

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## Intimate Partner Violence, Unhealthy Alcohol Use, and Housing Instability Among Women Veterans in the Veterans Health Administration

Dichter, M. E., Wagner, C., Borrero, S., Broyles, L., & Montgomery, A. E. (2017). Intimate partner violence, unhealthy alcohol use, and housing instability among women veterans in the veterans health administration. *Psychological services*, 14(2), 246-249. doi:10.1037/ser0000132

**SUMMARY:** Social health screening data were used to examine the association between housing instability, intimate partner violence (IPV) victimization, and unhealthy alcohol use with female Veterans. Results indicate an association exists and highlights the importance of further research to reduce the risk of homelessness among female Veterans.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Almost 13% of participants in the sample reported housing instability.
- The odds of housing instability were two times higher for women who reported IPV victimization within the last year (one in five women) than for women who had not experienced IPV in the last year (one in ten women).
- There was no association between housing instability and unhealthy alcohol use for female Veterans.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide workshops to help Service members and their spouses learn about the resources and services available to couples experiencing IPV
- Provide education to military couples to enhance positive communication to reduce the risk of IPV
- Continue to disseminate information to military personnel who work with military families regarding reporting requirements for IPV

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage collaboration among DoD programs and community-based organizations that provide services to military families who are experiencing IPV
- Continue to provide support for programs and services that work with military families experiencing IPV
- Continue to provide support for programs that are responsible for identifying and preventing IPV within military families

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



## METHODS

- Social health screen data were collected between 2013 and 2014 from female Veterans who visited women's health clinics at two Veteran Health Administration (VHA) medical centers located in Pennsylvania.
- A total of 583 female Veterans completed the social health screens, but due to missing data only 554 were included in the analysis.
- Social health screens collected information regarding housing instability, unhealthy alcohol use, and IPV victimization.

## PARTICIPANTS

- To protect patient's health information, no demographic data were collected.
- Seventeen percent of female Veterans experienced IPV within the last year.
- Unhealthy alcohol use was reported by 19% of female Veterans.

## LIMITATIONS

- No demographic data were available, therefore the influence of demographic differences among female Veterans on housing instability, alcohol use, and IPV could not be assessed.
- Due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, it is unclear if housing instability increases the risk of IPV or if IPV increases the risk of housing instability.
- Social health screen data were only collected at two VHA medical centers in Pennsylvania, and therefore, the findings may not generalize to all female Veterans.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Continue to examine the link between IPV and housing instability among military Service members and their spouses
- Continue to explore the influence unhealthy alcohol or substance use and abuse may have on housing instability for military Service members or their spouses
- Examine housing options for Service members or their spouses who are experiencing IPV or alcohol related issues and housing instability

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:  
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>