



# ADDRESSING CHILD SUPPORT NEEDS OF HOMELESS VETERANS:

## HHS-VA-ABA COLLABORATION



# CHALENG Report

(Community Homeless Assessment Local Education and Networking Groups)

Consistently, child support ranks high among “Unmet Needs” identified by both veterans and local community providers

## Top Unmet Needs 2008-2010

- Welfare payments
- Child care
- **Legal assistance for child support issues**
- Assistance for child support issues
- Family reconciliation assistance
- Guardianship (financial)
- Long-term permanent housing
- SSI/SSDI process
- Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines
- Credit counseling
- Job training

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# Challenge to Eliminate Homelessness among Veterans

- In 2009, more than 75,000 homeless veterans
- President Obama and VA Secretary Shinseki issued challenge to end homelessness of veterans by 2015
- CHALENG report
  - Homeless veterans consistently identify child support among top 5 unmet legal needs

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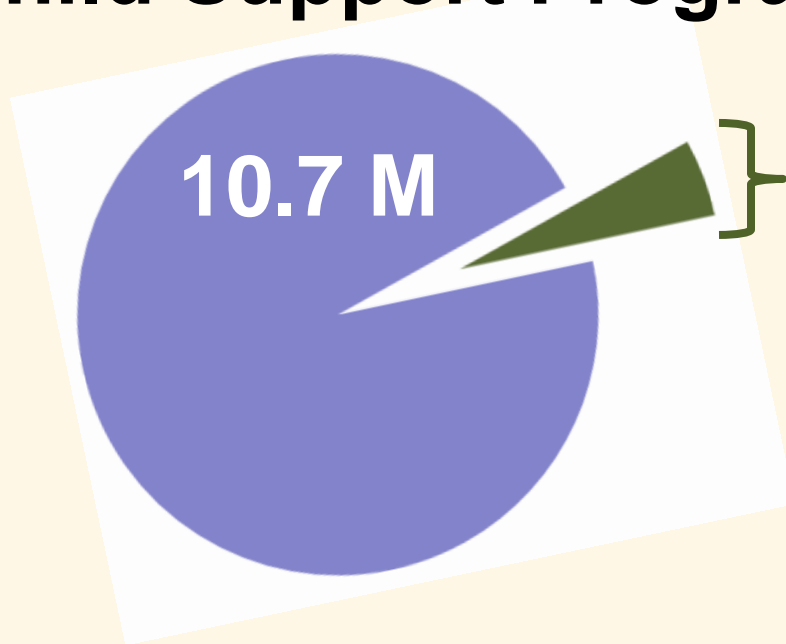
# How many veterans have dependent children?

- DoD demographics
  - Approx. 30% of the 23 million veterans have dependent children
  - Percentage is much higher for OIF/OEF veterans



# Veterans in the Child Support Caseload

Out of All Noncustodial Parents in the Child Support Program...



**Over 535,000  
(5%) are  
Veterans**

- Half of states > 10,000 vets
- Texas > 61,000 vets

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# Characteristics of Veteran Child Support Cases

## OCSE National Data Match

- About 50% of veterans in caseload are > 50 years old
- Many cases are arrears only
- Average support amount owed by veterans is about \$24,500

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# Impact of Child Support Issues on Homeless Veteran

- Child support arrearages and unaffordable monthly payments act as barrier to financial stability
- Loss of drivers license can affect ability to obtain employment
- Warrants for failure to appear and arrests for nonsupport affect background checks that affect employment, housing, and credit
- Felony warrants for child support can place a veteran into Fugitive Felon Program status, affecting receipt of VA health care benefits

# How can Child Support Agencies Help Veterans?



## Help veteran manage arrears

- Arrearage forgiveness programs
- Establishment of payment plans toward arrears



## Reinstate drivers license



## Review order for modification



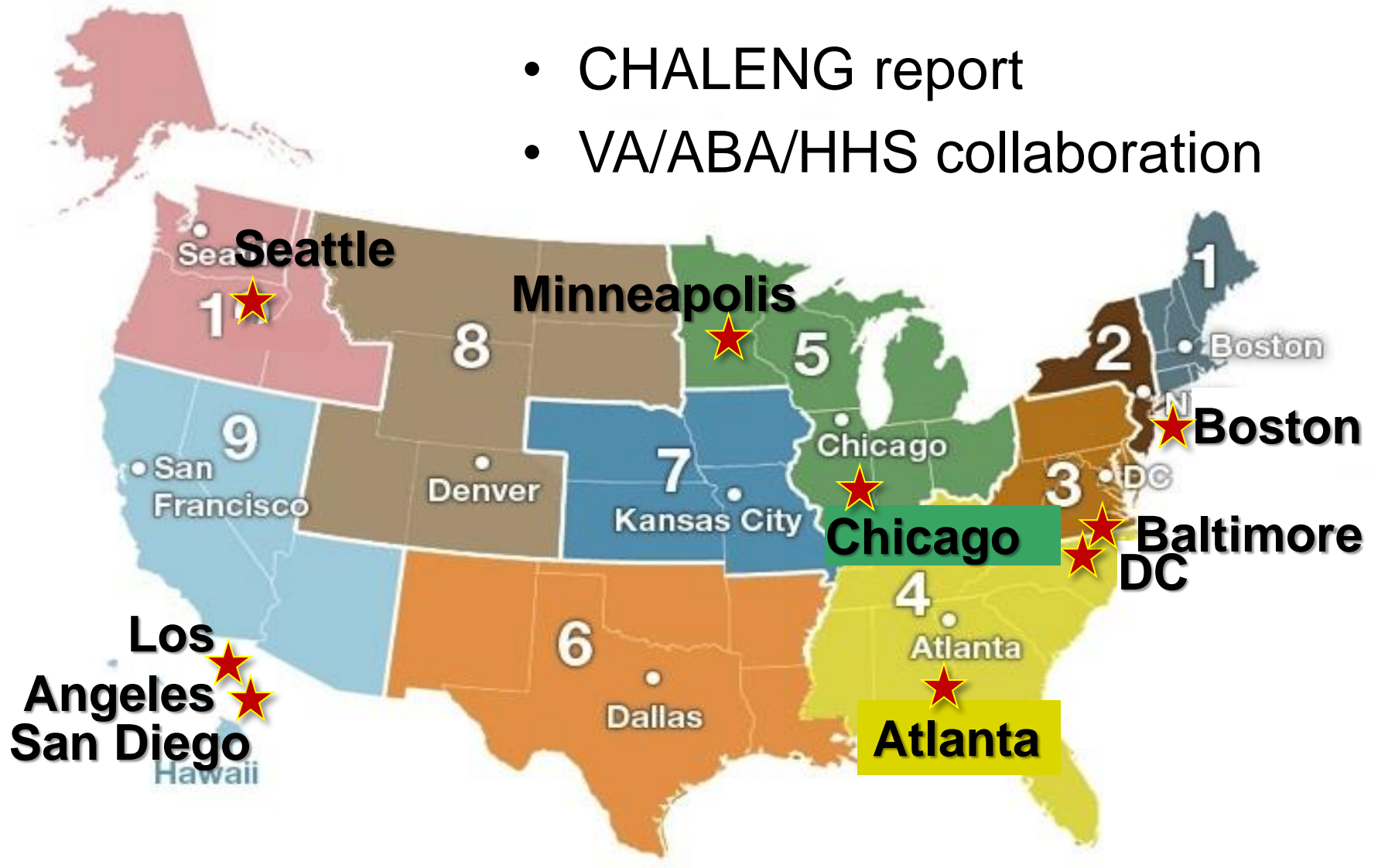
## Review case for closure





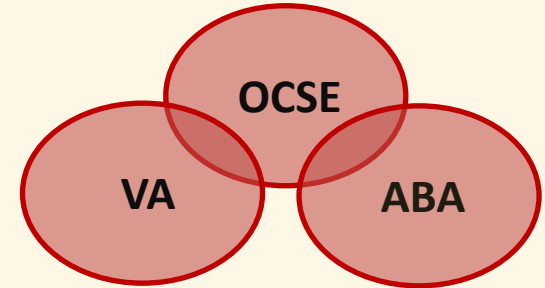
# Collaboration Pilot Cities

- CHALENG report
- VA/ABA/HHS collaboration



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# Partners



- At each site the child support agency played major role
- Each site had a legal partner
- Most sites had a VA or veteran service provider partner
- Selection of partners was based on who in that community was already serving the homeless or veterans

# Examples of Legal Partners

<b>Atlanta</b>	GA Law Center for the Homeless		<b>Minneapolis</b>	Minnesota Assistance Counsel for Veterans  Central MN Legal Services
<b>Baltimore</b>	Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc.		<b>San Diego</b>	Thomas Jefferson School of Law – Veterans Clinic
<b>Boston</b>	Shelter Legal Services (now called Veterans Legal Services)		<b>Seattle</b>	Northwest Justice Project  Open Door Legal Services
<b>Chicago</b>	State’s Attorneys Office		<b>Washington, DC</b>	Legal Aid Society
<b>Los Angeles</b>	Public Counsel			

# Examples of Veteran Partners

<b>Atlanta</b>	VA Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program
<b>Baltimore</b>	MD Center for Veterans Education and Training
<b>Boston</b>	VISN Network Homeless Coordinator  VA Compensated Work Therapy Program  HUD/VASH Program  State/Local Veterans Affairs and Veteran Services Officers

# Examples of Veteran Partners

<b>Chicago</b>	Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program VA Grant & Per Diem Liaison VA Outpatient Clinic
<b>Los Angeles</b>	
<b>Minneapolis</b>	VJO Program VA Healthcare Reentry Hennepin County Veterans' Service Office

# Examples of Veteran Partners

<b>San Diego</b>	Veterans Village San Diego
<b>Seattle</b>	VA Homeless Outreach Manager
<b>Washington, DC</b>	HUD – VASH Clinician

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# Goals

- Short term goals
  - Identify homeless veterans with child support issues
  - Establish realistic current support, address arrears, reinstate drivers license
- Long term goals
  - Achieve consistent support payments
  - Restore family connections
  - Stabilize work
  - Achieve independent housing

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# Outcomes

- Results among the sites vary
- Partners have provided services to over 1,000 veterans and resolved nearly \$800,000 in state-owed child support debt
- The human stories document the most important results.

Source: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ocse/ending\\_homelessness\\_among\\_veterans.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ocse/ending_homelessness_among_veterans.pdf)



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# Outcomes (cont'd)

- Veteran leases his first apartment
- Custodial parents close arrears only cases in hopes of helping their veteran former partners and reuniting them with their children
- Custodial party and veteran plan to meet for dinner so he can see child for first time in over 10 years
- When veteran inquired about his case, he learned he had over \$8000 waiting to be refunded! Checks had been sent to an old address. Veteran lives in public housing and is a recovering alcoholic. He went straight to his VA case manager for assistance in managing the money.
- Veteran received legal assistance to have his order modified. He is pursuing educational assistance through the VA and is currently in stable housing. He stopped by the child support area at Stand Down to say he feels like his life is on track for the first time in a long time!

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# Pilot Site Recommendations

- Learn about your targeted population
  - Homeless individuals
  - Veterans
- “Take temperature of the community”
  - What is needed?
  - Who is already providing services?
  - Who can you partner with to reach veterans?
- Determine scope and goals
- Don't have reach that exceeds ability to deliver

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# Recommendations (cont'd)

- Identify funding sources
  - Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) grant
  - Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps
  - Local bonds
  - State department of veterans affairs
  - State or local bar association
    - Legal Assistance to Military Personnel (LAMP) section
  - Federal OCSE SIP or 115 grants

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# Recommendations (cont'd)

- Establish partners
- Designate contact point within each partner
- Ensure partners share mission
- Exchange information about each partner's services
- Establish regular, periodic meetings among partners

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# Recommendations (cont'd)

- Conduct outreach
- Identify what you want to measure and who will measure
- Collect stories

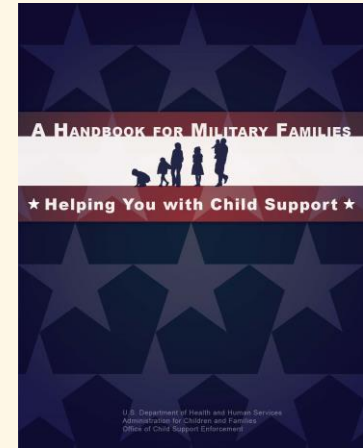


# Resources



# Information and Guides

- A Handbook for Military Families
- Working with the Military on Child Support Matters (*for CS caseworkers*)
- OCSE website: Numerous fact sheets and other resources



Promoting Child Well-Being & Family Self-Sufficiency  
Office of Child Support Enforcement  
Administration for Children & Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Child Support Fact Sheet Series Number 9

### Ending Homelessness Among Veterans: The OCSE-VA-ABA Collaboration Project

The Promoting Child Well-Being & Family Self-Sufficiency Fact Sheet Series discusses how and why the child support program provides innovative services to families across six interrelated areas to assure that parents have the tools and resources they need to support their children and be positively involved in raising them.

This fact sheet focuses on the early implementation of a collaboration among the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement,

The diagram consists of six overlapping circles arranged in a hexagonal pattern. The central circle is light blue and contains the text "CSE Core Mission: Locate Parents, Establish Paternity, Establish Orders, Collect Support". The other five circles are: top (orange) "Child Support Prevention", right (purple) "Family Violence Collaboration", bottom-right (red) "Health Care", bottom-left (yellow) "Economic Stability", and left (green) "Engagement of Fathers from Birth".

- Child Support Veteran & Military Liaison Network
- Toolkit (*in development*)

# Modification Guide

Information About: Families, Courts  
Topics: Review and Modification, Family Services & Referrals, Incarceration/Prisoner Reentry  
Types: Guides/Publications/Reports, Outreach/Brochures

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# BASIC TRAINING: CHILD SUPPORT 101

A TRAINING RESOURCE TO ASSIST SERVICE PROVIDERS IN UNDERSTANDING  
THE BASICS OF THE CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM

