

Psycho-Social Aspects of Disabilities of Disabled Veterans

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Wars in General

- Always unique situation
- Employment needs change with time
 - Needs different at 19 than 22 or 32
 - Often acquire new skills
 - Leadership
 - Technical
 - But without degree to put on resume

War in General

- Readjustment issues
- Time issues: training, then deployment
- Experience may have changed person
 - Physically and/or psychologically
 - Heating coil
 - Lose people with shared experience with discharge
 - Time has changed family; roles

Situation with Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq

- Setting and engagement of war different
 - No front line, always on guard (anywhere, anytime)
- More females in battle (12-23%)
- High percentage of “Citizen Soldiers”(30-50%)
- “Citizen Soldiers” often not draft age
 - Families (half married), careers, house payments

Situation with Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (cont.)

- Enemy difficult to distinguish
- Daily reports of dead and wounded
- Unknown tour of duty (similar to other conflicts)
- Support of veterans; but different views of war

This Situation

- Better equipment and medical service
 - Less die, more wounded (90% survival)
- Different type of weapon
 - Blast injuries
 - Poly trauma
 - Average of five surgeries
- Some Civilian contractors also eligible for services

This Situation: Employers

- Most employers lack experience
 - Not trained to recognize problems that may result from being in a war
- Number of veterans not seen in this country for this generation
- War not a shared experience for employers

Situation

- Likely over 100,000 wounded
- 20% with mental health diagnosis
- Disability and health care payments could reach 600 billion \$
- Re-employment for non-disable 73%

Opportune Time for Rehabilitation

- Rehabilitation laws grow out of war
 - Vocational rehabilitation beginnings
 - Soldiers Act of 1918
 - Services
- National stage to display rehabilitation worth
- Budgetary thoughts

Laws Support Veterans

Generally seen as a deserving class

May help lessen stigma against people with disabilities (if they are fighting for their country why would God punish them?)

1st laws in US for war-injured in early 1800s

War Risk Insurance Act (1917) first for disabilities

Employment Issues for Veterans

- 40% of injured will not return to pre-deployment employment
- 73% return rate for non-disabled
- About 1 in 5 report disability at discharge
- Jobless rate for GTA vets 5.2% (vs 3.9%)
 - (well by 2007 data, higher for all I suppose)
- Vets 18-24 17% unemployment (vs 10%)

Why a Rehabilitation Issue?

- Clients at critical age
- No group has embraced this
- National stage
- High need for group
 - Unemployment rates

Issues for Rehabilitation

- Laws pertaining to veterans
- Mental health concerns of veterans
- Community services
- Injuries common in war

Laws Pertaining to Veterans

- Services
 - e.g. NDAA 2005
- Deployment demands on employers
 - USERRA
- Re-employment laws
 - e.g. escalator principle

Quick Primer on Disability Datings

- From Dept. of Veteran affairs
- Increments of 10%
- When entitled to VR&E services
- Most common

Mental Health Concerns

- Stigma of mental health client
 - Real military effects
- Secondary concerns
 - Substance abuse
- Adherence problems

Community Services

- Veterans affair hospitals
- Vet Centers
- Transitional Assistance Program (TAP)
- Options for health care service providers

Student Thoughts

- VAs (aka Veterans Affairs) called upon to provide more/better services
 - National Defense Authorization Act of 2005
- CRCs (interns) being hired by VA

Recent Studies

- From various fields
- Counselors with veterans
- Veterans
- Rehabilitation Counselors

Knowledge Needs of Counselors

High need areas

- Laws pertaining to veterans
- Common Psychological Problems of Veterans
- Mental Health concerns
- Injuries common in war

Knowledge Areas

Somewhat high

- Community supports
- Deployment laws and psychological concerns
- Vocational services
- Uncertainty

Areas of reported low preparedness

- Family issues
- Laws concerning military
- Employer rights and views of reservists
- Psychological problems of war

Job Functions

- Training and employment assistance
- Monitoring medical and psychosocial
- Connection to veteran service organizations

Reported Critical Issues - Counselors Working with Veterans

- Burnout
- Caseload size
- Bureaucracy
- Understanding presenting issues

Responsibilities of rehabilitation counselors

A Roadmap for Rehabilitation

5 pronged approach to addressing the needs of veterans with disabilities

1. Infuse veteran issues into rehabilitation training
2. Employment needs
3. Self-management
4. Family resiliency
5. Developing researchers

Infusing Veteran Issues

- Current textbooks
- Laws pertaining to veterans
- Injuries common among veterans

Rights of Veterans in Employment

- Re-employment
- Escalator principal
- College requirements
- USERRA
- Current reported troubles

Veterans with a Disability

- 2 years for re-employment
- “Reasonable accommodations”
- “Undue hardship”

Distinct Employment Needs

- Number of returning veterans changing employment
- Specialize employment laws for veterans
- Thoughts on importance of this group

Employers Needs

- Rehabilitation's responsibility to employers
- Insurance and re-employment laws
- Status and training requirements
- Ability to fire; obligation to pay

Employer Attitudes

- Shifting tide
- New view of reservists
- Co-worker attitudes
- Employers view of reservist laws

Employment Retention in Military

- Demographics of lower rates
 - Gender issues
- Social reasons for leaving
- Impact on rehabilitation

Self-Management

- What is it?
- Why an issue for veterans?
- Why an issue for rehabilitation counselors?
- What are the interventions?

Family Resiliency

- Importance of family in veteran issues
- Changes in service delivery for rehabilitation counselors
- Issues of family amenable to change

Development of Research

- Current situation
 - War unique situation to examine disability
- War always a friend to rehabilitation
- Similarities between ADA: Reservists Act
- What researchers could do for the field

News You Can Use

Rehabilitation counselor role in any setting

- Proactive
- Focus on wellness
- Screenings
- Investigation of effect
- Liaison with employers
- Acceptance of person (if not war)

Screenings Rehabilitation Professionals Can Use

- TBI
 - e.g. Reading problems when no vision problems
- PTSD (PCL checklist, 17 item)
 - e.g. Substance Abuse (CAGE)
- Sexual Trauma
- Family Screening

PTSD

- Symptoms
 - Re-experiencing event
 - Emotional numbness
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Depression, anxiety
 - Outbursts of anger
 - Feelings of intense guilt
- Diagnosed when symptoms last >1 month

TBI

- Hearing loss
- Tinnitus
- Auditory processing problems
- 3 quick screen questions

Rehabilitation Counselor Opportunities with veterans

- Veteran affairs programs
 - Pay
 - Work details
- Counselor opportunities
- State VR roles

Survey Information

For counselors

<http://www.coe.fau.edu/faculty/frain/consentcounselors.htm>

For Veterans

<http://www.coe.fau.edu/faculty/frain/consentveteransconsent.htm>

Questions & Comments

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THANK YOU!

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