Community



Hon. Ellen Brostrom
Hon. J.C. Moore
Edward Zapala LCSW

“ A Veteran – whether active duty, national guard or reserve, retired, or discharged from any of these - is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to ‘The United States of America,’ for an amount of ‘up to and including my life.’... ”

Author Unknown

Home

Difficulty expressing feelings

Mission focus vs. social chatter

Suspicion and isolation

Nobody Understands

ANGER AS PROBLEM

Numbing through substance abuse

Discussion

ADRENALIN – THRILL SEEKING

Nightmares, flashbacks, panic

Re-integrating with family

TRANSITION: MILITARY TO CIVILIAN

Too many choices

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Common Emerging Issues

- Reintegration difficulties (family)
  - Divorce/ Relationship Issues
  - Domestic Violence
- Drug addiction/Alcoholism
- Medical & Mental Health problems
  - Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
  - Traumatic Brain Injury(TBI)
  - Combat Operational Stress Reaction (COSR) vs. Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD)
- Suicide
- Homelessness
- Unemployment
- Justice Involved Veterans

Reintegration: How have family members changed?

- More independent
- Used to making their own decisions
- New friends/relationships
- Children may be significantly different
- New routines
- New perspectives
- Changes in the environment
- “I was angry for months, my wife and kids had grown without me”

Domestic violence rose 33 percent from 2006 to 2011.

Alcohol & Drug Use

- Increased use noted among returning service members
- Self-medicate
- Sleep
- Increase feelings of invincibility
- Avoid feelings
- Means of social support
- Excuse for behaviors
- Decreases potential for eventual reintegration
- May lead to job loss, family loss, legal problems, suicide

COSR vs PTSD

- **Combat Operational Stress Reaction: expected and predictable emotional, intellectual, physical, and or behavioral reactions from exposure to stressful events.**

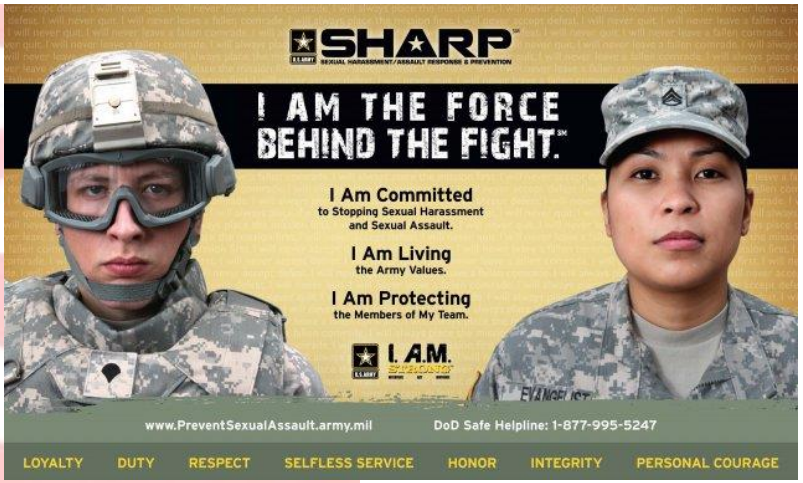
- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder:**
  - **Exposure to an *extreme traumatic stressor.***
  - **actual or threatened death or serious injury or other threat.**
  - **Witnessing such event.**
  - **Same event experienced by a family member or other close associate.**

- **Person's response to event <u>must</u> involve intense fear, helplessness or horror.**
- **Symptoms**
  - **Increased Arousal**
  - **Persistent avoidance**
  - **Persistent reexperincing**
  - **Duration: longer than 30 days**

- **Nearly 20% OIF/OEF Veterans– are likely to suffer from either PTSD or major depression.**

Military Sexual Trauma

- Sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment that occurred while the Veteran was in the military.
- Perpetrators are usually known to the victim.
- Victims are typically young.
- The military is like a family.
- The military is hierarchical and authoritarian.
- Military culture places a premium on strength, self sufficiency and loyalty.
- Victims are in conditions of relative entrapment (restricted freedom of movement).
- Re-exposure and re-victimization are likely.



Violent sex crime in the military was up 64 percent from 2006 to 2011.

Traumatic Brain Injury

A blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain.

MILD: 80% a brief change in mental status or consciousness
MODERATE:10%
SEVERE :10% extended period of consciousness or amnesia after the injury

SYMPTOMS

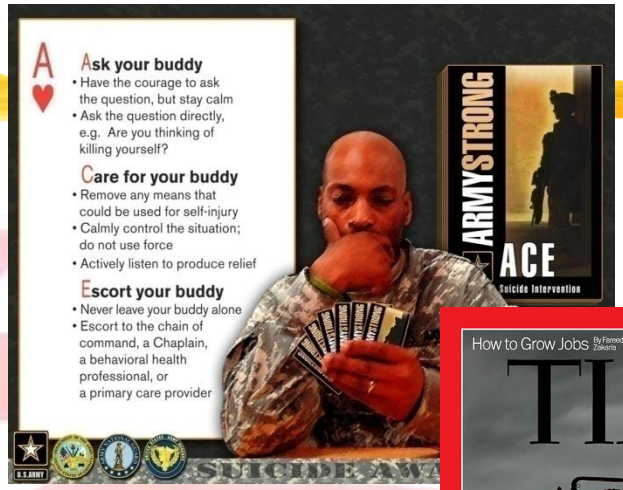
- Impaired hearing, vision, speech
- Balance problems
- Fatigue
- Seizures
- Memory loss
- Concentration or processing difficulty
- Organizational problems
- Spatial disorientation

May Mirror PTSD

320,000 of the returning Veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan may have experienced traumatic brain injuries during deployment.

Suicide

- **Suicide rates**:
- 2010: 301
- 2011: 283
- 154 in 1st 155 days of 2012
- suicide rate **7.5 x** the national average.
- Female Veterans are 2-3x more likely to commit suicide than non-Veteran women .
- Approx **1000 attempts each month** by Veterans who are receiving some type of treatment.



One Veteran attempts suicide every 80 minutes.

Center for a New American Security Suicide Report Oct 2011

Homelessness

- 30% of homeless are Veterans – approx 150,000.
- 67,000 will be homeless tonight.
- 5% are women Veterans.
- Women Veterans are 4x more likely to be homeless than males.
- Veterans are 50% more likely to become homeless than non-Veterans.

Unemployment

- Currently 9.7% for Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.
- 19.9%for women Veterans.
- 23.5% for Veterans 18-24.

Justice Involved Veterans

United States Jail and Prison Population

- **9.4%** are Veterans.
- **39%** of incarcerated Veteran report psychiatric problems.
- 30% **homeless** recently
- 60% serious **medical** problem
- problems with **alcohol** (45%) & **other drugs** (45%)

Veterans Dorm in Muscogee Co, GA

82% wanted medical help
59% mental health help

Veterans Courts

Eau Claire

Green Bay

Sheboygan

Outagamie

Milwaukee

La Crosse

Rock

2d District

Judge Robert Russell, Veterans Court, Buffalo, NY

2008: 1st vets court

2011: 100+ vets courts

See Judge Russell at WATCP Conference 3/24-24/2015 Milwaukee, WI

Benefits – Treatment Courts

Recidivism

- 75% remain arrest free 2 years after graduation.
- Reductions in crime last at least 3 years and can continue for over 14.
- Reductions in crime as much as 35% more than other sentencing options.

Money

- Savings of $3.36 in criminal justice costs for every $1.00 invested.
- Savings of $12 in other costs (reduced victimization and healthcare service utilization) for every $1.00 invested.
- Annual costs per participant: $4,000-$12,000.

Figures provided by NADCP

"Efficacy-based outcomes of veterans courts appears to be at least as favorable as those of other specialized treatment courts."

Research conducted by Widener University School of Law - 2011

Milwaukee County Veterans Treatment Initiative

- Began Dec 2012
- DPA/ treatment court calendar since 2009
- Vets court Wednesday am – Br 6

Photo Courtesy of the Wisconsin State Public Defender.

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VTI

Mission: To successfully habilitate Veterans in recognition of their service to our country and the challenges it may present to them and their families by diverting them from the traditional criminal justice system and providing them with the tools they will need to lead a productive and law-abiding life.

Target population:

- U.S. Military Veterans who have committed a criminal offense and who are in need of the structure and support available through the Milwaukee VTI.
- Veterans who are charged with the offense of Operating While Intoxicated ("OWI") and are determined to have suffered from some type of military related trauma.
- Offenses must have been committed in Milwaukee County and not be subject to the exclusions.

Eligibility:

- Face pending criminal charges in the Milwaukee County Circuit Court
- Have served in the United States Armed Forces and received a discharge other than dishonorable
- Approved by the VTI Team to determine appropriateness for participation

10 Key Components

1. The Milwaukee VTI integrates alcohol, drug treatment, and behavioral health services with justice system case processing.
2. Using non-adversarial approach, prosecution and defense promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights.
3. Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the Milwaukee VTI or Drug Treatment Court.
4. The Milwaukee VTI provides access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, behavioral health and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.
5. Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing.
6. A coordinated strategy governs the Milwaukee VTI responses to participants' compliance.
7. Ongoing judicial interaction with each Veteran is essential.
8. Monitoring and evaluation measures program goals and gauge effectiveness.
9. Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective Milwaukee VTI planning, implementation, and operation.
10. Forging partnerships among the Milwaukee VTI, the VA, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances the Milwaukee VTI's effectiveness.

Process

Vet enters jail.

Jail/JP/SPD enquire about service.

Jail: list - sent to VA.

JP: recorded for univ screening.

SPD: recorded as

VA determines eligibility of vets on jail list. VJO may conduct follow up interviews from list.

VA eligible list sent to SPD.

SPD sec'y notifies appt'd atty of VA eligibility.

Attorney/ ADA negotiate for VTI disposition.

Coordinator conducts review:

appropriate offense?

monitoring agency?

risk/needs determination?

VA, CVI (wiser choice), DOC notified.

VA/CVI conduct clinical/needs evaluation.

Results to DA for use as conditions of VTI agreement.

DA generates VTI agreement.

Attorney reviews with vet.

Vet enters into agreement (diversion) or enters plea/agreement in trial court or vets court (DPA/enh prob).

Vet works with provider/is monitored by agency and vets court until discharge via successful completion or revocation.

Tracks

- **Diversions: low risk/low need**
- **DPAs: low risk/med-hi need**
- **Misdemeanor OWI programming: hi risk/med need**
- **Drug Treatment Court – Veterans track hi risk/med-hi need**

Monitored in vets court

Team

- Evaluator
- Veteran Justice Outreach coordinator/Community Based Social Worker
- Probation officer (monitor)
- Case Manager (monitor)
- Mentor Coordinator
- Law Enforcement Liaison
- VTI coordinator
- Defense atty
- District atty
- Judge

Providers Welcome

Court

- **Reports**
  - Communication between providers and monitor is key.

- **Staffing**
  - Conducted immediately prior to court session.
  - Discuss sanctions, incentives, alterations to treatment plan.
  - Vigorous participation.

- **Court Sessions**
  - Recognition of positive performance
  - Veterans with violations stay and watch.
  - Court interaction - 3 min.
  - Veterans stand and “report.”
  - Mentors follow up.

Sanctions

- Warnings or admonishments
- Increased alcohol or substance testing
- Increased visits with probation officer and/or case monitor
- Increased appearances at court sessions
- Write an essay on a topic as identified by the Milwaukee VTI
- Increased participation in self-help meetings, such as AA, NA or CA
- Increased treatment, including but not limited to intensified Chemical Dependency treatment (outpatient to residential), treatment extensions, or increased therapy sessions
- Additional community service hours
- Incarceration
- Termination

Incentives

- Praise, acclaim or recognition.
- Bus cards or tokens.
- Gift cards or gift certificates.
- Decreased visits with probation officer and/or case monitor
- Decreased appearances at court sessions.
- Decreased participation in self-help meetings, such as AA, NA or CA.
- Decreased treatment requirements.
- Forgiveness of additional community service hours.
- Sobriety or substance-free tokens and medallions.
- Successful completion of court agreement

Treatment Planning

- Based on assessments by assigned monitoring agency
- Addresses criminogenic factors risks, needs and goals
- Altered to reflect Veteran progress with team input after staffing
- Prioritizes use of VA services if eligible in favor of community based /DOC services unless Veteran is already utilizing the latter.
- Utilizes preferred network of Veteran specific community based services funded by Veteran organizations of Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division
- May include prescribed psychotropic medications, pain medications or medically assisted treatment for addiction (excluding : Veterans track – DTC)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Purpose of VJO program

- To establish a Veteran's track within the courts system that will facilitate eligible Veterans who are charged with low level criminal offenses into treatment, rehabilitation, education, employment and judicial monitoring.
- To establish an intervention and support "Network" to ensure easy and timely access to services for program eligible Veterans.
- To support prevention, early intervention, and education that will reduce the negative impact of combat experiences on Veterans and create individualized functional case management plans for Veterans engaged in the Veteran Justice Outreach Program.

VJO's by Region

•**Tomah**: Gary Hebel (608) 567-1225

•**Iron Mtn**: Mike Matwyuk (906) 774-3300

•**Minneapolis**: David Holewinski (612) 467-5082

•**Madison**: Ed Zapala (608) 256-1901

•**Milwaukee**: Abby Ziebell (1st) (414) 882-3375

•Rosonna Comers (4th & 8th) (920) 636-8158

•**Chicago**: Lauran Olson (312) 569-6998

•Patricia Moore (773) 962-3732

•**North Chicago**: Jessica Pinder (224) 610-1444

•**Hines**: James Seminaroti (708) 202-8387

VJO “Cans/Cant's”

Can…

- Reach out to law enforcement, jails, and courts;
- Provide comprehensive healthcare services of non-incarcerated Veterans;
- With Veteran consent, communicate essentials (attendance, progress, tx testing, d/c plan);
- Serve all Veteran eras;
- Function as court team member;
- Assess Veteran’s healthcare needs, identify appropriate VA and non-VA services;
- Refer and link Veteran to services, act as a liaison.
- Provide EBT for court-monitored Veterans. (non-incarcerated)

Can’t…

- Provide treatment to Veteran in custody (incarcerated including work release);
- complete Diversion paperwork;
- Serve only OEF/OIF Veterans;
- Decide criminal justice criteria for Veteran court participation or decide who gains admission to specialty treatment court;
- Perform forensic psychiatric or psychological evaluation for the court;
- Guarantee program acceptance;
- Advocate for legislation;
- Serve VHA ineligible Veterans.

Mentors

- **Dryhootch Mission**: provides Wisconsin's Veterans and their families with a stable, substance-free environment to gather, grow, and enhance their post-service life experience.

- **Band of Brothers and Sisters Project**, (BoBS): **peer-to-peer recovery support services** program specifically for Veterans in the Milwaukee community that have a substance abuse disorder
- Services:
- **Mentoring/Coaching.**
- **Recovery Groups.**
- **Socialization Activities.**

Mentors – what are they

- Mentors working with Veterans involved in the court system helps to reduce risks associated with substance abuse, mental health or other behavioral issues.
- Military Mentors bond with Veterans involved in the court system due to shared values the Veterans had and the sacrifices that had made while in the military.
- Mentor participation can be included in as condition of diversion, deferral, treatment court participation.

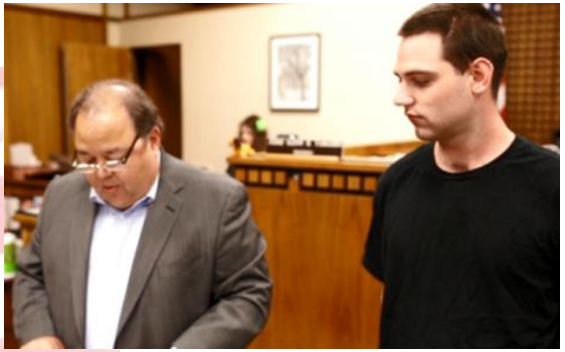
BAND OF BROTHERS & SISTERS

Success

Analysis: 11/2010-10/2013

•50 completed/ 10 not completed = 83% success rate

•8.33 years incarceration/23 years probation saved



Goals:

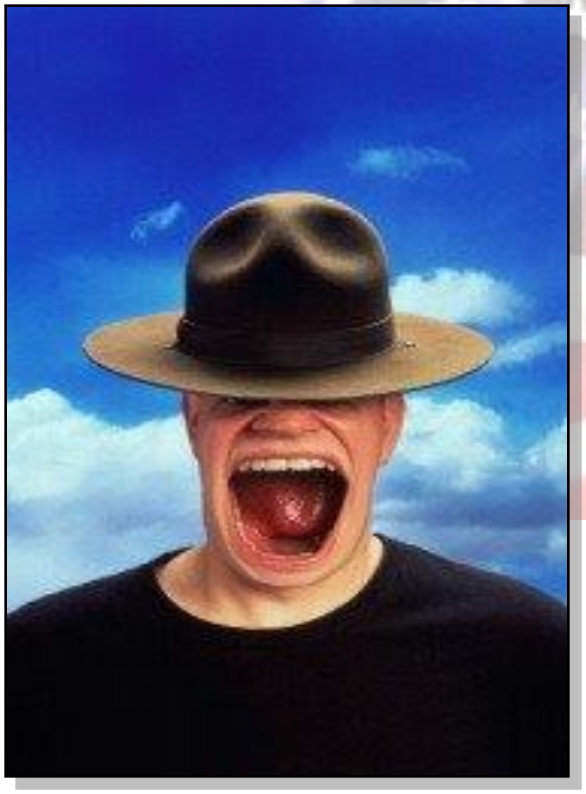
•Recidivism: 90% no new crimes

•Economic Stability: housing 26% increase, employment: 38% increase, income 21 % increase

•Compliance (tx and court conditions): all grads

•Improve relationships: (dryhootch mentoring) all grads

Questions?



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