

# Pioneering Study Identifies Risk for Veteran Homelessness | CEHS

JoLynne Lyon

09/04/2015



A pioneering study reveals that a hugely disproportionate number of homeless veterans were separated from the military for misconduct.

The study was released today by the Journal of the American Medical Association. Its co-lead authors were Dr. Jamison Fargo, Associate Dean for Research in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at Utah State University, and Adi Gundlapalli, M.D., of the Veteran's Administration Salt Lake City Health Care System.

The research team analyzed data from U.S. active-duty military service members whose deployment ended between October 2001 and December 2011, who were deployed in Afghanistan or Iraq, and who were eligible for Veterans Health Administration services.

The research team's most startling finding: 26 percent of veterans who were homeless at their first encounter with the VA were separated for reasons related to misconduct. When compared to normal military separations, those who were separated due to misconduct were five times more likely to be homeless the first time they came to the VA for services, and seven times more likely to be homeless a year later.

These veterans represent a relatively small slice of people discharged from the military, at six percent. However, they accounted for more than 25 percent of homeless vets.

"Misconduct" is a term applied to people with issues like drug and alcohol abuse, commission of a serious offense, or other anti-social or risk-taking behaviors. Those who were separated from the military for misconduct were still entitled to benefits through the VA.

"This association takes on added significance because the incidence of misconduct-related separations is increasing at a time when ending homelessness among veterans is a federal government priority," the authors wrote.

Fargo said the research can help those who provide services to veterans identify people who are at risk of homelessness when they leave the military.

"They've served their country and been willing to put their lives on the line," he said. "They're entitled to some treatment and care. ... Anything we can do to prevent homelessness is a good thing, and a benefit to our society."

Fargo is a research scientist with the National Center on Homelessness among Veterans, Philadelphia Veterans Affairs Medical Center. He is also an associate professor of Psychology.

Writer: JoLynne Lyon 435-797-1463  
Contact: Jamison Fargo [jamison.fargo@usu.edu](mailto:jamison.fargo@usu.edu)

## Related Links

- [Journal of the American Medical Association](#)
- [Reuters Health](#)