

What is Military Sexual Trauma?

Military sexual trauma (MST) is the term that the Department of Veterans Affairs uses to refer to sexual assault or sexual harassment that occurred while a person was serving in the military. It includes any sexual experience that someone is involved in against their will.

Some examples:

- Unwanted sexual touching or grabbing
- Someone taking advantage of a person while he was drunk or incapacitated
- Threatening & offensive sexual remarks
- Being pressured into sex by a superior
- Threatening & unwelcome sexual advances
- Being physically forced into sexual activities

Common Reactions to MST

MST can affect a person's mental and physical health, even many years later. Reactions may include:

- Anger/Rage
- Depression/Sadness
- Trouble sleeping
- Nightmares
- Embarrassment/ Shame
- Being "jumpy"/ Anxious
- Memory problems
- Suicidal Thoughts
- Difficulty in relationships & trusting people
- Avoiding reminders of the sexual trauma
- Feeling emotionally numb or "flat"
- Problems with alcohol or drugs
- Sexuality & sexual orientation concerns
- Physical health problems such as sexual difficulties, chronic pain, eating or weight problems, gastrointestinal problems

Male MST Q & A

Can men really be sexually harassed or assaulted?

- Yes! Any man can be sexually harassed or assaulted regardless of his strength, size, or age. Perpetrators can be men or women.

How many Veteran men using the VA have experienced MST in the military?

- We know that around 50,000 men using VHA services have reported sexual harassment and/or sexual assault while in the military. This is believed to be an underestimate given that many men are reluctant to report these experiences.

Can straight heterosexual men be sexually assaulted?

- Yes, sexual assault is about power and control, not sex. Both heterosexual and homosexual men can be sexually assaulted and being assaulted does not change one's sexual orientation (e.g., make one gay).

What if a man didn't or couldn't fight back?

- Many men do not or are unable to resist or fight back for a variety of reasons (e.g., fear, physical restraint, intoxication). Also, some may feel forced to engage in sexual acts due to threats or fear of retaliation. If the sexual experience was unwanted and against the man's will, it is MST.

What if a man became physically aroused during an assault? What does this mean?

- Sometimes a man who is sexually assaulted has an involuntary or forced erection or ejaculation. These are normal physiological reactions and do not mean that the man wanted or enjoyed the assault.

Stories of Survivors

"It took me almost 40 years to talk to someone... after a lot of heavy drinking, two divorces, and an attempt to kill myself. Now I am getting help from a psychologist at the VA. Slowly, I am starting to deal with what happened to me in Vietnam."

— Tom, USMC Veteran

"I was a 6' 2" and 185 lbs soldier... I never thought about being raped. I thought it was only something that happened to women. My sense of being a man was shattered... I spent a few years trying to forget about the assault until I realized it was eating me up inside. It wasn't until I finally admitted it to my doctor that I realized all the ways it had affected my life."

— Daryl, Army National Guard Veteran



"After I got out of the military, I couldn't keep a job or a relationship. I just didn't care about anything. Another Veteran finally convinced me to try the VA. I didn't like the counselor so I dropped out after two meetings. I came back and requested a new counselor and have been surprised by my progress over the last 6 months—I even have a new relationship!"

— José, USAF Veteran

"Pursuing treatment was the hardest thing I've ever done. No one can take back the hell I went through in the military, but I have learned that I can have a better future."

— Frank, Navy Veteran

Available VA Service

- The VA provides **free and confidential** counseling and treatment to male and female Veterans for any mental or physical health conditions related to experiences of MST.
- You do not need to be service connected and may be able to receive this free care even if you are not eligible for other VA services.
- You do not need to have reported the incident when it happened or provide any documentation that it occurred.



How can I find out more about MST services?

- You can talk to a current trusted health care provider, contact your local Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator, contact your local VA clinic or Vet Center, call the general VA hotline at 1-800-827-1000, or visit the MST website at www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp

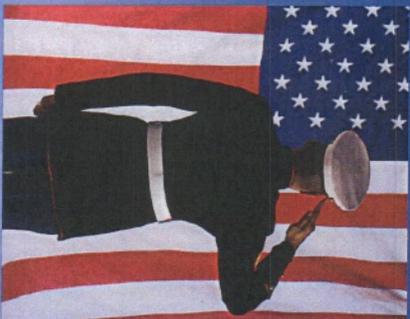
What if I only feel comfortable talking to a female (or male) provider?

- You have the right to ask to meet with a clinician of the same or opposite sex if that would make you more comfortable.

Can I apply for service connection (VA disability rating) for conditions related to MST?

- Yes, you can talk to a Veterans Service Representative at the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) who can provide further information on the program and assist you if you decide to file a claim at 1-800-827-1000.

You've Served
Your Country.
It's Time for Us
to Serve You.



VA General Information Hotlines:
1-800-827-1000 or 1-877-222-8387

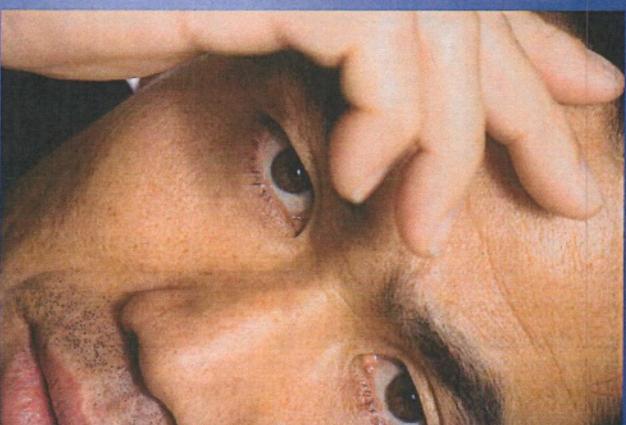
Dr. Laura Johnson
MST Coordinator
781-687-2694

Every VA facility has an MST Coordinator who serves as a contact person for MST-related issues. This person can help Veterans find and access VA services and programs.



Defining
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Military Sexual
Trauma Services
for Male Veterans



Don't Suffer in Silence
You Can Get Help Now
Free Medical and
Mental Health
Services Available



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