



Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE NETWORK
Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23
Network Update
April 2011
www.visn23.va.gov



Sexual Assault Awareness Month

VA Cares about
Military Sexual Trauma

1 in 5 women and 1 in 100 men have told their VA provider that they experienced sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment while in the military.

MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA

Military sexual trauma (MST) is the term VA uses to refer to sexual assault or sexual harassment that occurred while a veteran was in the military. It includes any sexual activity where someone is involved against his or her will – Other experiences that fall into the category of MST include unwanted sexual touching or grabbing; threatening, offensive remarks about a person's body or sexual activities; and/or threatening and unwelcome sexual advances

HOW CAN VETERANS GET HELP?

For more information, Veterans can speak with their existing VA healthcare provider or contact an MST Coordinator, Veterans can also call VA's general information hotline at **1-800-827-1000** or visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp



VA has launched a suicide prevention outreach campaign focused on increasing awareness and use of the Veterans Suicide Hotline. The renaming of the Veterans Suicide Prevention Line to the **Veterans Crisis Line** is intended to reach Veterans early so they can get help during a crisis before they reach a suicidal state. This confidential 24/7 Veterans Crisis Line is for Veterans and their families in crisis. Trained VA professionals are available at all times. Veterans and their families **do not** have to be enrolled in VA to use the free, confidential Veterans Crisis Line.

Also available is a Veterans Chat line. The Veterans Chat enables Veterans, their families and friends to go online where they can anonymously chat with a trained VA counselor. If the chats are determined to be a crisis, the counselor can take immediate steps to transfer the chatter to the Veterans Crisis Line, where further counseling and referral services are provided and crisis intervention steps can be taken.

<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx>

Know the Warning Signs –

Watch for these key suicide warning signs, and provide the Lifeline number to anyone exhibiting them.

- Talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- Trying to get pills, guns, or other ways to harm oneself
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Hopelessness
- Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- Acting in a reckless or risky way
- Feeling trapped, like there is no way out
- Saying or feeling there's no reason for living.

Veteran, Military Retiree Benefits Summit



If you are a Veteran or retiree and would like to know more about your benefits and the services available to you and your family, plan on attending the Veteran and Retiree benefits summit held April 12-14 in various communities throughout South Dakota. Veterans and retirees of all military branches are encouraged to attend. The summit will include brief presentations followed by opportunities for attendees to meet individually with representatives to discuss specific questions and concerns

such as TRICARE, retirement and survivor benefits as well as Veteran entitlements. The summit is hosted by the South Dakota National Guard, S.D. Division of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. **FOR MORE INFORMATION:** contact Transition Assistance Advisor Kevin Speirs at (605) 737-6669, Kevin.speirs@us.army.mil

April is Volunteer Recognition Month



Every day hundreds of Volunteers donate thousands of hours helping Veterans at VA medical centers and clinics throughout our Network. This all-volunteer army is an integral part of the Veterans health care experience.

Volunteers offer a variety of services and assist VA staff in providing the quality care our Veterans deserve. Volunteer services include everything from making reminder phone calls, completing clerical tasks, escorting veterans and visitors, filing in clinics and offices, participating in recreational and social activities, landscaping, and transporting veterans to and from their appointments. VA Voluntary Service provides opportunities for people of all

ages and backgrounds, our youth program is very active. If you know of someone interested in serving as a VA Volunteer have them contact the VA Voluntary Service Officer at the nearest VA medical facility. Pictured above, Gracia Emmertt, VA Central Iowa Volunteer assists a Veteran during arts and crafts class.

VA Websites Offer Calendar of Events, Weather Alerts, and Much More

For more information on upcoming classes , special events, or weather related alerts, log on to your :VA Health Care System homepage.

Black Hills Health VA System (HCS) -	www.blackhills.va.gov
Central Iowa VA HCS-	www.centraliowa.va.gov
Fargo, ND VA HCS -	www.fargo.va.gov
Iowa City, Iowa VA HCS -	www.iowacity.va.gov
Minneapolis VA HCS -	www.minneapolis.va.gov
Nebraska Western Iowa VA HCS-	www.nebraska.va.gov
Sioux Falls VA HCS -	www.siouxfalls.va.gov
St. Cloud VA HCS -	www.stcloud.va.gov
Department of Veterans Affairs	www.va.gov

VA HCS– Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care System

For More information, call the Network Office at (612) 725-1968 or
Log on at www.visn23.va.gov or e-mail sharyl.schaepe@va.gov