

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Homelessness and Money Mismanagement in Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans

Elbogen, E. B., Sullivan, C. P., Wolfe, J., Wagner, H. R., & Beckham, J. C. (2013). Homelessness and money mismanagement in Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. *American Journal of Public Health, 103*(S2), S248-S254. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2013.301335

SUMMARY: Risk factors (i.e., drug abuse, posttraumatic stress disorder, mental and physical health) for homelessness among Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) Veterans are examined, with a particular focus on money mismanagement. Results found mismanagement of money to be a strong predictor of homelessness beyond increased risk from other factors.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Money mismanagement among Veterans predicted higher odds of subsequent homelessness above and beyond other risk factors.
- A large number of Veterans surveyed (30%) reported money mismanagement, including writing bad checks, falling victim to a money scam, going over their credit limit, or being referred to a collection agency.
- Probable mental health diagnoses were also associated with a greater risk of experiencing homelessness.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop curricula aimed at increasing Veteran's money management skills
- Educate Service members and their families on how to identify and avoid predatory lenders
- Assist Veterans in obtaining information about companies and stores that provide military and Veterans savings discounts

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage case management and community support for homeless Veterans to include formal financial literacy education
- Continue to support programs that provide money management training for Service members separating from the military
- Recommend education for service providers about the risk factors for homelessness among retiring Service members

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METHODS

- This longitudinal study utilized data from the National Post-Deployment Adjustment Survey, in which randomly selected Veterans were invited to participate in a baseline and follow-up survey collected at two time points, one year apart.
- Participants included Service members who served after September 11, 2001 and were either separated from Active Duty or a member of the Reserve or Guard.
- Participants were recruited via letters sent to their address and could complete online or paper-based surveys.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 1,090 Veterans representing all military branches (55.21% Army, 19.92% Air Force, 14.88% Navy, 9.64% Marines, 0.35% Coast Guard).
- Forty-eight percent of the sample were Guard or Reserve members.
- About 16% of participants were female, 27% were non-White, and the average age was 34 years.

LIMITATIONS

- Data were gathered through self-reported surveys and participants may have under-reported mental health or substance abuse problems, money mismanagement, or homelessness.
- Since invitations to participate were sent through the mail, homeless Veterans may be under-represented.
- This was a cross-sectional analysis, which does not allow for examination of causal relationships.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine contributors to money mismanagement that are both civilian-specific and Veteran-specific
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current personal financial management training provided to Service members
- Continue to investigate how mental health issues and substance use affect homelessness among Veterans

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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