

# The mental health needs of **VETERANS** *in Minnesota*

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) contracted with Wilder Research to conduct a behavioral health needs assessment of Veterans in Minnesota including interviews with 45 behavioral health practitioners and surveys with 918 Veterans.

Survey participants were more likely than Minnesota Veterans, overall to be female (15% compared to 7%), a person of color (12% compared to 9%), and live in the Twin Cities Metro area (56% compared to 46%).<sup>1</sup>

## NEEDS

of survey respondents

feel they have the **support** they need



77%

said they have received **any mental or chemical health services** since exiting the military



44%

used services in the **past two years**



38%

Of those who used services in the past two years,



**90%** used individual counseling mental health services



**72%** used Federal services

## The Minnesota Veteran survey identified several groups of Veterans at an increased risk for behavioral health issues

These veterans tended to report more behavioral health diagnoses and symptoms. In particular,



**women Veterans**

**Veterans who have experienced sexual assault**

**Veterans of color**

**Veterans with a disability or chronic medical condition including traumatic brain injury**

**younger Veterans**

## Top 5

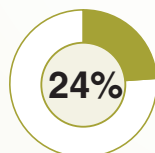
## BARRIERS

to accessing services of survey respondents

Half of all of the survey respondents (50%) selected at least one barrier that prevented them from accessing services



I was worried about **how I would be seen**



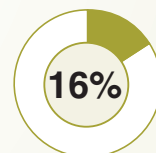
I was worried about the **effect on my current or future employment**



**I don't think the services will help**



I could not **pay for the services**



I cannot financially afford to take **time off for treatment**

## Top 5 preferred

### SERVICE FORMATS of survey respondents

#### Individual

68%



one-on-one services with a professional care provider

#### Informal support

33%



such as support from family, friends, etc.

#### Online

18%



services provided online

#### Peer-to-peer

26%



trained or untrained supporters who provide knowledge, experience, emotional, social, or practical help to each other

#### Group

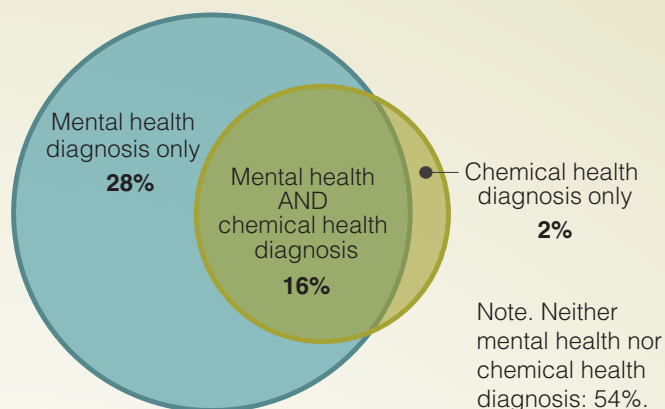
24%



a group of people with common experiences or concerns who provide each other with encouragement, comfort, or advice

### CO-OCCURRING DIAGNOSES

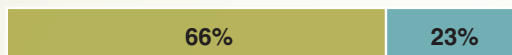
of these respondents



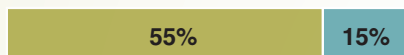
## GEOGRAPHY

Behavioral health services are not equally distributed across the state

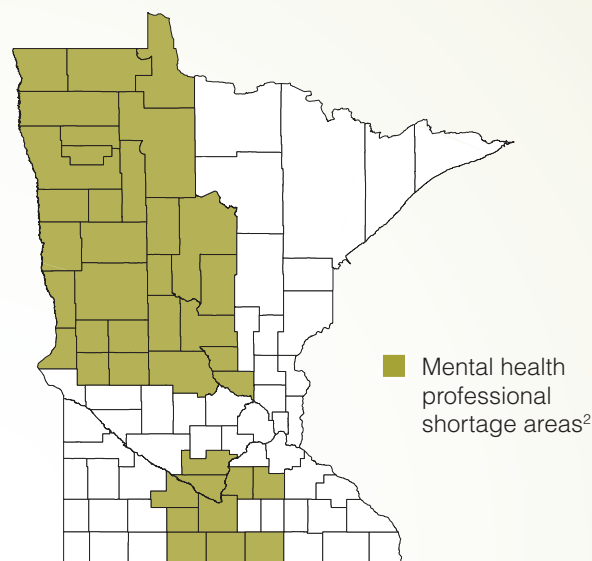
Key informants in greater Minnesota were significantly more likely than those in the Twin Cities metro area to report there are **no services in their area**



Greater Minnesota key informants were also significantly more likely to say there are **no good services in their area for Veteran-specific issues**



Survey respondents in greater Minnesota were more likely to select that **services weren't available in their area as a barrier** than respondents in the Twin Cities metro area



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilder Research identified the following recommendations based on the primary data collected as well as secondary data. Please see the full report for all supporting evidence.

- Collaborate with efforts to address statewide provider shortages.
- Increase mental health and chemical health services for Veterans in rural areas.
- Train community specific service providers on issues related to serving Veterans.
- Increase awareness of available services and eligibility requirements.
- Reduce stigma surrounding behavioral health services.
- Enhance support services to accommodate dual-diagnosis.
- Increase access to Veteran social supports.
  - Increase and improve efforts to prepare families and friends to support Veterans.
  - Increase opportunities for Veterans to obtain informal, individual support from peers.
- Provide population-specific behavioral health services for Veterans.
- Provide services related to sexual assault for both men and women.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services HRSA Data Warehouse. (2016). *Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) Find*. Retrieved from <https://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/tools/analyzers/hpsafind.aspx>