Veteran Homelessness: Risk Factors and Effective Services

Robert Rosenheck MD
Yale Medical School
VA New England MI RECC
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Risk factors for Homelessness Among Veterans: Highlights

- Alcohol and Drug Abuse increase risk 2-5 times
  - stronger risk risk factor than mental illness alone (NCS, NESARCH, Edens et al. 2011)
- VA service connection is strongest measurable protective factor, reducing homelessness risk by 62% (greater than 50% SC) or 47% (less than 50% SC)
- OEF/OIF veterans were 65% less likely to have been homeless than other veterans
- Female veterans 3-4 times greater risk than female non-veterans

Percentage of veterans among homeless and domiciled US males in 1996: by age group

From NSHAPC, 2000 and CPS, 1996
## Current Family Status Among Homeless Veterans (N=43,853)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custody</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living w</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family Relationships (N=1,493)

- One close family member 84%
- Number of close family members 6.6

Family Support
- Could get a loan of $100 52.7%
- Could get help with a ride 43.4%
- Could get emotional support if suicidal 55.7%
## Family Relationships (2)
(N=1,493)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family of...</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Procreation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One close rel.</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of rels.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loan</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ride</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five Intervention Models

1. System Integration.
2. Supported housing.
3. Case management alone.
5. Supported Employment.
System Integration: The ACCESS Program

“System fragmentation is the problem”

18 site demonstration of efforts to integrate homeless service systems

7,000 homeless people with serious mental illness in 4 annual cohorts followed for 12 months.

9 sites received $150,000 and technical assistance to improve system integration

Other 9 sites did not

ACCESS Outcomes By Systems Integration Site Assignment and by Annual Cohort: Exited From Homelessness for 30 Days
OUTCOMES BY SYSTEMS INTEGRATION ASSIGNMENT AND BY COHORT: PSYCHIATRIC SYMPTOMS*

Psychiatric Symptom Index*
Supported Housing: HUD-VA

Supported Housing

- Combines case management and Section 8 vouchers

Experimental study of three groups:
- HUD-VASH
- Case management only
- Standard VA care

Days housed in past 90: HUD VASH Experimental Evaluation

- 65% days housed
- 57% days housed
- 53% days housed

**Key:**
- *Group 1>2, p<.05
- #Group 1>3, p<.05
Outcomes in the HUD-VA Supported Housing Program:
Nights Homeless in Past 90

Key:
*Group 1<2, p<.05
#Group 1<3, p<.05
Other HUD-VASH Benefits

- Superior therapeutic alliance
- More social support
- Reduced alcohol and drug use
Outcomes in the HUD-VA Supported Housing Program:
Days of Alcohol Use in past 30 days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>6 mos.</th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>18 mos.</th>
<th>2 years</th>
<th>3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VASH ex.</td>
<td>N=182</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case mgt.</td>
<td>N=88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. care: N=187</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Days of alcohol use

Baseline 6 mos. 1 year 18 mos. 2 years 3 years
Three-year VA health care costs by treatment group.

1. Experimental VASH (N=182)
   - Total VA: $36,524
   - VAIP: $28,515
   - VA OP: $17,267

2. CM controls (N=90)
   - Total VA: $35,095
   - VAIP: $19,257
   - VA OP: $12,779

3. Standard care (N=188)
   - Total VA: $35,095
   - VAIP: $18,628
   - VA OP: $9,886
Outcomes in the CICH Supported Housing Program:
Percent Nights Housed in Past 90

Mares AS, Rosenheck RA. A Comparison of Treatment Outcomes among Chronically Homeless Adults Receiving Comprehensive Housing and Health Care Services Versus Usual Local Care. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research 2011; 38 (6):459-475
Benefits Outreach

- VA-VBA initiatives: 70% pensions
- Joint VA-SSA Benefits Outreach
- Linked SSA disability specialists and VA case managers and medical evaluators
- Compared Joint outreach sites and other VA homeless programs using VA and SSA administrative data over a 4 year period before and after program implementation.
- Program Cost $1,700-$3,200/ additional awardee
SSA-VA Joint Outreach: Rates of Application for Benefits
(N=34,431)
SSA-VA Joint Outreach: Rates of Award Among Applicants (N=3,952)

Year Before/After Program Initiation

Joint Outreach Sites

Comparison Sites
SSA-VA Joint Outreach: Rates of Award Among All Outreach Veterans (N=34,431)

Year Before/After Program Initiation

Joint Outreach Sites

Comparison Sites

Percent Received Benefits

0 5 10 15

Year - Year - Year - Year - Year + Year + Year + Year +

Year 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4

Intervention

4 6 6 6 7 8 7 7 13
SSA-VA Outreach: Client Outcomes (Subsample) (1)

- Conducted baseline assessment just before benefits decision (N=173).
- Of those interviewed and followed-up 29% (n=50) received benefits, 71% (n=123) did not.
- Compared 3-month outcomes among recipients and non-recipients.
- Total monthly income $735 vs. $458 (p<.001)
- No difference in psychiatric, substance abuse, or medical status at baseline OR follow-up.
### SSA-VA Outreach: Client Outcomes (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>No benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Days homeless</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to work</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days worked</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * p<.05
** p<.01
***p<.001
Supported Employment

- Employment specialists work directly with clients to identify, obtain and retain employment.
- Pre-post intervention cohort design at 9 VA sites
  - Phase 1: before intervention (N=308)
  - Phase 2: after intervention (N=322)
- Employment Specialist Cost = $2,063/ client
- Less productivity of $1,299 = $764/client/year

Days Competitive Employment in Supported Employment (Least Square Means)

![Graph showing days competitive employment in supported employment over different time periods. The graph compares supported employment and control groups.]
Days Housed in past 90
(Independent)
(Least Square Means)

38% independently housed

33% independently housed

Supported Employment
Control
Conclusions from Research (1)

- Diverse intervention models are effective in reducing homelessness among people with mental illness.
- Effect sizes are typically modest in magnitude and primarily center in one outcome domain (i.e. housing, symptoms, income, or employment).
- Limited Social reintegration/recovery
Conclusions from Research (2)

- Program costs can be substantial ($2,000-$9,000/client/year) and are entirely offset by savings only when high-cost, high-risk populations are targeted, or when the duration of treatment is limited. i.e. there is a cost-effectiveness generalizability tradeoff.

- Progress is incremental: Cost-effective, generalizable ways to end homelessness among people with mental health problems have yet to emerge.