

**VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (VHA)
HOMELESS PROGRAMS OFFICE**

VETERANS JUSTICE PROGRAMS (VJP)

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TASC's Center for Health and Justice

COSSAP TTA Provider for
First Responder Led Diversion Initiatives



Website: <http://www.centerforhealthandjustice.org/>



Center for Health & Justice COSSAP Team

TTA provider for COSSAP first responder deflection/diversion grantees since 2017



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Objectives

- What do we know about Veterans in the criminal justice system?
- VJP's Mission and Vision
- Current outreach landscape
- New and emerging areas of work
- Identifying Veterans
- Partnering with VJO Specialists
- Accessing VA services



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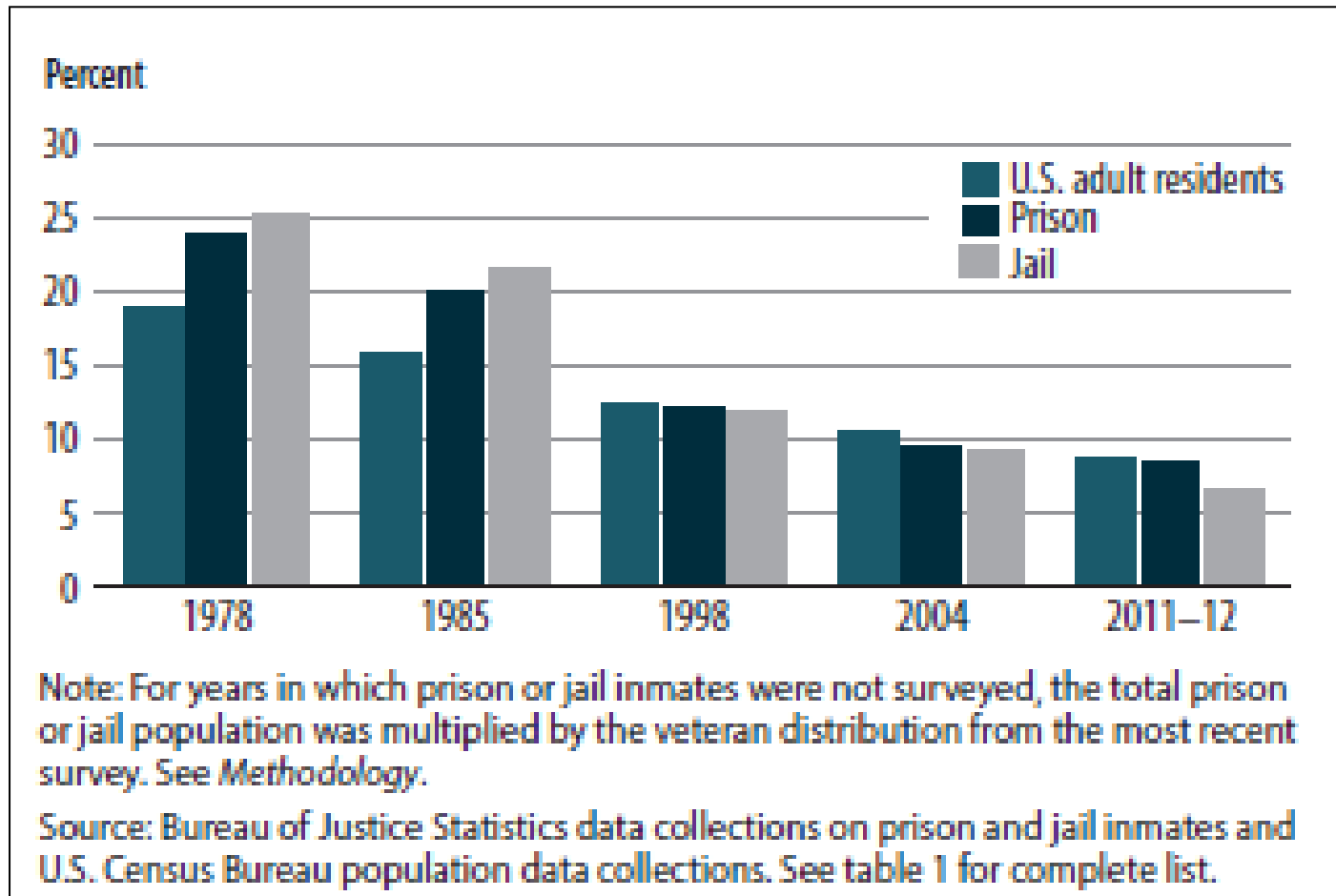
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Veterans in Prison and Jail

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



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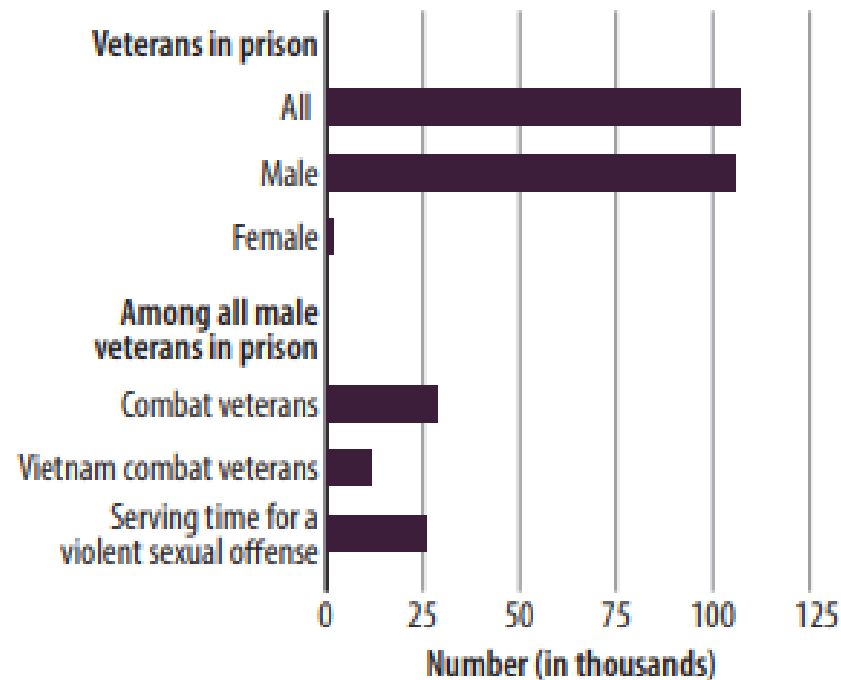


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Veterans in Prison

FIGURE 1

Estimated number of all veterans in state or federal prison and number of all male veterans, by selected characteristics, 2016



Note: See table 1 for counts and standard errors.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016.



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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)



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Clinical Characteristics of Justice-Involved Veterans Served by VJO

- Most Veterans seen in VJO have a mental health (75%) or substance use disorder (56%) diagnosis, or both (48%)
- Veterans seen in VJO face a higher suicide risk compared to other VA Veteran patients
- In Fiscal Year 2019:
 - 11% of Veterans seen in VJO had an Opioid Use Disorder diagnosis



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Veterans Justice Programs (VJP): Mission and Vision

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.



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Limits on VA Services for Incarcerated Veterans

- 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



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VJP Outreach Services

Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO)

- 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: 383
- Number of local jail facilities serviced: 1,883
- Number of Veterans receiving VJO services, FY21: 35,134

Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV)

- 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: 1,005
- Number of incarcerated Veterans receiving reentry services, FY21: 4,277



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VA Partnership with Veterans Treatment Courts

Veterans Treatment Courts:

- Hybrid Drug and Mental Health Treatment Courts, serving Veteran defendants
- Volunteer Veteran Mentors
- 613 courts operating in 48 states and one territory

VA Contributions:

- VJO Specialist on treatment team—in courtroom when in session
 - Linkage to health care services at VA medical centers
 - Regular updates on Veterans' progress in VA treatment
- VA does not establish, fund, operate, or set eligibility rules for VTCs



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Existing Law Enforcement Deflection VA Partnerships

- Dayton, OH: Dayton Police Department CIT/Veterans Roundtable*
- Wilmington, DE: Veterans Response Team*
- Cincinnati, OH: Military Liaison Group/Veteran Response Program**
- Bedford, MA: Veteran Crisis Intervention for First Responders
- Local VA/VJO participation in CIT trainings

* Veteran Response Teams: Law Enforcement Officers Respective Service, Restoring Honor for Vets in Crisis

** <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Files/Publications-Files/Publications-for-Law-Enforcement/Veterans-Response-Program-Guide>



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Identification of Veterans

- Ask the most inclusive question “Have you ever served in the United States military?”
- Or, utilize VA’s Status Query and Response Exchange System (SQUARES)
 - SQUARES can provide organizations, including local law enforcement and other community providers, with reliable, detailed information about Veteran status and eligibility for VHA services.
 - Learn more at: [SQUARES - VA Homeless Programs](#)



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What can a VJO Specialist do?

- Facilitate access to VA services at the earliest possible point in the Veteran's criminal justice involvement
 - Assist local partners in identifying veterans and determining eligibility for VHA services
 - Conduct outreach, assessment, and case management for Veterans engaged with local law enforcement
 - Provide/coordinate training for law enforcement personnel regarding Veteran specific needs and VA services
 - Link to VA and community services/resources



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VHA

- Largest integrated health care system in the country
- VHA manages:
 - 1,255 health care facilities
 - including 170 medical centers
 - and more than 1,000 outpatient clinics across the country
- VHA offers:
 - Primary care, mental health, substance abuse treatment, housing support, and employment services, and other types of specialty care
- Over 9 million Veterans are enrolled in VHA programs



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Get Connected

- Locate your nearest VJO Specialist:
 - [Veterans Justice Outreach Program - VA Homeless Programs](#)
- Find your nearest VA Healthcare Facility:
 - [Find VA Locations | Veterans Affairs](#)



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Outcomes: What Do We Know So Far?

Recent research by a VA investigator demonstrated that in FY2021:

- Within one year of their VJO outreach visit, 92% of Veterans with mental health diagnoses had at least one VHA mental health visit, averaging 13 visits in that year.
- Within the same timeframe, 66% of VJO Veterans with substance use disorder diagnoses had at least one VHA substance use disorder visit, averaging 12 visits in that year.



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Additional Resources

- Veterans Crisis Line
 - 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
 - Text 838255
 - <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat>
- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
 - 1-877-424-3838



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Discussion

- Comments or Questions?
- Veterans Justice Outreach:
<http://www.va.gov/homeless/VJO.asp>



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Need TA?

Request training and technical assistance:

Center for Health and Justice at TASC

Ben Ekelund

(312) 573-8337

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or visit the TTA request page on the COSSAP website:

<https://www.cossapresources.org/Program/TTA/Request>