



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Innovators



Cards for Connection: Coping Skills Playing Cards for Homeless Veterans

Contact: Katherine.Juhasz@va.gov Funding: VHA Innovators Network, Spark (2018)



40,000+

Veterans were without shelter on any given night in 2017

of the Veterans followed in a More than large-scale longitudinal study 50% had a diagnosed mental disorder before they became homeless

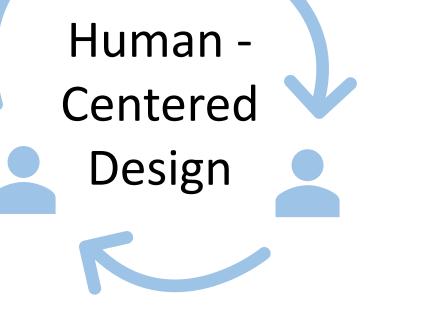
Up to had a mental disorder 92% diagnosis after experiencing homelessness



Cards for Connection

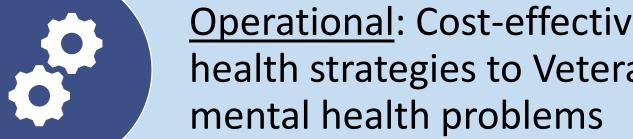
Each of the 52 playing cards has a unique design, and in using them for their primary function (as playing cards) Veterans will have repeated exposure to simple, easy to implement coping skills and critical VA resources

Since playing cards are already distributed and used in VA and homeless outreach settings, this is an easy to access and maintain resource for homeless Veterans





<u>Clinical</u>: Increased awareness of and engagement with VA clinical services among Veterans who are homeless, including increased access to mental health services and critical resources



<u>Operational</u>: Cost-effective method for distributing evidence-based mental health strategies to Veterans who are homeless and living with untreated



<u>Financial</u>: Public education campaign using playing cards has the potential to reduce the need for, or increase the efficiency of, existing mental health outreach efforts

Customer: Puts VA resources into the hands of Veterans in need; makes it easier for Veterans to use effective mental health strategies and to connect to existing services, using an easily accessible and Veteran-focused product

Cards for Connection offers a non-stigmatizing and low-cost solution that can be seamlessly integrated into current operations

This fills a critical gap for homeless Veterans who have difficulty connecting to essential resources

Critical Phone Number

Connect with Others



Take Care of Yourself

	Help for Homeless Veterans 877-4AID-VET regretowater (877) 424-3838 Call for help with VA housing or mental health services.	Share a helpful resource or skill with a friend.	Try a VA mobile app, like PTSD Coach or Mindfulness Coach. Search for them in your app store.	4 Say hello to someone. ♥	5 Feeling stressed in a situation? Count to 10, then decide what to do.	Feeling out of touch with your body? Ask yourself: Can I feel my feet on the ground? What do I see? What do I hear?	Need a medication refill? Call the number on your bottle to request more. Write that number here for easy reference.	8 Thank you for your commitment to our country.	9 ▲ In recovery? Avoid your triggers. 6	10 I can do this.	J It's ok if it takes time to figure things out.	L can get through this.	K Breathe. X	
	Call if you need someone to talk to. You don't have to be in crisis.	2 Place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach. Breathe in and out slowly for one minute.	Emotions are like waves – they come and go.	4 Think of something you're proud of - a contribution you have made. Thank you for that.	Need support for intimate partner violence? Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233.	6 It's ok to make mistakes. 9	What do 1 like about myself? Name two things.	8 Have you checked how your body is feeling today?	9 Am I spending too much time alone? 6	10 It's ok to call your doctor to check in. Write their number here.	Say something kind to someone.	Do something nice for someone else.	K I am worth it.	
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	A Need shelter, food, clothes, or a shower? Dial 211.	What's your priority? What steps do you need to take to make it happen?	Play a game of cards with someone.	4 ← This time could be the start of something new. ↓	What was my mission when I was a child? What's my mission now?	Many libraries offer free internet and staff who can show you how to use it.	Describe 3 things you can see right now.	Listen for your breaths as you breathe in and out.	9 I've made it to today - what has helped me get here?	10 What have I done to nurture myself?	Feel your heart beating. Feel your feet on the ground.	What am I grateful for?	K Connect with a friend.	
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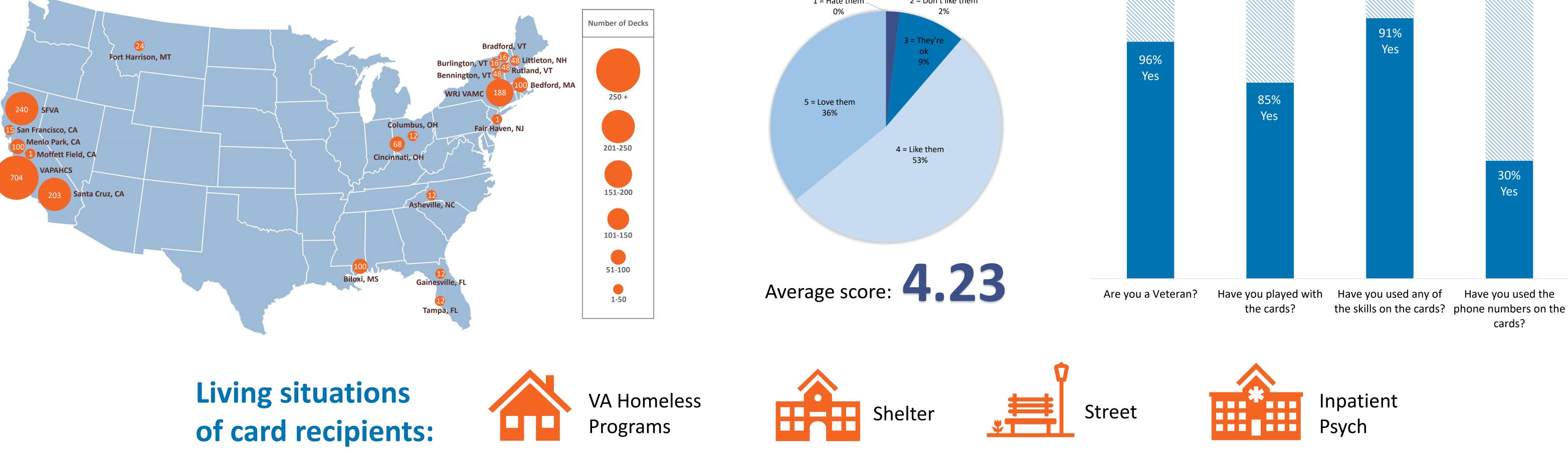
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Societal: Contributes to ongoing efforts to end homelessness among Veterans and to address the tremendous unmet needs of this population

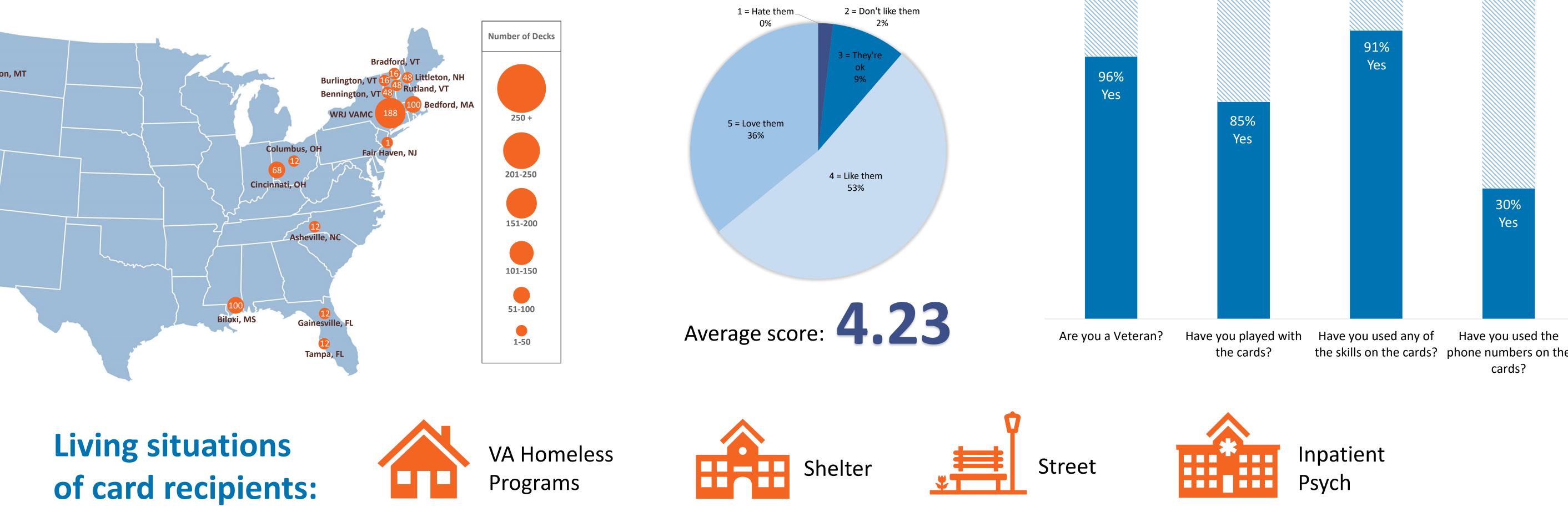


Cards for Connection Prototype Distribution (2018)

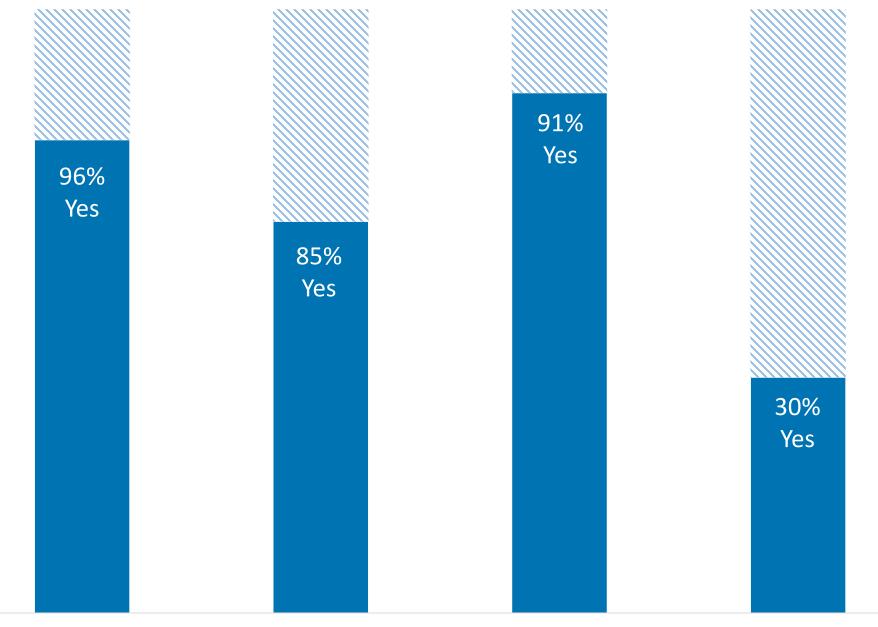
2,000 Decks distributed in **10** states



How would you rate the cards? N=53



Veteran Postcard Return Feedback N=53



Theme: Playing cards are familiar and convenient for Veterans.

"They can also be very sentimental because it could take them back to times of service, times with friends/battle buddies, whatever."

Theme: The size of playing cards is important.

"Also, the size is great-very accessible, easy to carry, portable."

Theme: For Veterans dealing with addiction or in recovery from addiction, playing cards are familiar and convenient.

"I'm a Veteran too, I was homeless, and all we did was play cards, dominos, and drink. And I go to a memorial in the city and all they do is play cards, drink, and play dominos."

Theme: Playing cards are discreet and accessible.

"Then you put them back in your pocket – like a wallet. Camouflaged, doesn't draw attention to them, someone can easily step aside, sit down, pull it out real quick and take a look, then put it back. For Veterans in general, not just homelessness, it's great."

Theme: There's a unique social aspect to playing cards and an educational component to these cards.

"Yeah, it's social and it's an educational platform – it opens up a conversation. It can be a very helpful resource for family, in particular."