



## **Veterans Statistics**

- Most veterans return home strengthened by their military service. But the combat experience has unfortunately left a growing number of veterans suffering from substance abuse, mental health disorders and trauma.
- 41 percent of veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan — more than 1 million — report having outbursts of anger and 45 percent have relationship problems with their spouse or partner. Both are indicators of post-traumatic stress and could suggest that rates of affliction may be higher than the government has forecast.
- 1 in 5 veterans has symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive impairment
- 1 in 6 veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom suffers from a substance abuse issue
- Research continues to draw a link between substance abuse and combat-related mental illness
- Research indicates that combat related PTSD can lead directly to aggressive behavior and domestic violence.
- Combat veterans with PTSD experience high rates of family dysfunction.
- Left untreated, mental health disorders common among veterans, such as Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, can directly lead to homelessness and involvement in the criminal justice system.
- The Department of Justice and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration estimate that there are 703,000 veterans in the corrections system.
- 81% of justice-involved veterans had a substance-abuse problem prior to incarceration and twenty-five percent were identified as mentally ill. Twenty-three percent of justice-involved veterans were homeless at some point in the year prior to their arrest.

## **Veterans Treatment Courts**

- The first Veterans Treatment Court launched in January, 2008 in Buffalo, NY following increasing numbers of veterans on city court dockets with substance abuse and mental health issues.
- There are 264 operational Veterans Treatment Courts in the United States.
- Approximately 13,200 veterans are currently participating in Veterans Treatment Courts.
- In Veterans Treatment Courts the judge, prosecutor, defense council, probation department, and law enforcement work together with treatment providers, the VA/VBA and volunteer veteran mentors. This team works with the veterans to address their needs, ranging from treatment to housing, employment and family counseling. Veterans appear regularly in court for the team to review their progress and to meet with volunteer veteran mentors.
- The structure of the program appeals to veterans who have experienced a loss of structure upon coming home. And there is strong camaraderie among the participants because everyone is a veteran. The courtroom truly becomes a place of hope and healing. And Veterans Treatment Courts are a much more effective and efficient system.
- Veterans Treatment Courts evolved out of the growing need for a treatment court model designed specifically for justice-involved veterans with diagnosed substance abuse and/or mental health issues.
- Veterans Treatment Courts build upon military camaraderie by allowing participants to go through the treatment court process with people who are similarly situated and have common past experiences and through the use of volunteer veteran mentors.
- Recently, the *Community Mental Health Journal* released the first published study on Veterans Treatment Court and the results are outstanding. Researchers concluded that veterans participating in Veterans Treatment Court experienced significant improvement with depression, PTSD and substance abuse as well as with critical social issues including housing, emotional well being, relationships, and overall functioning.
- The study also found that mentoring from volunteer veterans is particularly effective. Veterans who receive mentoring not only experience better clinical outcomes, they report feeling more socially connected.