



Mid-Columbia Community Action Council

Jessica

Jessica* is a veteran who, due to her severe PTSD, has trouble leaving the house and cannot keep a job. Despite all the compelling evidence and a good attorney, it is taking significant time for the VA to approve her disability claim. Honorably discharged from the military one year ago, Jessica lived for months in her car until a friend offered some financial help and she got an apartment. The challenge: How to keep it going? Unable to work, she resorted to selling most everything she had, including her jewelry, the car she had lived in, her plasma, and ultimately sex – so she could stay off the street, so she could pay the rent. Eventually she got yet another 72-hour eviction notice; Jessica was out of options.

Someone told her about MCCAC and that the agency might help her avoid becoming homeless again. In the smallest whisper, she shared her story with the caseworker, revealing her strengths, joys, hopes, and fears. She expressed how difficult she found it to ask for help, as a woman and as a veteran, adding that in her family, she was always the one who held everyone together. MCCAC used New EHA-HP funds to keep Jessica from losing her home, and together they developed a short-term rent assistance plan that would ensure housing stability until the VA approved her disability. Jessica continued to work with her caseworker for months. Happily, she recently married her best friend, whose new job promises to be enough to pay for their rent in the near future. Keeping Jessica off the streets through New EHA funds cost a mere \$1,350.

It's estimated there are more than 28,000 women veterans in Oregon.

Currently, the average wait-time to access services from the Veterans Administration (VA) is 39-months.

Source: www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State_Summaries_Oregon.pdf2015

*Community Action Agencies, like Mid-Columbia Community Action Council, Inc., support low-income individuals and families, both directly and through partnerships with community organizations. **Read more about how Community Action Agencies are helping Oregonians find safe, stable, and affordable housing at www.caporegon.org.***

** All names changed to protect privacy.*

