

Lactation rooms for women veterans and employees at a VA medical center

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Lactation Rooms at the VA/Public health professionals

ABSTRACT: Background/Purpose: Women veterans face many barriers to care at the VA. The system historically was primarily for men, but the number of women veterans is growing dramatically. These women veterans are younger, often of child-bearing age. Due to their military service, they often have experienced trauma, so giving them privacy and respect is essential. The purpose of this project was to explore the need for a lactation room for women at a VA medical center.

Methods: The availability of a lactation room at the VA was investigated through conducting a gap analysis, interviewing key stakeholders, and surveying employees that use the one identified lactation room.

Results/Outcomes: Findings included that there was one lactation room, but it was inconveniently located, required women to wait, and was for employees only. It was poorly advertised, with little signage, and most employees were unaware it existed.

Discussion/Implications: Although the project was originally geared toward the needs of women veterans, it expanded to include the female employees and visitors at the VA as well. Having a lactation room not only removes barriers to care for veterans, but is a workplace right and a public health issue for all women. Recommendations for next steps are described.

OBJECTIVE(S): Following this presentation, the learner will be able to:

- Describe why it would be important for the VA to provide lactation rooms for women veterans and employees.

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