



## Fact Sheet:



# Veterans in Treatment

The data in this fact sheet is based on admissions and discharges from publicly funded and narcotic treatment services in California during State Fiscal Year 2006-07 as reported in the California Outcome Measurement System (CalOMS) unless otherwise noted.

### Who is a Veteran?

A veteran is defined as an individual who has served in any of the U.S. Armed Forces (Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, and the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps).<sup>1</sup>

California's veteran population includes men and women who have served in World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Era, Persian Gulf War, individuals who served in peacetime and those who have served in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The GWOT includes Iraq-Operation Iraqi Freedom and Afghanistan-Operation Enduring Freedom.

### National Veteran Demographics

National veteran's statistics prepared by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS), February 2008 reported:

- There are about 23.8 million living veterans.
- Women make up about 7.5 percent of that total.

<sup>1</sup> National Survey on Drug Use and Health, November 1, 2007, and Drug and Alcohol Services Information System, November 2, 2001.

- As of October 31, 2007, 1,638,817 service members have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>
- The Vietnam Era veteran makes up the largest living segment of the veteran population totaling about 7.9 million.
- In 2007, the median age of all living veterans was 60 years old, 61 for men and 47 for women.
- The veteran population by race includes White 80%; African American 10.9%; Hispanic 5.65%; Asian/Pacific Islander 1.4%; American Indian/Alaska Natives 0.8%; and Other Races 1.3%.
- Sixty percent of all veterans live in urban areas.
- It is estimated that there are 250,000 homeless veterans in the United States.

### California Veteran Demographics

The California Department of Veterans Affairs, in its report to the Legislature titled "Strategies to Improve California's Utilization of Veteran Benefits," dated March 15, 2007, states:

- California has the largest number of veterans of any state at 2.2 million, approximately 9.2 percent of the nation's total.

<sup>2</sup> *Invisible Wounds of War*, Rand Corporation.

- California women veterans make up about 7.5 percent (165,279) of the state's veteran population.
- California veteran population by race/ethnicity<sup>3</sup> is: Hispanic of any race 12.3%; White Non-Hispanic 70.6%, African American Non Hispanic 8.7%; American Indian Non-Hispanic 0.8%; Asian Non-Hispanic 4.7%; Pacific Islander Non-Hispanic 0.3%; and Other or Multiple Race Non-Hispanic 2.5%.
- Almost 1.1 million (49%) of California veterans are concentrated in the southern part of the state in San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties.
- Thirty-two percent of California's veterans served in Vietnam; 17% in the Persian Gulf War; 13% in Korea; and 13% in World War II. Those who served in peacetime make up 24% of California's veteran population.
- Fifty-three percent of California's veterans are over 60 years old.
- It is estimated that 2.5 percent (55,000) of veterans in California are homeless.
- Approximately 8,600 veterans were treated for a substance use disorder in VA hospitals in California in 2006.

## Critical Issues Facing Veterans

### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Many veterans suffering from PTSD and other combat-related trauma self-medicate with alcohol and other drugs, so therapists

<sup>3</sup> The race/ethnicity labels used by California Department of Veterans Affairs differ from those used by National Center for Veterans.

need to be aware of the need to treat both addiction and trauma simultaneously.<sup>4</sup> "Some experts estimate that about 40 percent of veterans who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan will experience a mental health problem, and of those, 60 percent will have a substance use disorder."<sup>5</sup>

### Homelessness

Homelessness is an on going issue for veterans. The national estimates for homeless veterans are 250,000. California's estimate is 55,000.

### Substance Abuse/Mental Health

The California Department of Veterans Affairs, in a press release dated March 11, 2008, stated that among the hundreds of thousands of troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, a small but significant percentage is turning to alcohol or drugs in an effort to self-medicate. The article also cautions that the substance abuse problems should not be viewed distinct from mental health problems.

## California Veterans in Treatment

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of California's veterans in non-VA, publicly funded and narcotic treatment programs for alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment. The fact sheet was prepared by using California Outcome Measurement System (CalOMS) data for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2006-07.

The CalOMS-Treatment data includes admission data, discharge data, and client

<sup>4</sup> Join Together, News Summary, April 9, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Join Together, News Summary, April 9, 2008.

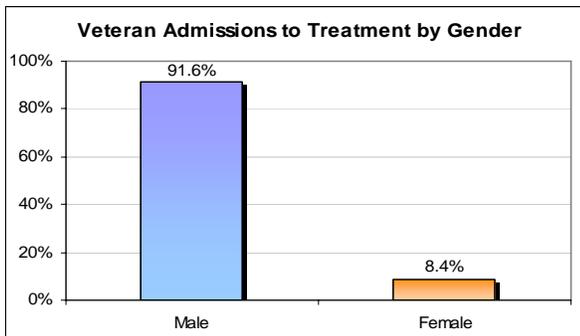
outcome data collected by county providers every time clients are enrolled in AOD treatment services.

The data are not based upon unique client counts. A client may be counted more than once if the client had more than one treatment admission and discharge during the selected reporting period.

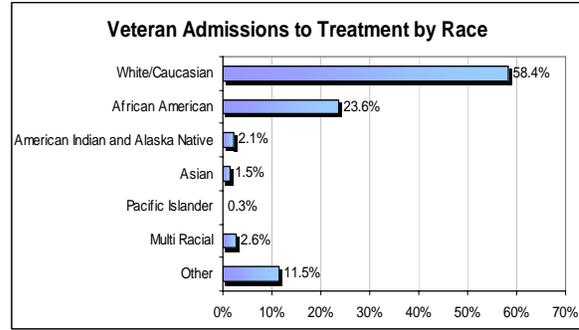
### Demographics

In SFY 2006-07 there were 225,568 admissions to publicly funded and narcotic treatment programs in California. Of those admissions, 9,139 identified themselves as veterans.

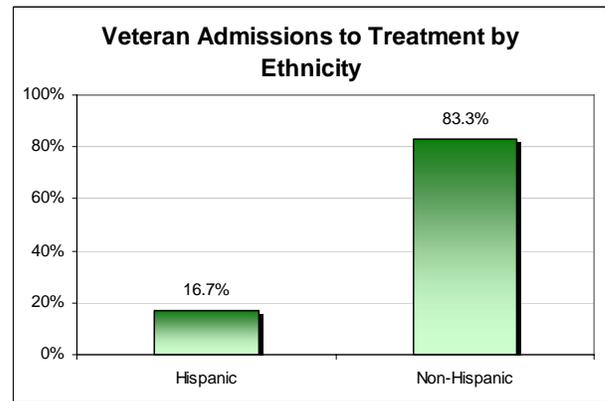
There were substantially more male admissions (91.6%) than female admissions (8.4%).



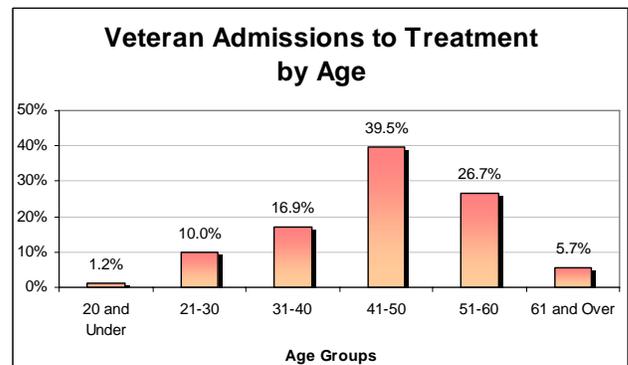
Admissions for White/Caucasians accounted for 58 percent of all veteran admissions to treatment, followed by African Americans at 23.6 percent.



Non-Hispanic admissions (83.3%) significantly outnumbered Hispanic admissions (16.7%).

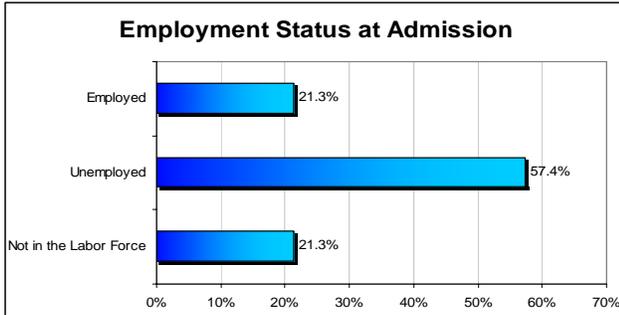


Of the 9,139 admissions to treatment 41-50-year-olds made up 39.5% of the total admissions followed by 51-60-year-olds at 26.7%.

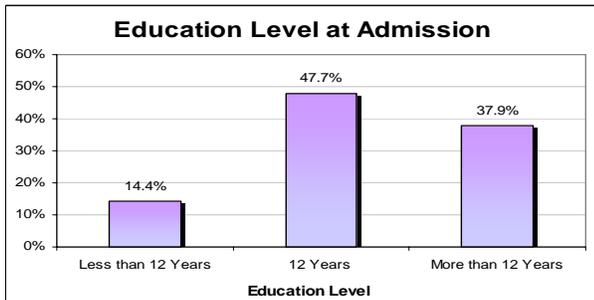


### Characteristics of Veterans in Treatment

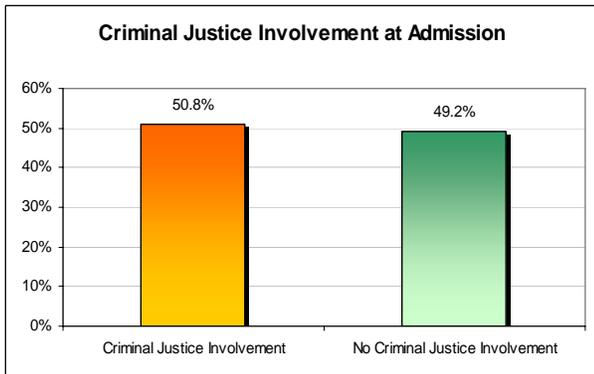
At the time of admission, over 57 percent of veterans were unemployed.



The education level at admission for 47.7 percent of veterans was 12 years. Over thirty-seven percent of all admissions had more than 12 years of education.

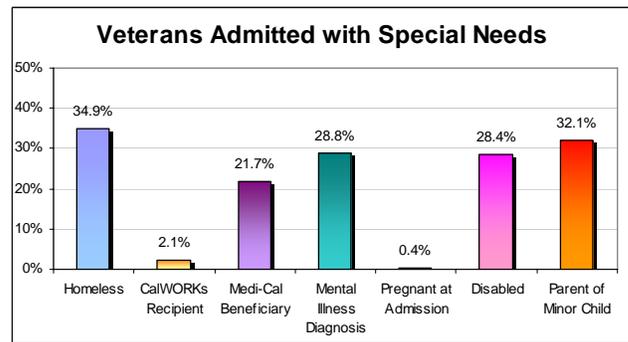


Half of the veterans in publicly funded treatment and narcotic treatment programs had criminal justice involvement.

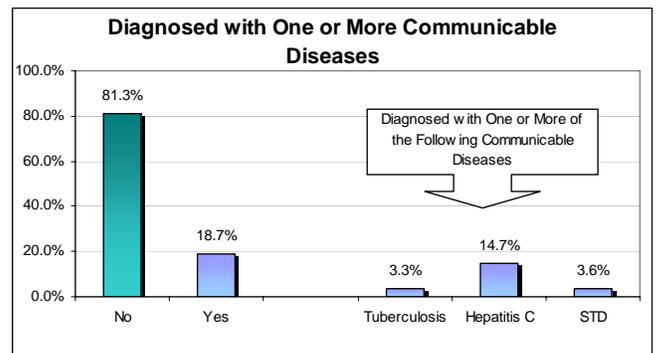


Veterans admitted to treatment had the following special needs:

- Thirty-five percent were homeless;
- Thirty-two percent were parents of minor children;
- Twenty-nine percent were diagnosed with mental illness;
- Twenty-eight percent were disabled.

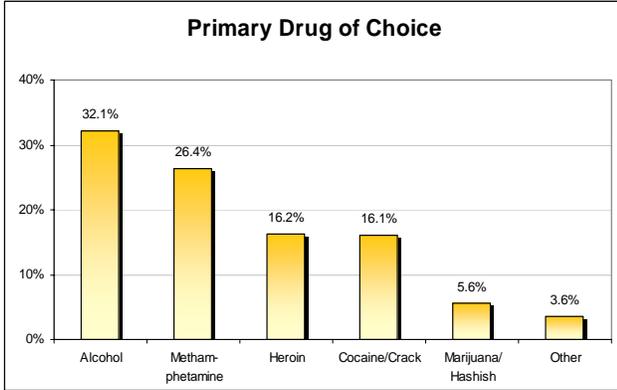


Almost 19 percent of veterans were admitted with one or more communicable diseases including tuberculosis (3.3%), Hepatitis C (14.7%) and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) (3.6%).

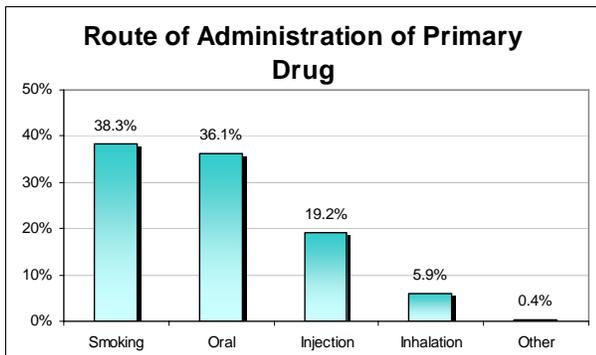


### Substance Use among Veterans

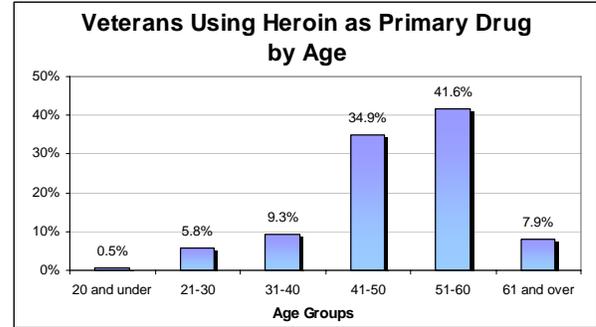
Alcohol (32.1%) was the most common primary drug of abuse reported by veterans admitted to treatment. Methamphetamine was second (26.4%) followed by heroin (16.2%) and cocaine/crack (16.1%).



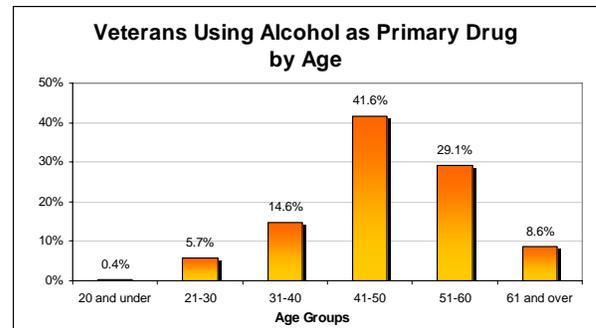
Smoking was the most common method of ingestion of the primary drug (38.3%), followed by oral ingestion (36.1%) and injection (19.2%).



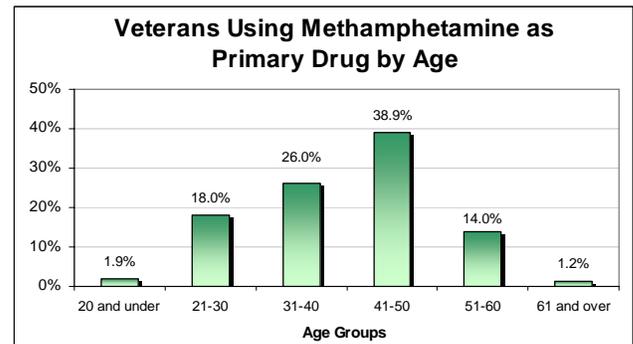
Seventy-six percent of veterans using heroin as their primary drug were between the years of 41 and 60.



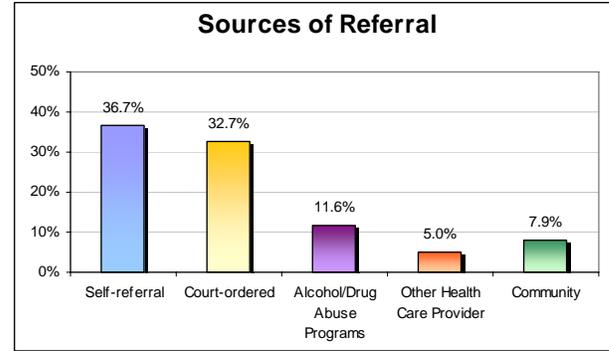
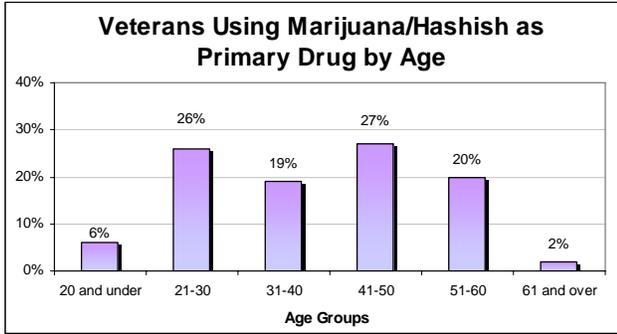
Alcohol was the primary drug for 70% of 41-60 year olds admitted to treatment.



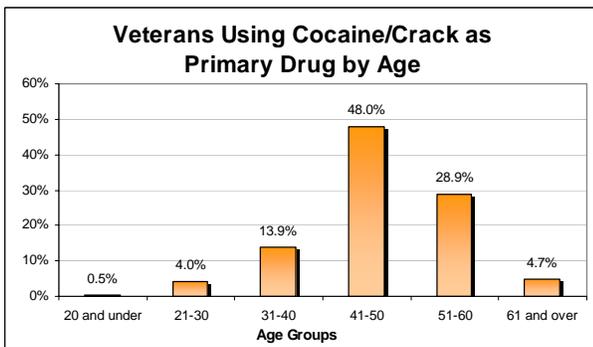
Methamphetamines were used mainly by the 41-50 age-group (38.9%). Veterans aged 31-40 reported the second highest usage of methamphetamine.



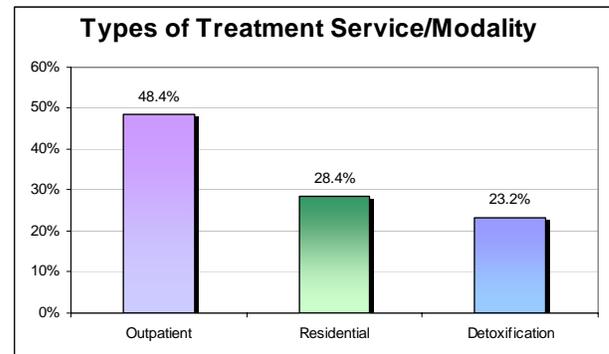
Marijuana/Hashish use was spread over the age-groups from ages 21 to 60 somewhat more evenly compared to the other primary drugs of choice.



Cocaine/Crack was the most common used drug among the 41-50 and 51-60 year-old age groups.



Over 48 percent of veteran admissions to treatment were for outpatient services. Twenty-eight percent were admitted for residential treatment while the remaining 23 percent were admitted for detoxification services.



**Access to Treatment Services**

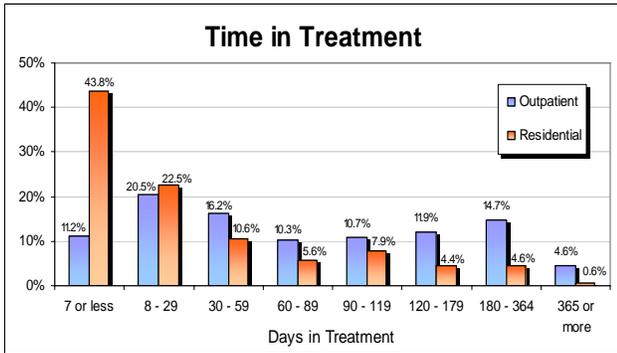
Almost 37 percent of California veterans referred themselves to treatment. Court-ordered referral was the next highest source of referral at almost 33 percent. Court-ordered referral to treatment includes such programs as the Substance Abuse Crime Prevention Act (SACPA). Other referral sources include alcohol and drug abuse programs, other health care providers and community referral programs.

**Time in Treatment**

A period of 90 days or more is widely cited as the minimum length of stay before treatment is likely to have a beneficial effect.

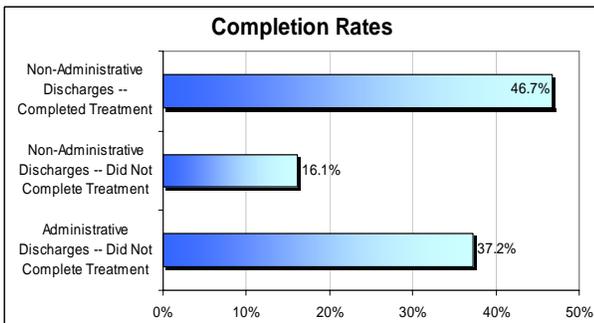
Fifty-eight percent of veteran admissions receiving outpatient treatment stayed in treatment 89 days or less. Forty-two percent of those receiving outpatient services were in treatment 90-365 days or more.

Eighty-two percent of veterans receiving residential treatment spent 89 days or less in treatment. Only 17 percent receiving residential treatment spent 90-365 days in treatment.

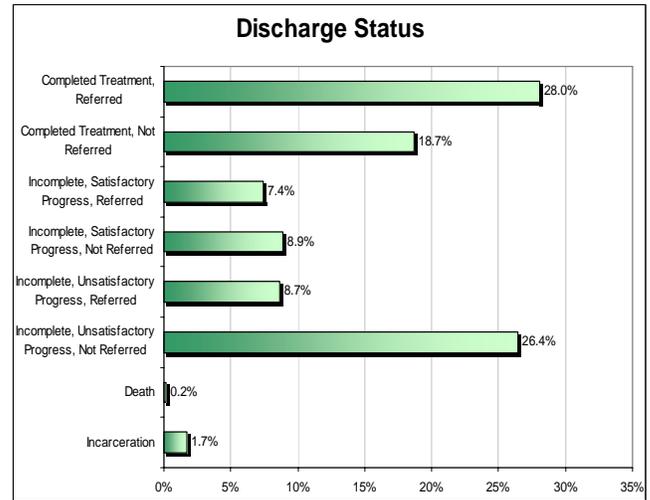


### Discharges from Treatment

During SFY 2006-07, there were 7,999 veteran discharges. Almost 47 percent of those discharges completed treatment. Sixteen percent of discharges did not complete treatment, but were referred or transferred to other treatment programs. The remaining discharges (37%) did not complete treatment and were not referred or transferred to other treatment programs for several reasons (e.g., stopped appearing for services, death, or incarceration).



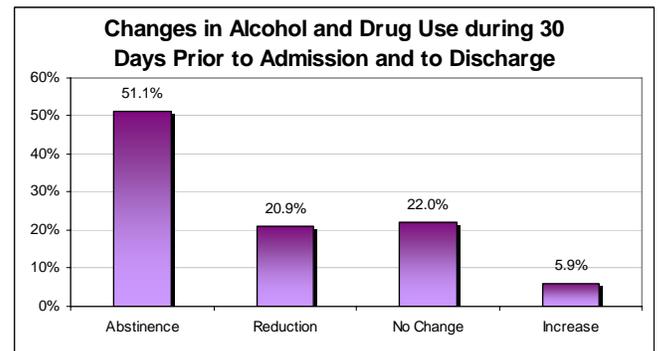
The next chart displays the discharges in more detail.



### Changes during Treatment

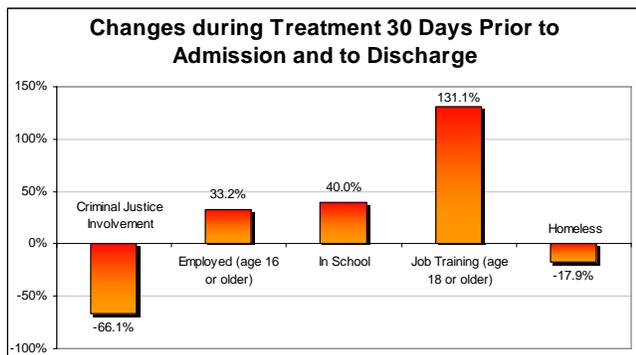
This section reports the changes in various life domains for veterans in treatment by comparing AOD use 30 days prior to admission with 30 days prior to discharge.

Fifty-one percent of discharges showed abstinence from alcohol and drug use during 30 days prior to discharge. Twenty-one percent showed a reduction and 27.9 percent showed no change or an increase in alcohol and drug use from 30 days prior to admission to 30 days prior to discharge.

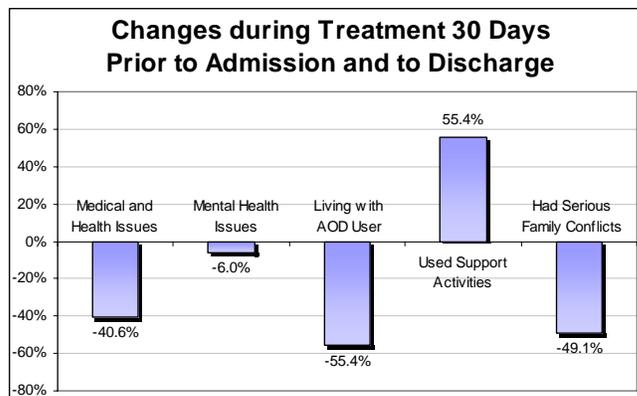


The following changes occurred during treatment:

- Criminal justice involvement dropped 66.1 percent.
- Employment increased by 33.2 percent.
- The number of those attending school increased by 40 percent.
- The number attending job training increased by 131 percent.
- Homelessness decreased by 17.9 percent.



- Medical and health issues declined by 40.6 percent. Mental health issues were diminished by six percent. These reductions may be attributed to the fact that the veterans while in treatment had access to medical and mental health services.
- Veterans living with another AOD user declined by 55 percent.
- Use of support activities increased by 55 percent.
- Veterans having serious family conflicts decreased by 49 percent.



## Hotlines and Websites

Below are some websites that provide information, help and advice useful to veterans, their families, friends, and employers.

- 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press "1" to reach the VA hotline or <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.
- Local County 24 Hour Mental Health Crisis Hotlines  
[http://www.adp.ca.gov/cojac/pdf/MH\\_24Hour\\_Hotline.pdf](http://www.adp.ca.gov/cojac/pdf/MH_24Hour_Hotline.pdf)
- County Alcohol and Drug Program Offices  
[http://www.adp.ca.gov/help/county\\_admin.shtml](http://www.adp.ca.gov/help/county_admin.shtml)
- California Department of Veterans Affairs  
<http://www.cacvso.org/ContentPage.asp?ContentID=71>
- U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
<http://www.va.gov/>