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Justice
Center

Addressing the Needs of Veterans in the Justice System



Speakers

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Bureau of Justice Assistance

BJA helps to make American communities safer by strengthening the nation's criminal justice system: Its grants, training and technical assistance, and policy development services provide state, local, and tribal governments with the cutting edge tools and best practices they need to reduce violent and drug-related crime, support law enforcement, and combat victimization.

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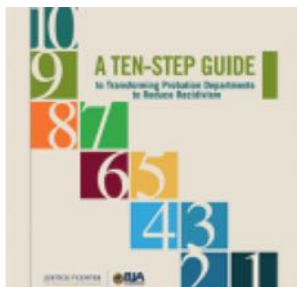
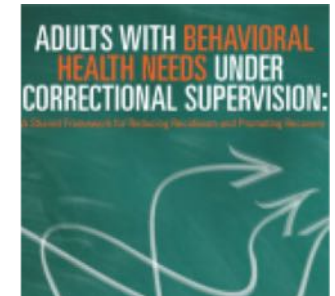
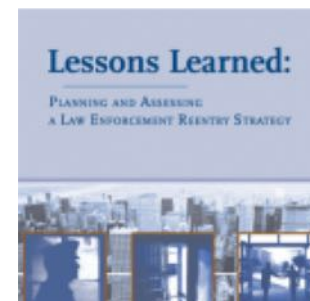
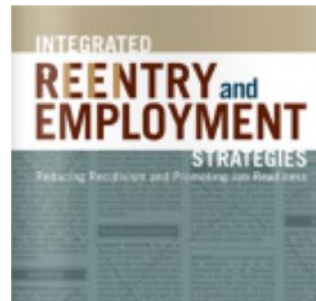


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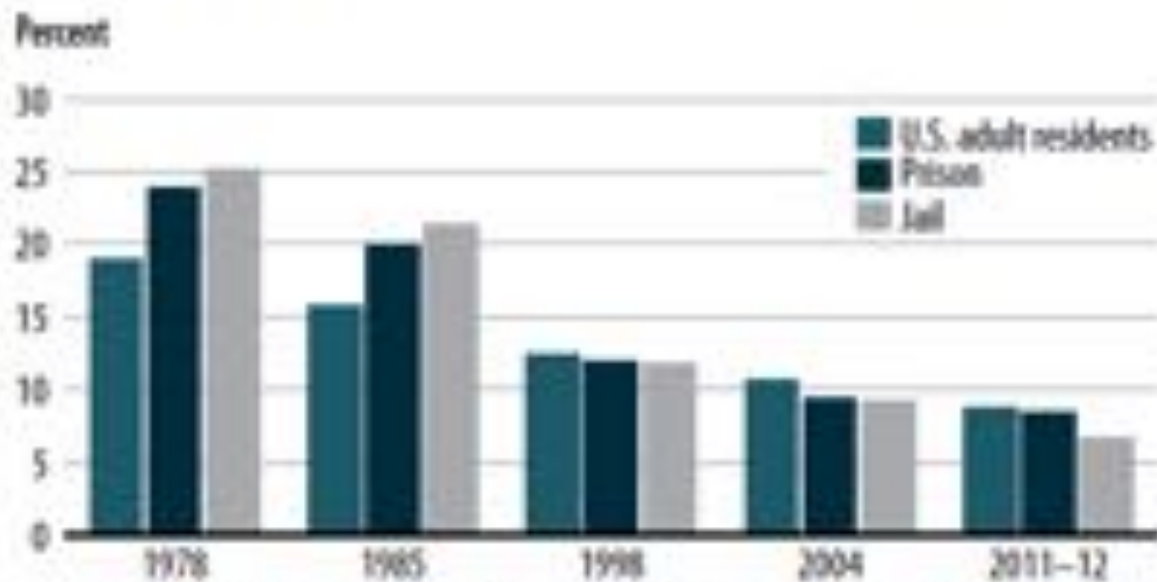
Objectives

- 1) Review national estimates of incarcerated Veterans – Bureau of Justice Statistics data
- 2) Understand components of VHA Veterans Justice Programs
- 3) Expand awareness of the needs of justice involved Veterans
- 4) Discuss new developments in VA and community interventions to service justice involved Veterans

Veterans in Prison and Jails: National Estimates from Bureau of Justice Statistics

FIGURE 1

Estimated percent of veterans in the U.S. resident population in prison and jail, 1978, 1985, 1998, 2004, and 2011–12

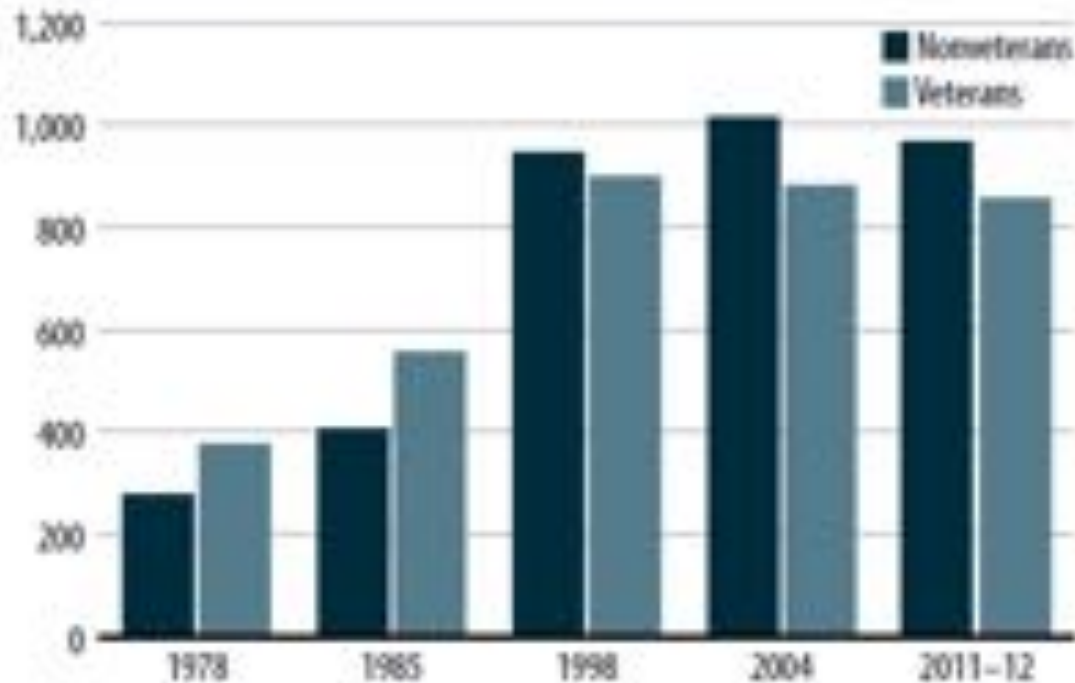


Veterans in Prison and Jails: National Estimates from Bureau of Justice Statistics, continued

FIGURE 2

Incarceration rate of veterans in prison and jail, 1978, 1985, 1998, 2004, and 2011-12

Incarceration rate per 100,000 U.S. adult residents



Incarcerated Veteran Offense Type

(source: Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Most serious current offense	Prisoners	Jail Inmates
Violent sexual	35.4%	11.8%
Other violent	28.9%	15.5%
Property	11.7%	20.8%
Drug	14.2%	17.7%
DUI/DWI	2.8%	8.1%
Other	7.9%	26.1%

Important Context with BJS data

- Among adult males, the incarceration rate of Veterans (630 prisoners per 100,000) was *less than half* that of nonveterans (1,390 prisoners per 100,000)
- The calculated male violent offender rate for Veterans was 338 prisoners per 100,000 and for non-veterans was 595 per 100,000
- The non-veteran violent offender rate per 100,000 population is one and three quarters times higher than the Veteran rate
- This data DOES NOT support a view of Veterans as more violent population than non-veterans; in fact, the data supports the opposite view.

Homelessness Risk

Incarceration as an adult male is the single highest risk factor of ever being homeless (NSHAPC/Burt, 1996)

“Lengthy periods of incarceration in remote locations often attenuate the social and family ties that are crucial for successful reentry into the community.” (p. 9-5).

“...(E)ven short term incarcerations may disrupt lives and interfere with the ability to maintain employment and housing.” (p. 9-6).

(Metraux, Roman, and Cho on prison reentry/jail stays, National Symposium on Homelessness Research, 2007)

What is Federal VA?

- United States Department of Veterans Affairs: <https://www.va.gov/>
 - Veterans Health Administration: <https://www.va.gov/health/>
 - 170 hospitals, 830 outpatient clinics, 370 Vet Centers
 - Veterans Benefits Administration: <https://benefits.va.gov/>
 - 57 Regional Offices
 - Life Insurance, Home Loan, Disability Compensation, Pension, Education, Vocational Rehabilitation
 - National Cemetery Administration: <https://www.cem.va.gov/>
 - 131 National Cemeteries
 - Burial, Headstone or Marker or Medallion, Burial Flag, Presidential Memorial Certificate, Burial Allowances

VHA Justice Programs: Mission

Mission: To identify justice-involved Veterans and contact them through outreach, in order to facilitate access to VA services at the earliest possible point. Veterans Justice Programs accomplish this by building and maintaining partnerships between VA and key elements of the criminal justice system.

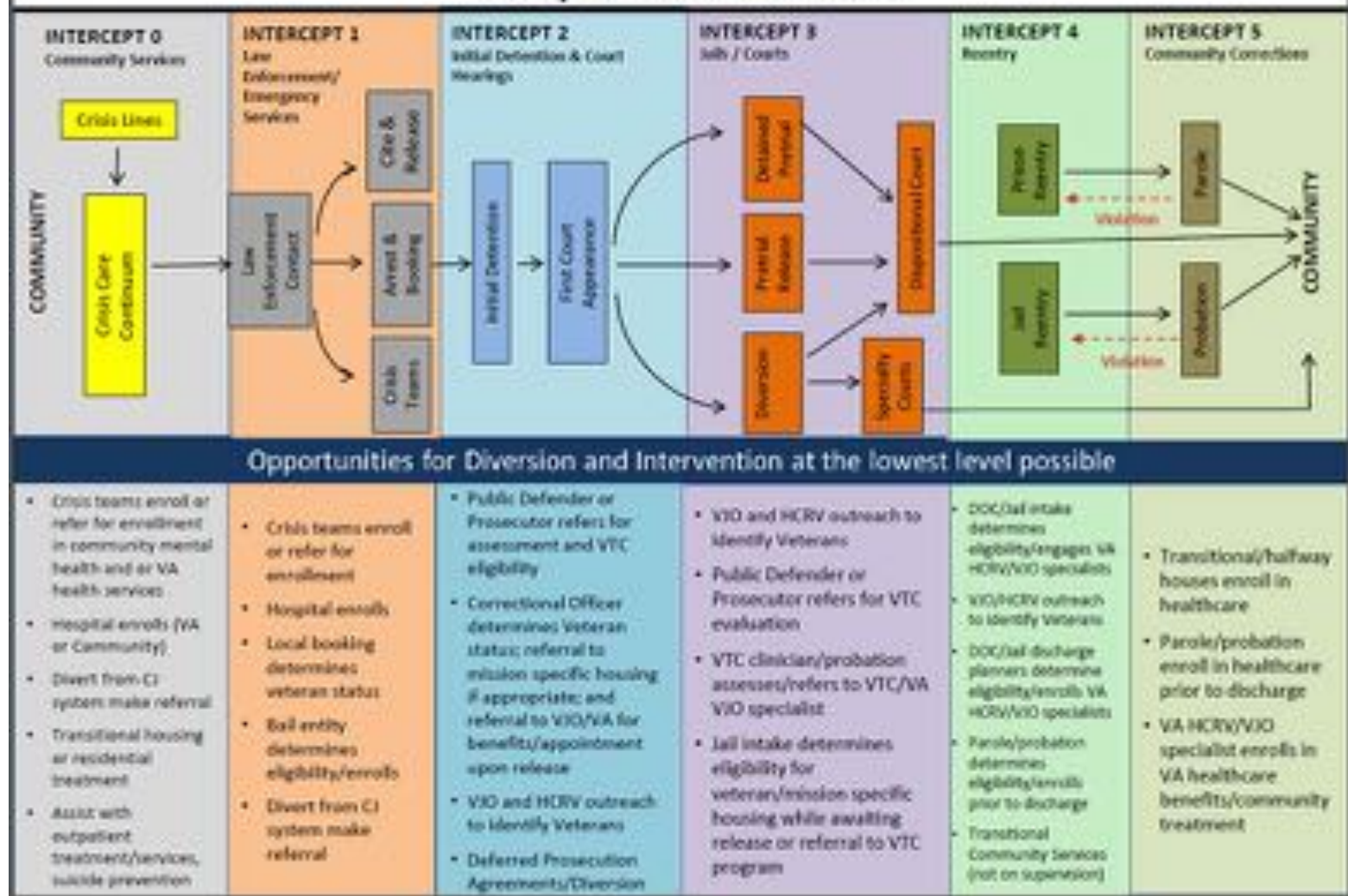
Vision: Every justice-involved Veteran will have access to the care, services and other benefits to help him or her maximize their potential for success and stability in the community, including by avoiding homelessness and ending their involvement in the justice system.

VHA Justice Programs: Strategic Goals

1. Optimize Veteran identification and outreach
2. Assess needs and link to treatment
3. Combat stigma
4. Maximize efficiency while preserving effectiveness
5. Evaluate effectiveness
6. Advance knowledge through research
7. Build capacity through workforce development

Veteran Intercepts in the Criminal Justice System

Sample Decision Points



VHA Justice Outreach Services

Justice Outreach

- Gain access to the jail
 - Identify Veterans and Determine Eligibility
 - Conduct outreach, assessment, and case management for Veterans in local courts and jails
 - Provide/coordinate training for law enforcement personnel
 - Linkage to VA and Community Services/Resources
-
- Number of VJO Specialists funded: 314
 - Number of 3,365 local jail facilities serviced: 1,284
 - Number of Veterans receiving VJO services FY 2017: 46,659

Prison Re-Entry

- Gain access to the prison
 - Educate Veterans' groups about VA and VA services
 - Identify Veterans and Determine Eligibility
 - Reentry Planning
 - Linkage to VA and Community Services
-
- Number of HCRV Specialists funded: 44
 - Number of state and federal prisons serviced: 1,008 (78%) of 1,295 US prisons
 - Number of incarcerated Veterans receiving reentry services, FY 2017: 9,732

Outcomes: What do we know so far?

- Most Veterans seen in VJO and HCRV have a mental health (VJO 77%; HCRV 57%) or substance use disorder (VJO 71%; HCRV 47%) diagnosis, or both (VJO 58%; HCRV 35%).
- Within one year of their VJO outreach visit, 97% of Veterans with mental health diagnoses had had at least one VHA mental health visit, and 78% had had at least six visits. (HCRV: 93%; 52%)
- Within the same timeframe, 72% of Veterans with substance use disorder diagnoses had had at least one VHA substance use disorder visit, and 54% had had at least six. (HCRV: 57%; 39%)

Limits on VA Authorization

- Can provide:
 - Outreach, assessment, referral and linkage to services
 - Treatment for justice-involved Veterans who are not incarcerated
- Title 38 CFR 17.38 (c)(5) does not allow VHA to provide:
 - Hospital and outpatient care for a Veteran who is
 - Either a patient or inmate in an institution of another government agency
 - If that agency has a duty to give that care or services

VA Partnership with Veterans Treatment Courts

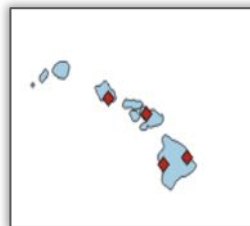
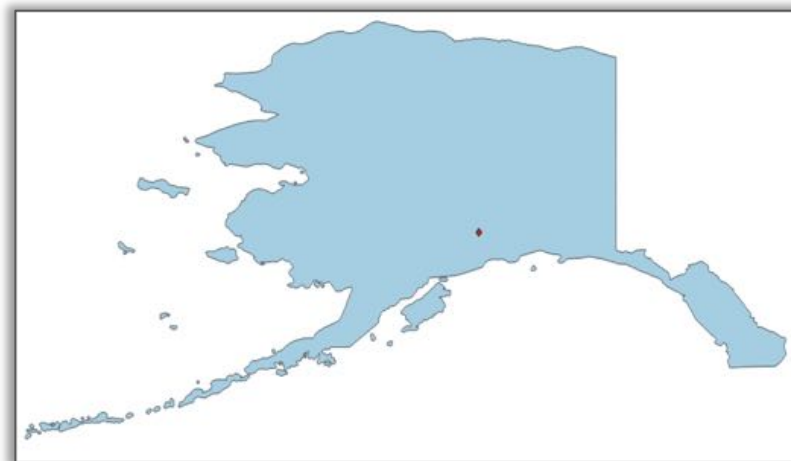
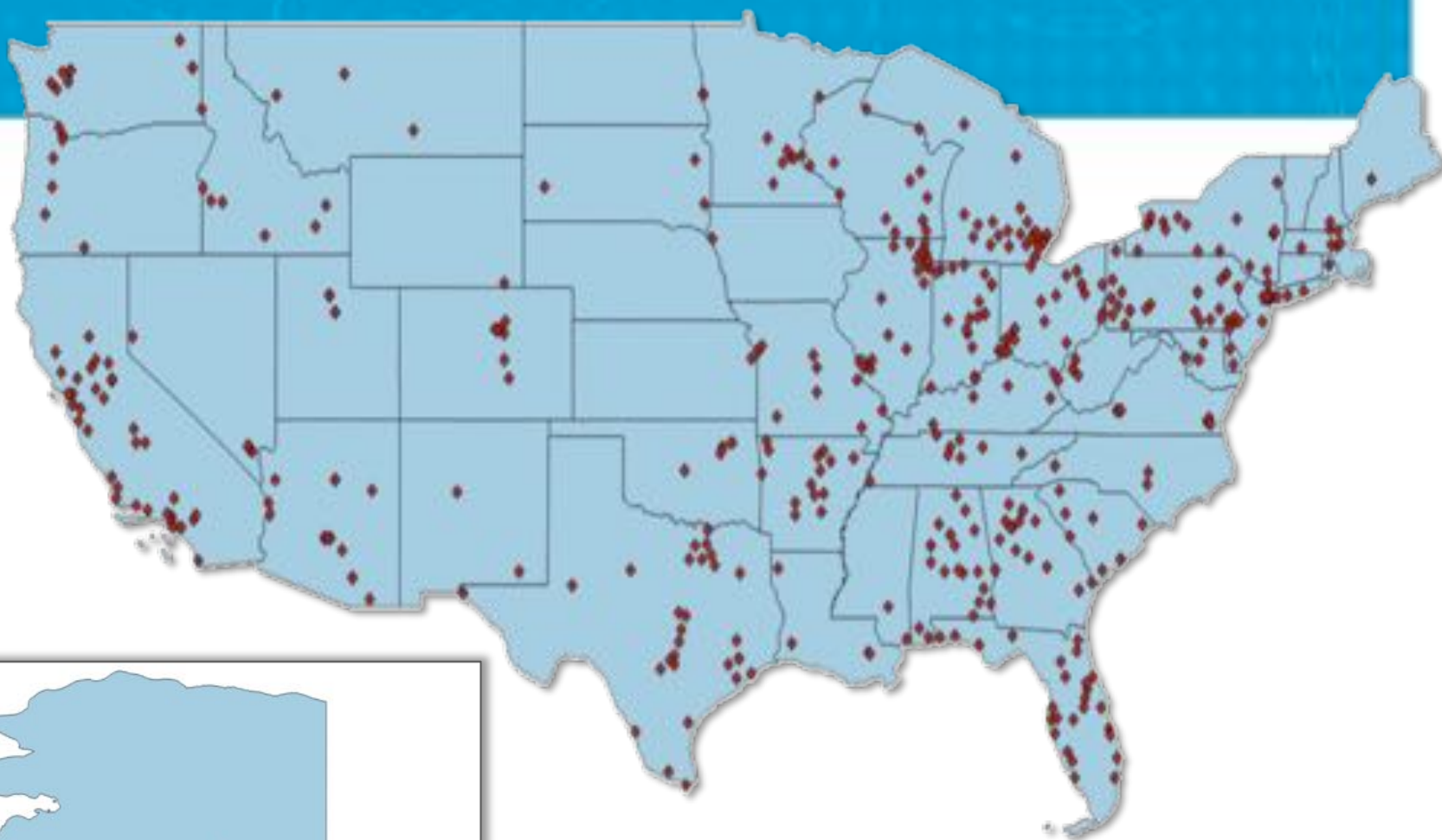
Veterans Treatment Courts:

- Hybrid Drug and Mental Health Treatment Courts, serving Veteran defendants
- Volunteer Veteran Mentors
- 461 courts operating
 - As of June 30, 2016
 - up from 50 courts in January 2011

VA Contributions:

- VJO Specialist on treatment team; in courtroom when in session
- Linkage to health care services at VA medical centers
- Benefits assistance: VBA participation (both in and out of court)
- Partner with National Association of Drug Court Professionals to spread the model and established best practices

As of June 30, 2016, there were 461 Veterans Treatment Courts and other Veteran-focused courts in 47 states



Source: Veterans Justice Programs, 2016
Veterans Court Inventory (available at:
<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO.asp>)

Developments: Access to Legal Services

- VHA Directive 2011-034: VA medical centers making office space available for legal service providers to work with Veterans; 165 operational pro-bono legal clinics
- Legal services for homeless and at-risk Veterans through VHA Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program
- Promoting legal service providers' participation in SSVF as subcontractors (example: DoJ Access to Justice Initiative webinar)

Developments: Video Outreach

- “A Second Chance for Veterans” – for VA leadership/staff and community partners (includes an introduction by former Secretary Shinseki)
- “Suits: Support for Incarcerated Veterans” – direct outreach to incarcerated Veterans (includes a companion training video for correctional staff)
- Each is available online (<http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO.asp>)
- National dissemination:
 - Veterans Justice Outreach and Health Care for Reentry Veterans Specialists use copies of “Second Chance” in presentations to VA and community audiences
 - Justice Programs staff are working with the Association of State Correctional Administrators and other partners to get “Suits” aired in correctional facilities nationwide

Veterans Reentry Search Service (VRSS)

System to identify all Veterans currently incarcerated/in courts

Data source:

- VA/DoD Identity Repository (VADIR)
- Universal data source on Veterans (25 million + entries)

Status:

- Currently used by 272 partners, including Federal Bureau of Prisons, state Departments of Corrections, County jails, and courts
- VRSS identifying approximately 8% of inmates with history of military service; improvement over self-report response rates of 2-5%
- Notifies both external user and VA staff, for outreach

Veterans Dorms

- Units in prisons or jails designed to:
 - house Veterans together
 - deliver services effectively
 - prepare for reentry
 - reconnect with pride from military service
- Services delivered by multiple partners, including direct prison services, state and county Veterans Affairs, non-profit behavioral health providers, state and local employment services, Vet Centers, volunteers, outreach provided by VHA
- Most recent inventory (Sept 2017), identified 83 Veterans Dorms in federal prisons, state prisons, and county jails.

Locations of Veterans Dorms in U.S. jails and prisons as of September 2017, n=83



Discussion

Comments or Questions?

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 - HCRV: <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/reentry.asp>
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