

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

For Arizona veterans and those who care for them.



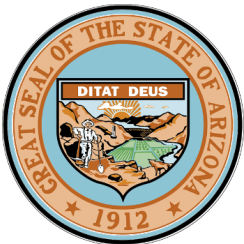
Women Veterans Session:

“I am a _____ and a Woman Veteran”



Session Overview

Attendees will get a better understanding of the journeys of women Veterans and fully recognize the value that they bring to their communities. This session will feature stories of transitioning from the military, workforce integration, accessing VA benefits and the importance of self identification.



Speakers



Col. Wanda Wright (Ret)
ADVS Director



Sabrena Schmella
Phoenix VA Regional Office



Women Veteran Demographics

- According to the Department of Labor, there are nearly 2 million living Women Veterans in the United States.
- 14% American men are Veterans... But among women in America, only 1.5% are veterans.
- 1 in 69 women in the civilian workforce are Women Veterans.
- In FY20, approximately 28% of the nearly 2 million women Veterans received disability compensation.

Women veterans are 1.5% of the overall women population



1 in 69 women is a veteran

Arizona Women Veterans



- Approximately 3.6 million adult women live in Arizona
- According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, nearly 53,000 Arizona Women have identified as Veterans = 1.5% of total female population in AZ
- Approximately 22,200 Arizona Women Veterans enrolled in VHA as of FY21 Q1 = 42% enrollment in VA healthcare
- Women currently make up approximately 10% of the overall veteran population in Arizona.



What Does a Woman Veteran Look Like?



- Veterans come in all different shapes, sizes, colors, races, genders, abilities, and religious affiliations — You can't stereotype what a Veteran looks like.
- Challenge yourself to re-think what a “veteran” is and looks like.
(**Hint:** It can be anyone!)
- The best way to identify a Woman Veteran is to ask, “Have you ever served in the military?”





I am a _____ and a **Woman Veteran**

In the poll, choose one occupation:

- A) Elementary School Teacher
- B) Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist
- C) Dental Hygienist
- D) Corrections Officer



Tonya is a Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist and a Woman Veteran



- Tonya served for 7 years in the Active Duty Army as an enlisted Parachute Rigger.
- She went from inspecting, testing, and packing military parachutes to a civilian career as a diagnostic radiologic technologist where she ensures quality diagnostic images are captured, maintains imaging equipment, and assists physicians as they make their diagnosis.



Self-Identifying as a Veteran



- Many women who have served in the military do not readily identify as Veterans
 - “Served in Uniform”
 - Many say “Veteran” doesn’t fit them
 - Impact of Military Sexual Trauma - About 1 in 3 women seen in VHA respond "yes" when screened for Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
 - Reintegration post service impacted by others not recognizing or respecting service of Women Veterans
 - “People not believing they are Veterans makes things much harder.” – Kristen M. Zellars
 - The Journal of Women’s Health completed a study entitled “The Baseline Characteristics from the Women Veterans Cohort Study: Gender differences and Similarities in Health and Healthcare Utilization”
 - Study conducted over three years, focused primarily on GWOT Veterans, found significant variation in risk factors, health outcomes, and healthcare utilization among men and women Veterans of the same era
 - We may expect that these outcomes are more severe for Women Veterans of earlier eras.
 - Social stigmas and stereotypes associated with Veterans and issues such as PTSD
 - Not only do the stigmas cause veterans internal conflict and lead them to possibly want to hide their veteran status, but they can also adversely impact veterans’ performance and comfort in a myriad of settings. (Kirchner, 2015)

I am a _____ and a **Woman Veteran**

In the poll, choose one occupation:

- A) Legislator
- B) Nurse Practitioner
- C) FBI Agent
- D) Technical Support Engineer



Kassie is a Technical Support Engineer and a Woman Veteran.



- Kassie is a Marine Corps combat veteran who served 5 years as an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) pilot.
- She was the first female to be qualified as an internal and external UAV pilot, where she was responsible for planning, coordinating, and integrating drone missions in support of combat operations.
- Being a pioneer in the industry launched her career in the civilian world as a subject matter expert and a technical support engineer to defense contractors.



Importance of Self-Identifying



- “No one can take it away from you”
- Rising above old ideas, stigmas and stereotypes
- All benefits available to men are available to women
- Transition assistance, days after discharge, or decades
- Contributing to Community
- Self Advocacy and Advocating for Others
- Specialized programs for and by women available to women
 - Accessing Benefits
 - Compensation
 - Education
 - Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Accessing Healthcare
 - Women's Clinics
 - Primary Care
 - MST Treatment
 - Pre and Post Natal Treatment
 - Transgender Care
 - Accessing Community
 - Support Groups
 - Community Based Groups

Timeline of Women Veterans and Evolution of Access to VA Benefits



In the American Revolution, women mostly acted as nurses, laundresses and cooks.

In the War of 1812, the first women serve aboard ships in America's early Navy, as Nurses.

In 1866, the first National Home, now VA's oldest hospital, opened in Maine. They provided medical care and long-term housing for thousands of Civil War Veterans.



In WWI, women served at home and abroad, from bilingual telephone operators to nurses for POWs, reservists to Coast Guard.

Injured and disabled Veterans from World War I created the need for the establishment of the second largest system of Veterans' hospitals.

They leased hundreds of private hospitals and hotels for the rush of returning injured war Veterans and began a program of building new hospitals.



Access to Veteran services was not granted until 62 years later, when admission to Veterans Bureau hospitals and National Homes was fully extended to women, National Guard, and militia Veterans in 1928.

The National Homes were taken over by the Veterans Administration in 1930 as part of the establishment of the VA.

Starting in 1939, over 400,000 women served in WWII in new roles of mechanics, drivers, pilots, intelligence.



Women served as aviators in WWII in the Women Air force Service Pilots (WASP) 1943-1944, but were considered civilians and not entitled to benefits.

As the country demobilized after the WWII, women were pushed out of the military, since they are not allowed to serve during peacetime.

In 1944, the GI Bill granted education, home mortgage, small business loan assistance, and unemployment insurance benefits to re-integrate WWII veterans into the workforce.



In 1944, only two percent of the veterans eligible to receive GI Bill benefits were women. Women Veterans faced barriers in accessing benefits and many were not informed they were eligible.

Over 332,000 woman veterans were eligible for benefits, but only about 65,000 female veterans attended college. An overall higher percentage of women opted for university education (as opposed to vocational training) than men.

In 1944, Veteran's Preference for hiring was granted to women.

Timeline of Women Veterans and Evolution of Access to VA Benefits



The Women's Armed Service Integration Act of 1948 grants women permanent status allowing them to serve during peacetime in the Army, Navy Marine Corps, Air Force.

Permanent status granted women full access to VA benefits.

But, the act limited the amount of women in the military to 2% of the enlisted force and 10% of officers.

It also prevented women from commanding men or ever serving in combat.

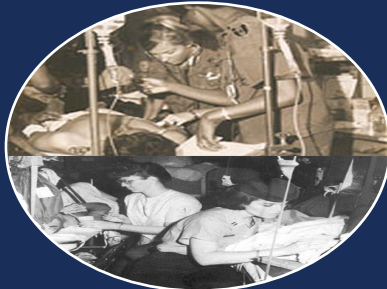
That same year, an Executive Order ends racial segregation in the military.



1950-1953: Women who had joined the Reserves after WWII are involuntarily recalled to active duty during the Korean War.

Over 500 Army nurses served in the combat zone and theater of operations, and the military suffered some of its first female combat casualties.

More than 7,000 women serve during the Vietnam War, mostly as nurses. In 1965, a female Marine becomes the first woman officially recognized to have fought under hostile fire.



In 1967, the act limiting the amount of women in the military was repealed.

In 1977, military Veteran status was granted to the women in the WASP who served during World War II.

Prior to 1980, the census questionnaire only asked about the military service of men. At the time of the 1980 decennial census, 1.2 million women answered yes. Women made up just over 2 percent of the Veteran population.



The Census findings, prompted the creation of the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans was established in 1983 mandating reports to Congress every 2 years.

As a result of the Advisory Committee's recommendations, VA appointed the first Women Veterans Coordinators in 1985.

The creation of the Women Veterans Healthcare Program streamlined services for women Veterans to provide better medical and psychosocial care. 4.4% of Veterans were women.



In 1992, Congress expanded women's health care to include treatment for PTSD as a result of military sexual trauma.

In 1994, the VA's Center for Women Veterans was established.

In 2000, the VA allocated funds for the first time (\$3 million) to support programs specifically for women Veterans who are homeless.

In FY20, more than 196,000 women Veterans used education benefits and more than 555,000 women Veterans received \$10.7 billion in disability compensation.

Nearly 10% of Veterans are women.

Veterans Health Administration and Women Veterans Health Care - Present

- The VA health care system has grown to 1,600 health care facilities, including 144 VA Medical Centers and 1,232 outpatient sites of varying complexity.
- 41 VHA facilities serve Arizona Veterans
- The Women Veterans Health Care mission is provision for all women Veterans:
 - Comprehensive primary care by a proficient and interested primary care provider
 - Privacy, safety, dignity, and sensitivity to gender-specific needs
 - The right care in the right place and time
 - State-of-the-art health care equipment and technology
 - High-quality preventive and clinical care, equal to that provided to male Veterans



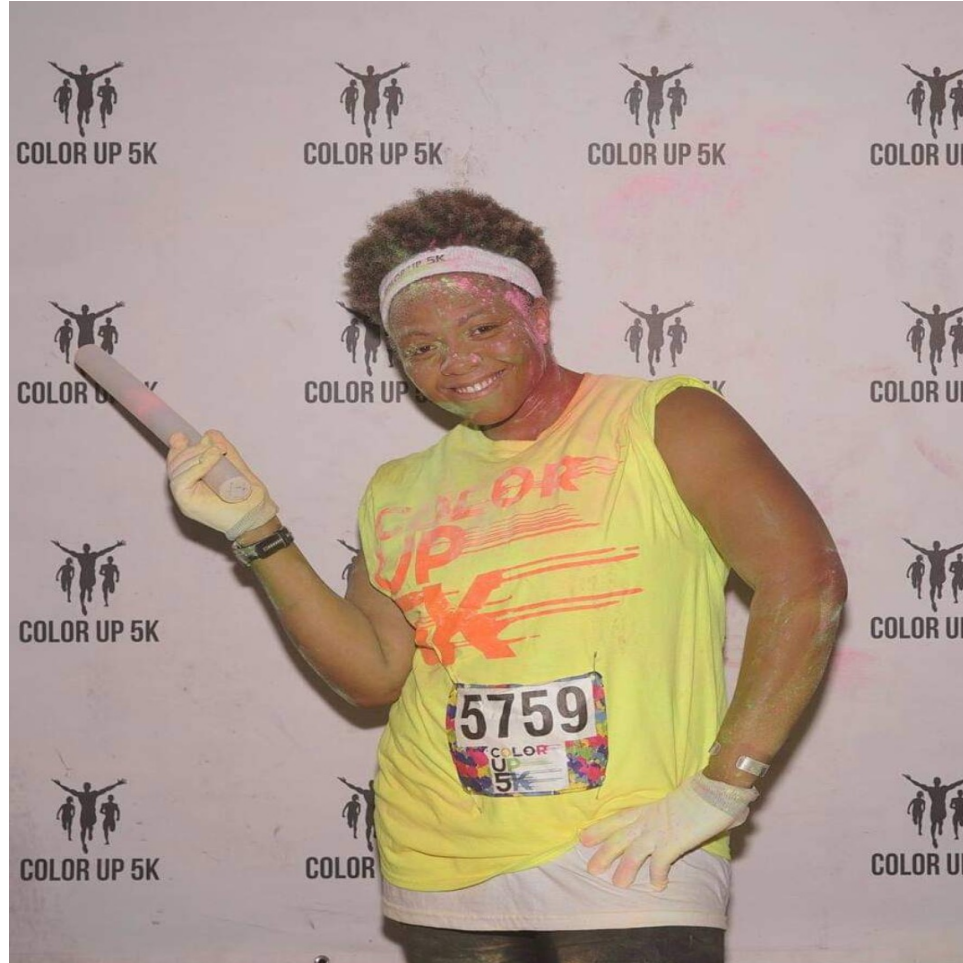
- Top medical diagnoses for Women Veterans nationally as of FY20:
 - Chronic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Major Depressive Disorder
 - Anxiety Disorder
 - Lower Back Pain
 - Type 2 Diabetes
 - High Blood Pressure
 - High Cholesterol



I am a _____ and a Woman Veteran

In the poll, choose one occupation:

- A) Pediatrician
- B) Athletic Trainer
- C) High School ROTC Instructor
- D) Recreational Art Therapist



Centoria is a High School ROTC Instructor and a Woman Veteran

- Centoria retired from the Army as a Human Intelligence Collector after 23 years.
- She served on combat deployments where she interrogated human intelligence sources, analyzed documents and prepared reports for Army leadership.
- She now teaches high school students that participate in Junior ROTC, which is a character and leadership development program, and mentors those who want to join the military.



Military Transition



- Director Wright will share her unique journey as a woman transitioning from the military, challenges women Veterans experience, and resources.
- If you are a woman Veteran in the audience, please share in the chat if you have enrolled with the VA or utilized any of the benefits that you have earned after transitioning from the military.
- Suggestions: Do you use VA healthcare services or receive compensation from service-connected disabilities? Have you used life insurance, education, home loan, or other VA benefits, etc.?



Things Women Veterans Want the Community to Know

What do you want the community to know? Please comment in the chat.



WE ARE MOTHERS, SISTERS, FRIENDS, PARTNERS, AND WIVES.
WE ARE ADVOCATES, BOSSES, STUDENTS, AND SURVIVORS.
WE ARE ALL ERAS AND BRANCHES OF SERVICE.
WE ARE WOMEN. WE ARE VETERANS.

WE ARE NOT INVISIBLE



Q&A



In the chat box, please type your questions!

ACMF staff will read aloud and Director Wright or Ms. Schmella will have the opportunity to answer.



Important Contacts



- **Arizona Department of Veterans' Services:**
www.azdvs.gov or 602-255-3373
- **Be Connected:**
www.BeConnectedAZ.org or
1-866-4AZ-VETS (429-8387)
- **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs:**
www.va.gov
- **VA Call Center for Benefits:** 1-800-827-1000
- **VA Health Care:** 1-877-222-VETS (8387)
- **VA Inspector General:** 1-800-488-8244
- **Veterans Crisis Line:** 1-800-273-8255, Opt. 1

