

WOMEN'S VETERANS HEALTH

EVOLVING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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OUTLINE

- Overview of history of women veterans health program in VHA
- Highlights of VISN 8 Florida/PR
- Highlights of VISN 21 California
- Video “A Soldier First”
Women Serving in IRAQ



History of WVHP in VHA

- ❏ **Census 1980 (women/veterans)**
- ❏ **1982: Secretary Harry Walters first appointed a Women Veterans Advisory Committee to oversee and correct system inequities for women in the Veterans Administration.**
- ❏ **1985: Based on the recommendation of the Secretary's Women Veterans Advisory Committee, the first Women Veterans Coordinators are appointed.**
- ❏ **1988: A VHA Office to address women's health issues is created.**
- ❏ **1991: GAO was tasked by Congress to conduct a study on health care to women.**
- ❏ **1992: GAO issues report entitled, "VA Healthcare for Women – Despite Progress, Improvement Needed".**



- ❏ **Public-Law 102-585, 1992, Veterans Health Care Act enacted – landmark legislation that provided earmarked funds to enhance services to women, resulting in the following initiatives:**
 - ❏ Authorized VA to provide gender-specific services and general reproductive health care and sexual trauma counseling to eligible women veterans
 - ❏ **Eight Women’s Comprehensive Centers** were authorized: Boston, Southeast PA, Durham, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Tampa
 - ❏ **22 full-time Women Veterans Coordinator positions funded nationwide**
 - ❏ **4 Regional Women Veterans Coordinator** positions mandated (re-titled Deputy Field Directors)
 - ❏ **66 sexual trauma counselors** funded for Vet Centers.



- 1993: Provisions of Public Law 102-585 were fully implemented.
- 1993: **VA established a new division within the National Center for PTSD devoted to studying the impact of military sexual (MST) trauma on women veterans.**
- 1994: Public Law 103-452, Veterans Health Program Extension Act of 1994 provides authority for counseling and treatment for MST for all veterans, male and female, incurred while on duty in the military.
- **1994: Human Resources Management Letter 05-94-16 established Guidance on Women Veterans Coordinators Positions.**
- 1994: **Center for Women Veterans established.**
- 1994: Research study initiated to look at reproductive outcomes of military women who served in Vietnam awarded.
- 1994: Women's Health fellowships awarded for first time in VHA.
- **1994: M-2, Part 1, Chapter 29 revised to provide guidance on establishing primary health care for women veterans**



- 1994: Evaluation of Women Veterans Coordinator positions completed (HSR&D).
- 1994: Breast Cancer Special Initiative established.
- 1995: Cervical Cancer Special Initiative established.
- 1995: National WVHP newsletter inaugurated.
- 1996: Evaluation of Women Veterans Health Program completed (HSR&D).
- 1996: USH Letter/Directive issued: “Planning for the Delivery of Women Veterans Health Care” under Vision for Change.
- **1996: Women Veterans Health Program established as Special Emphasis Program in VHA.**
- 1997: Consistent with general VA eligibility reform, military sexual trauma services were expanded for all veterans including reservists called to active duty.



- **1997: First full-time national director of Women Veterans Health Program appointed.**
- 1998: National software package instituted to track women's services.
- 1998: Guidelines for primary care services to women established.
- 1998: Expanded partnership established with DoD.
- 1999: Uniform eligibility package includes maternity and infertility services.
- 1999: VA "delivered" 171 babies.
- **1999: the first homeless grants for women veterans awarded (N=11).**
- 1999: Reproductive Outcomes Study results released.
- 1999: Clinical Programs of Excellence in Women's Health awarded for first time (Alexandria, Pittsburgh, Durham).



- **1999: Lead Women Veterans Coordinators appointed in each network.**
- **1999: Women's advisory councils established in majority of networks.**
- 1999: Military Sexual Trauma software implemented.
- **1999: "Millennium Bill"- mandates sexual trauma program and extends services to 12/31/2004.**
- 2000: VA participation in White House Initiative: "Beijing +5".
- **2000: Women Veterans Coordinator of the New Millennium Award established and awarded annually.**
- 2000: VA "delivered" 544 babies.
- 2000: National WVHP Strategic Work Group appointed by Under Secretary for Health.



- ❏ **2000: Legislation passed awarding “Special monthly compensation-K” for women undergoing mastectomy in the military.**
- ❏ 2000: Legislation passed expanding eligibility to women who served in Vietnam who have children with birth defects.
- ❏ 2000: VHA Women Veterans Coordinators program selected as the bronze recipient of Wyeth-Ayerst HERA Award.
- ❏ 2000: Participation in National Summit for Women Veterans
- ❏ **2001: Handbook 1330.1, “VHA Services for Women Veterans”, rescinds M-2, Part1, Chapter 29.**
- ❏ 2002: Six Clinical Programs of Excellence in Women’s Health awarded (Alexandria, Bay Pines, Boston, Durham, Pittsburgh, San Antonio).
- ❏ 2002: WVHP Integrated Business Plan finalized and approved.
- ❏ **2002: Lead WVPM's appointed as WVHP Field Advisory Committee.**



- **2003: Handbook 1330.2, " Women Veterans Program Manager Position", issued. Re-designated Women Veterans Coordinator title to Women Veterans Program Manager.**
- 2003: Program internet web site launched: <http://www.va.gov/wvhp>
- 2003: MST intranet web site launched: <http://vaww.va.gov/mst>
- 2004: MST video developed focusing on sensitivity
- **2004: Permanent consultant in women's health appointed to National Pharmacy Formulary Committee**
- 2005: Electronic reporting tool using Plan of Care/Inventory: Handbook 1330.1
- 2005: Electronic web-based Orientation Module for WVPM's
- 2005: Interface WH Software with CPRS





7 VAMC's

- ❑ Tampa, Bay Pines, West Palm Beach, Miami, Lake City/Gainesville (NF/SG) and San Juan, Puerto Rico
- ❑ 12 Satellite clinics
- ❑ 32 CBOC's
- ❑ Approved site for new hospital in Orlando....plans for 2010 or later



■ Florida ranks # 3 in nation with number women veterans 131,098

■ Puerto Rico...7,044

■ VISN 839,209 women veterans being seen (28.3% market penetration)

■ Corporate Tampa seeing most women veterans11,821



TAMPA

- (11,821 uniques)
- WVCHC (one of original 4 funded)
 - Multidisciplinary
 - Comprehensive GYN program including GYN/Oncology
 - Specific Mental Health Providers in WVCHC
 - Breast Clinic/on site Mammography
 - Total of 3 Mammo sites in Corporate Tampa
- Polytrauma Center
- Fischer House under construction
- Magnet Status (1st in VA awarded 2001, 2005)



BAY PINES (St. Petersburg)

- 6,544 uniques
- Center of Excellence
- Sexual Trauma Treatment Center
 - New Outpatient Program
 - Residential Program
 - 3 day MST Clinical Training Program
- Women's Clinic
 - Breast Clinic
 - GYN part-time
- Fischer House
- VARO (WVC on staff)
- National Cemetery



North Florida/South Georgia

■ 9,186 uniques

■ 2 Hospitals

■ Gainesville/UF affiliation

■ Lake City

■ Women's Program growing

■ New GYN

■ Research Opportunities



West Palm Beach

■ 4,774 uniques

■ Fischer House

■ Blind Rehab Program

■ Very active Volunteer Program

■ Needs new WVPM



Miami VA Health Care System

■ 4,774 uniques

■ 2006 Carey Award Winner

■ Magnet status application

■ Homeless Grants Awarded

■ Dedicated beds for women



VA Caribbean Health Care System

■ **3,765 uniques**

■ **Plans for a dedicated Women's Clinic**

■ **Need for new bed tower**



VISN 8 WVPM Projects Completed Ones

- **WVHP /VISN Strategic Plan integrated**
- **Lead WVPM membership VISN committees**
- **VISN wide inpatient and outpatient satisfaction surveys for women**
- **VISN wide CBOC surveys**



Projects under development

Maternity Project

-  Pregnancy Flag

-  Brochures

-  Fee Basis

Mandatory NEO Component

-  Address WVHP

VISN wide purchase of 25 Frequently asked questions for women veterans



Planned Future Projects

- **MST Coordinator/WVPM Collaborative Projects for Education**
- **Explore Combat related PTSD issues**
- **Integration with Polytrauma Centers addressing specific women's issues**



SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

- **WVHP has grown in past 10 years**
- **Women Veterans fastest growing veteran population next to the aging veteran**
- **New VA's being built....WOMEN friendly**
- **Lots of opportunities for research in women's health**

