

Indiana's News Center Fort Wayne, Indiana

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Sexual Trauma on the Rise for Female Veterans

Originally printed at <http://www.indianasnewscenter.com/news/local/Sexual-Trauma-on-the-Rise-for-Female-Veterans-99275224.html>

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (Indiana's NewsCenter) - A staggering statistic for our men and women in the military - about one in six female veterans has suffered some form of military sexual trauma. It's a disturbing national trend being seen here in Fort Wayne.

That number drops to around one in 100 men, but that's still an increase from previous years.

Mental health professionals at Fort Wayne's VA Medical Center say they're currently treating nearly 100-people for Military Sexual Trauma (MST).

They say no single cause for the rise has been identified, but say more females in combat is a factor.

MST can be anything from harassment to rape. It often mirrors the symptoms of, or evolves into, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

If someone screens positive for MST, which is as simple as answering a question, they are offered treatment, though it's not mandated.

Donald Wilson is the Chief of Mental Health Services at Fort Wayne's VA Medical Center. He says, "One may qualify for services at the VA who has never reported this, because that is often times the case. Just like sexual assault in the civilian community, the majority of those assaults never get reported."

Wilson says even if a veteran doesn't qualify for military health benefits, he or she can still register with the VA and get a doctor referral for MST treatment.

The military has screened for MST for quite some time before our current military conflicts, says Wilson, and encourages victims to step forward and get treatment. Unfortunately, that isn't always the response.