

LEARNING TOUR BRIEF #9

Pathways to Reintegrating Our Veterans in Communities

OVERVIEW AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Military veterans make up approximately 13% of the population in San Diego County, and many of them may experience obstacles when reintegrating into civilian life. During this Learning Tour, visit [Workshops for Warriors](#), an exemplary employment training program *dedicated to training, certifying, and placing veterans into manufacturing careers at no cost to the veteran*. Meet local nonprofit leaders and discuss insights that are helping our veterans transition and reintegrate through housing, education, job training, and mental health services.

As you participate in this learning tour, you'll have chance to:

- Understand veterans' diverse levels of needs and how programs can strategically match the complexity and comprehensiveness of these needs as veterans transition to civilian life
- Share best practices on how your community foundation is supporting active military personnel, veterans, and their families
- Contribute ideas on how public, private and nonprofit sectors work collaboratively and leverage resources to build on the assets of each respective sector

LEARNING TOUR AGENDA

- Part I: Welcome and Overview
- Part II: Tour of Workshops for Warriors
- Part III: Panel Discussion
- Part IV: Lunch with informal discussion

ISSUE STATEMENT

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

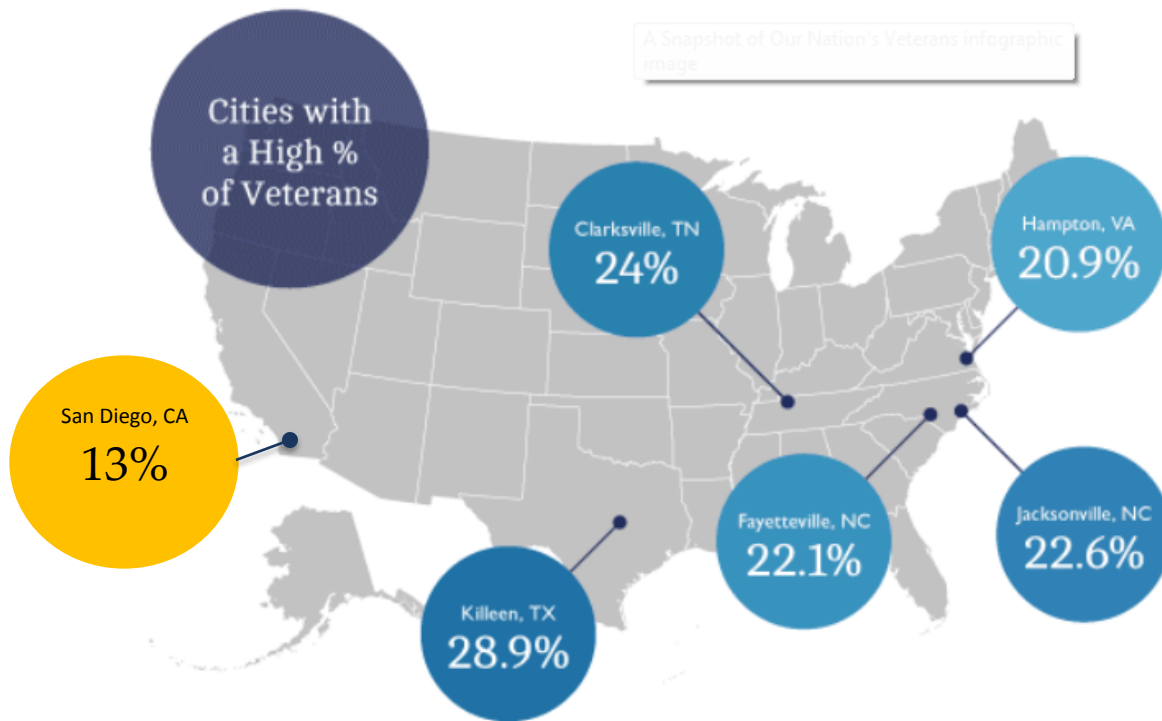
- President George Washington

Quick facts:

- Less than 1% of the US population serves in the all-volunteer military forces
- In 2010, there were approximately 22 million veterans; women comprised slightly less than 8%
- Historically, veterans have been more likely to be white, married, not living in poverty and earning more when compared to the non-veteran population
- Trends predict that by 2040 female veterans will double and that Blacks and Latinos will comprise more than one-third of the veteran population



Where Do They Live?



[Snapshot of Nations Veterans](#)

EFFECTS OF GULF WAR II

Since 2001, 2.2 million troops have deployed for the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars, including more than 500,000 National Guard and Reservists. More than 5,100 service members have been killed and about 35,000 have been seriously injured in the line of duty. Changes in modern warfare have regularly exposed these service members to improvised explosive devices and rocket propelled grenades. These blast-related dangers most notably result in amputations and severe brain injuries.

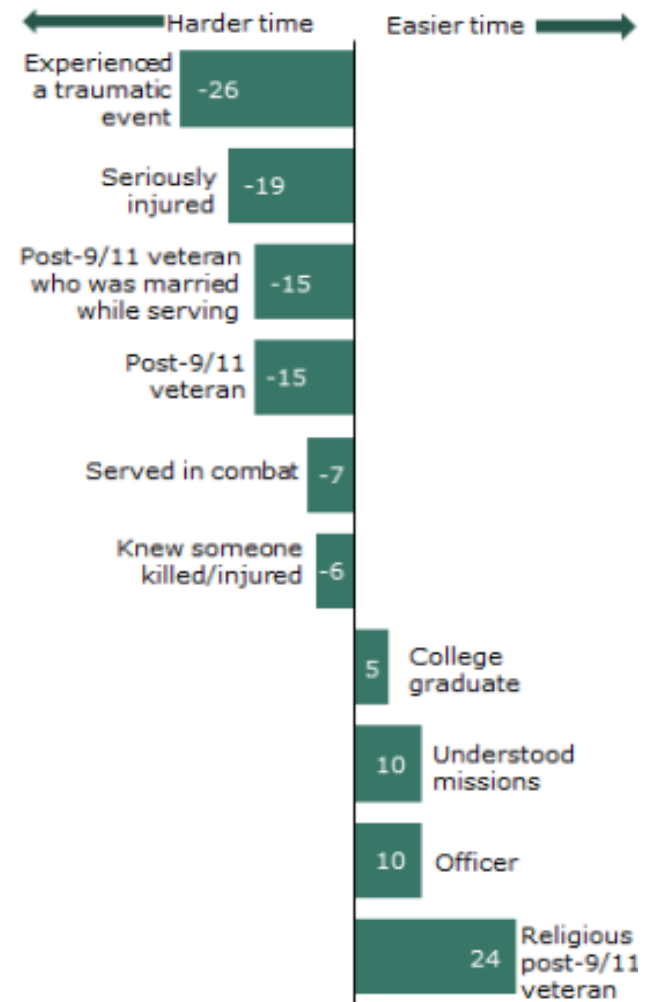
Scans show that these brain injuries are comparable to boxers who spent years fighting and being hit in the head. The all-volunteer military has reduced the number of available men and women resulting in numerous deployments, which are strongly correlated with an increased risk for detrimental mental health outcomes. Although there is currently no way to know exactly how many are returning with brain injuries, a Stanford University study found that close to 35% of veterans experience post-traumatic stress, unpredictable effects of traumatic brain injury and/or combat-related depression. These types of injuries are especially difficult to treat, since they are often invisible. The consequences of these injuries can be clearly seen in the challenges many veterans face as they reintegrate into civilian life.

Hurdles faced by veterans and their families' include:

- *Maintaining healthy relationships* - Veterans and their families report stresses when the service member returns home. Sadly, a stigma attached to mental health care makes most veterans reluctant to seek help; when they do, counseling and other services can be difficult to access.
- *Lack of job opportunities* - Returning service members face major difficulties finding post-military employment and obtaining services despite a new GI Bill. Over 2 million jobs are available but most veterans lack the necessary training. Additionally, spouses of veterans report a very high unemployment rate but do not qualify for job training services.
- *Skepticism of social services* - Veterans go without the help they need because they lack confidence in government agencies, are unaware of services, and come from a culture that emphasizes self-reliance. This is compounded by the poor communication between the Department of Defense and Veterans Administration, adding more complications to the transition from active duty member to veteran. Government agencies often offer a 'one program fits all' approach, which ignores the individualized needs of transitioning veterans.
- *Access to nonprofit supports* - Private, local, and nonprofit agencies provide services that governments cannot or do not perform. Veterans find those services valuable, but often are unaware of them. Also, a poorly understood and unevenly enforced system of laws and protocols severely limits the extent to which federal agencies may engage with nongovernmental partners. Ideally, issues of employment, education and mental health would begin six months prior to separation and continue for at least 12 months after.

Factors that Predict an Easy or Hard Re-entry into Civilian Life

Percentage-point change in the likelihood that a veteran with each characteristic had an easy time re-entering civilian life



Notes: For percentages based on full sample of veterans, n=1,842; for post-9/11 veterans, n=710. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent charts are based on all veterans.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



NATIONAL TRENDS

“...warriors come home to communities, not to federal agencies, and so it is at this crossroads of national obligation and social welfare that a new understanding of military wellness must take root. It is there that engagement with well-vetted nongovernmental partners should be among the most important strategies for ensuring the sustainability of an all-volunteer force, the successful social reintegration of our nation’s newest veterans, and the ongoing care of those who fought before them.”

- Nancy Berglass, “America’s Duty: The imperative of a new approach to warrior and veteran care,” Center for New America Security Policy Brief, November 2010

Important facts:

- As of July 2013, veterans of Gulf War II have a slightly higher unemployment rate of 7.7% when compared to the civilian population rate of 7.4%; although this rate has noticeably declined in the last couple of years, it is still higher than the overall veteran unemployment rate
- Veterans are disproportionately homeless
 - 13% of the homeless adult population are veterans and 20% of the male homeless population are veterans
 - 50% of homeless veterans have a serious mental health issue and 70% have substance abuse problems
- Almost 2 million veterans are at risk of homelessness due to poverty, lack of support networks and poor living conditions
- The Veterans Administration’s backlog to process benefits claims is creating a huge impediment for veterans to receive the services they need; more than 500,000 veterans have waited more than 125 days

After more than a decade of war, service members are returning to communities and government agencies that are ill-equipped to provide the needed supports. Coupled with a military culture that is averse to seeking help, veterans currently face challenges to find employment, receive mental and physical health services and reintegrate productively into civilian life. Fortunately, there are a growing number of innovative public-private partnerships developing across the country to address these critical issues.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are utilizing VA medical services and applying for disability benefits at much higher rates than in previous wars and conflicts. Based on current patterns of benefit claims and medical usage, it is estimated that the total present value of such costs for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans over the next 40 years is in the range of \$600 billion to \$1 trillion.

The social and economic costs of PTSD are shocking:

- First-year treatment alone costs the government \$8,300 per person, more than \$2 billion for this group
- Suicides among active-duty military personnel averaged one per day in 2012
- Veterans now account for 20% of suicides in the United States, with veterans aged 17 to 24 taking their lives at four times the rate for other age groups.

HOW IS THE SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY DEALING WITH THIS ISSUE?

Military Transition Support Project: Transforming the Transition Experience

In early 2011, a group of San Diego Grantmakers members began meeting to explore how they might collectively support local active military personnel, veterans and their families. In 2012, the group formalized as the Military Family Support Working Group and focused their efforts on helping with the difficult transition from active duty to civilian status.

The *Military Transition Support Project* (MTSP) is a one-year planning project convened by San Diego Grantmakers Military Family Support Working Group. This work is funded primarily by Blue Shield of California Foundation, with additional support from the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation and WebMD Health Foundation.. The planning project is designed to convene and connect San Diego’s currently siloed sectors – military, social services, public officials, businesses and philanthropy – to accomplish four key goals:



1. *Develop a framework and strategic plan for a transformed transition experience.* Convene key systems and service collaborations to design the best model to coordinate services for service members, veterans, and their families.
2. *Identify an ongoing strategy for transition support service coordination.* Identify a network hub to ensure the model's implementation and propose how the model can be sustainably funded.
3. *Convene the community.* Convene the community to review and refine the emerging framework and strategic plan.
4. *Share the process with other communities.* Document the framework and plan's development and share with regions across the nation.

Local examples of military service providers include:

Veterans Village San Diego - VVSD assists homeless veterans who have substance abuse and/or mental health issues, including men and women who have recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan. At the heart of VVSD's treatment plan are five pillars of success: Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, Aftercare and Employment services. Stand Down is a nationally recognized community-based intervention program designed to help the nation's estimated 200,000 homeless veterans "combat" life on the streets.

Camp Pendleton Armed Services YMCA is a civilian non-profit organization located on base. The mission is to enhance the lives of military personnel and their family members in Spirit, Mind, and Body. In cooperation with the Base Commands, the Armed Services YMCA offers programs and services which strengthen families and encourage individuals to achieve their fullest potential.

San Diego ASYMCA stands ready to support service members and their families with specialized programs to fit their specific needs. Many of these programs are designed to meet urgent and long-term needs of wounded, injured or ill service members.

ARE THERE MORE RESOURCES I CAN ACCESS ON THIS?

[Iraq Afghanistan Deployment Impact Fund](#)
[Military Family Support Working Group](#)
[Stand Down: Step by step manual](#)
[The Patriots Initiative](#)

REFERENCES:

[America's Duty](#)
[Background on Veterans - James Madison](#)
[Blue Shield of California](#)
[Costs of War Article](#)
[Gulf Coast Community Foundation](#)
[KPBS story on Chamber Report:](#)
[PBS Story on Homeless Veterans](#)
[Nancy Berglass – Well After Service Report](#)

[Orange County Community Foundation](#)
[Philanthropy Roundtable on Vets Summit](#)
[RAND Report on Veterans](#)
[San Diego Chamber of Commerce Report](#)
[San Diego Military Family Collaborative](#)
[San Diego Military Economic Impact Study 2012](#)
[VA Quick Facts](#)
[Veterans Employment Statistics](#)

