



A Division of the New York Legal Assistance Group

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Professional Partnership to Promote Well Being

This is general information, not legal advice. Patients should consult an attorney for specific guidance.

Military Sexual Trauma and VA Benefits

There are approximately 20,000 female veterans living in NYC. Currently, one in five women veterans and one in 100 men report experiencing military sexual trauma ("MST"). MST is psychological trauma resulting from a physical assault or battery of a sexual nature or sexual harassment that occurred while serving on active or inactive duty.

What is the best way to screen for MST?

- The VA suggests using descriptive, nonjudgmental wording, such as, "While you were in the military did you ever experience any unwanted sexual attention, like verbal remarks, touching, or pressure for sexual favors? Did anyone ever use force or the threat of force to have sex with you against your will?"
- When screening for a history of sexual trauma it is important to avoid words like "rape" and "sexual harassment." The veteran may not perceive what happened to them as falling under those definitions, or may not know how those terms are defined.

The VA provides free health care for health conditions related to MST, **regardless of disability compensation rating**. No proof or documentation of the incident(s) related to MST is required.

Can I be compensated for MST?

- The VA will not award compensation for the traumatic event itself. However, when MST leads to health problems, a veteran can apply for VA compensation for those disabilities. Common disabilities resulting from MST are post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, sexually transmitted infections, or sexual dysfunction.

To obtain VA compensation for a condition resulting from MST, a veteran must be able to show:

- Medical evidence of a current physical or mental disability; AND
- Evidence of an event, injury or disease in service; AND
- Evidence of a link between the current disability and the event, injury, or disease in service.

Every VA facility has an MST Coordinator who serves as a point person for MST-related issues:

VA James J. Peters Bronx Medical Center Jan Kasten, (718) 584-9000 ext.5314	VA New York Harbor Healthcare System-Manhattan Campus Sheila Keezer, (212) 686-7500 ext. 3114
VA Hudson Valley Healthcare Center Dr. Melissa Halligan, (914) 737-4400 ext. 4639	VA New York Harbor Healthcare System-Brooklyn Campus Dr. Shalini Sehgal, (718) 836-6600 ext. 6479
VA Northport Medical Center Amanda Sokolowski, (631) 261-4400 ext. 7012	VA New York Harbor Healthcare System-St. Albans Campus Dr. Shalini Sehgal, (718) 526-1000 ext. 6479

More questions? Refer patients for an appointment with a LegalHealth attorney

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