

## Situation Analysis:

# Women Veterans: One in 9 homeless vets is female

### Overview

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs states that homeless veterans are predominantly male with about 5% being female. Nashville's main veteran service provider, Operation Stand Down Nashville, Inc., found that 9% or 185 of the 2,049 veterans the nonprofit organization served in 2010 were female. "The number of female veterans, 185 or 9%, is the same ratio throughout all of our programs," states the OSD Nashville 2010 Annual Report.

### Trend

The percentage of females serving in the military has been increasing from 3.3% of enlisted troops in FY1974 to 10.9% in FY1990 to 14.8% in FY2004.\* By 2007, 165,000 female troops had been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan (that number currently stands at 182,000), which compares to 41,000 in the Gulf War and 7,500 in the Vietnam War.

In testimony before the House Committee on

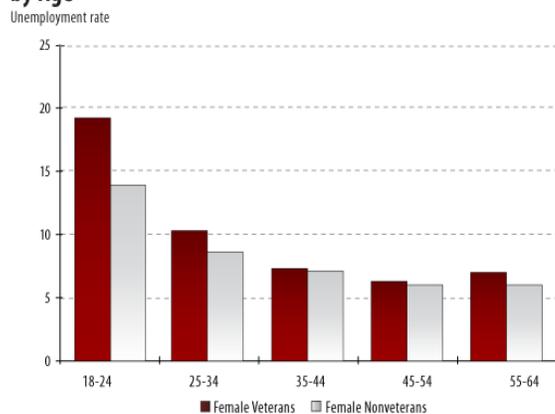
Veteran Affairs in 2009, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs noted that the United States has about 1.8 million women veterans. He further stated that women currently comprise about 14% of the active duty military and 17.6% of Guard and Reserves.\*\*

*Experts found that women veterans report incidences of sexual assault that exceed rates reported in the general population.*

### Issues

Female active duty soldiers have been found to suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at higher rates than their male counterparts. Between 23 and 29% of female veterans seeking medical care through the VA reported that they have been sexually assaulted. Sexual assault has been linked to PTSD, depression, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, disruption of social networks, and employment difficulties—and places female veterans at an increased risk of homelessness.\*

#### Unemployment Rates of Female Veterans and Nonveterans by Age



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

improved but "it has not been enough." The VA announced the new Task Force on Women Veterans in July 2011, which will develop a comprehensive VA action plan focusing on key issues facing women veterans and specific actions to solve them.

These issues will include obstetric and gynecological care, child care, military sexual trauma, homelessness, aging, and end-of-life issues, to name a few.

Sources:

\*CRS Report for Congress (2007): Veterans and Homelessness.

\*\*www.va.gov/WOMENVET/docs/VA\_Summary\_Report\_Final\_Revised\_022210.pdf

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### Notes from the author:

*Female veterans make up an increasing proportion of the overall veteran population.*

*However, women veterans only account for about 5% of the homeless veteran population. Consequently, services are not targeting this population.*

*What is especially needed, according to literature, is temporary housing and shelter for female veterans with children coupled with services dealing with issues ranging from alcohol and drug abuse to PTSD and consequences of sexual assault.*

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