



OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS.  
EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS.

# A Needs Assessment of Women Veterans in Western Pennsylvania

Final Report to Adagio Health

BY DANA SCHULTZ, SUSAN L. LOVEJOY, KAYLA M. WILLIAMS, KERRY LINDQUIST, TEAGUE RUDER

[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA2023-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2023-1.html)

To identify opportunities to expand and enhance Adagio Health's efforts to support women veterans' health and wellness, the authors quantitatively and qualitatively assessed the needs of women veterans in the Adagio Health service area. The assessment provides a clearer picture of this often-underserved population, available services and resources, gaps in support, barriers to access, and areas to prioritize to provide the best support possible.

## Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of women veterans in the Adagio Health service area and women veteran patients served by Adagio Health?
2. What are the health and well-being needs of women veterans in the Adagio Health service area?
3. What national and local programs, services, and supports for veterans are available to meet those needs?
4. What are the gaps in services and challenges associated with gaining access to and using available resources for women veterans in the Adagio Health service area?
5. How can organizations offering health care and services provide the best possible support to women veterans?

## Key Findings

**Women veterans in the Adagio Health service area face many challenges, many of which align with what has been found in other needs assessments and are applicable to women veterans nationally; many of these challenges are interrelated and build up over time**

- Unwelcoming environments and difficulties navigating systems of care that can leave women veterans feeling invisible and devalued.
- Prior negative experiences with care that can deter women veterans from future engagement in health care and related services.
- Lack of knowledge about services and supports available to veterans.
- Transition support that is often overwhelming at the time and/or not tailored to their specific needs.

- Inadequate social support that can lead women veterans to feel isolated.
- Insufficient access to trauma-informed and evidence-based care given the prevalence of trauma among women veterans.
- Concrete needs, such as access to transportation, childcare, housing, and broadband, that can facilitate engagement with health care and social services.
- Burden of caregiving responsibilities that can complicate situations, particularly for those women veterans experiencing homelessness or with small children.

## Recommendations

### Opportunities to address challenges and improve support for women veterans

- Develop strong relationships with women veteran patients.
- Collaborate with agencies and organizations to develop partnerships and referral pathways.
- Expand services to better meet needs of women veterans.
- Provide multiple channels to ensure that women veterans are aware of available services and supports.
- Address women veterans' feelings of isolation and lack of social support.
- Partner with agencies and organizations to address unmet needs and reduce barriers to accessing health care and other services.
- Expand trauma-informed approaches to care.

### Considerations for implementing changes

- Recognize the interconnectedness of the issues and challenges that women veterans face.
- Individualize and tailor assistance for women veterans in ways that address their unique needs that differ from those of veteran men and nonveteran women.
- Be intentional in reaching women veterans; it takes a great deal of effort and time to build trusted relationships with underserved populations.
- Use systematic, ongoing data collection to help identify unmet needs and gauge the progress of improvement efforts.
- Explore additional opportunities to solicit input and feedback from women veterans. Response rates on surveys can be low, but even limited data can help gauge patient satisfaction and inform improvements to available services and supports.

The research described in this report was sponsored by Adagio Health and conducted in the Social and Behavioral Policy Program within RAND Social and Economic Well-Being.



RAND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING