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An Increase in “Bad Paper” Discharges Since 9/11 Leaves Many Veterans Without Benefits or VA Support

New report highlights how veterans with higher needs may be adversely impacted

PROVIDENCE, R.I. [Brown University] – A new report released this week examines the lives of war veterans who are issued “bad papers,” or Other Than Honorable discharges from the military, leaving them ineligible to receive veterans’ benefits and support. Compiled by the [Costs of War Project](#) based at Brown University’s [Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs](#), the report speaks to current policy reforms aimed at these veterans, and contends that current policy proposals will not go far enough to tackle the issue.

Other Than Honorable (OTH) discharges, while not the only type of “bad papers,” are the most common. They often result from minor forms of misconduct stemming from trauma sustained during military service, and they prevent veterans from receiving Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare, education and housing support, and other resources. The research, conducted by Ali R. Tayyeb, a Navy veteran and Jonas Veterans Healthcare Scholar, and Watson Institute postdoctoral fellow Jennifer Greenburg, notes that such discharges “have seen a sharp spike since 9/11, with almost six percent of the entire veteran population of this era excluded from care.”

“Veterans with ‘bad papers’ in fact may be among those veterans with higher needs for postwar assistance, being over-represented in studies on veteran Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,

Traumatic Brain Injuries, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, military sexual assault/trauma, and related problems of incarceration and homelessness,” Tayyeb and Greenburg write. “Advocacy by veteran and legal groups, a national spotlight focused on veteran suicide, and media coverage of the excluded population have all led to the VA’s admission of its improper exclusion of veterans and announcement of its intention to expand services.”

For years “bad paper” war veterans have been denied basic benefits and support after being released from the military. In March 2017, Secretary of Veterans Affairs David Shulkin announced measures to address this problem. However, Tayyeb and Greenburg argue, “reforms under consideration fall short of actually making the VA accessible to ‘bad paper’ veterans.” The proposed reforms are far too limited, focusing solely on emergency mental health services to the exclusion of basic healthcare and other support like housing, job training, and education. Moreover, the VA’s plans simply codify a number of things the VA already does for all veterans (even those with “bad papers”) experiencing mental health crises. This report sheds light on an often invisible policy that makes returning to civilian life far more difficult for war veterans.

Click [here](#) for more information on “bad papers” and the complete report.

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