


Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD


Veterans and Mental Health
Learning About PTSD

with Dr. Laura Wiedeman
Northern California VA Health Care System


June 20, 2017




Posttraumatic Stress Disorder



Laura Wiedeman, Psy.D.
Clinical Psychologist
VA Northern CA Health Care System
PTSD Clinical Team




June 2017



Objectives

- Learn about PTSD epidemiology, symptoms, and recovery
- Review available resources for veterans with PTSD, including websites, educational videos, mobile apps, and VA services
- Address common misconceptions about PTSD that may be held by veterans and/or the public
- Develop a greater understanding of how to interact with veterans who may have PTSD


VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION



Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.


Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD

Objective #1:
**PTSD EPIDEMIOLOGY, SYMPTOMS,
AND RECOVERY**


VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

What is a "traumatic" event?

Daily hassles	Major life events	Serious traumatic events
Can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Car breaking down• Paying bills	Can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Losing a job• Divorce• Buying a new home• Getting married	Can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• War zone exposure• Physical or sexual assault• Serious accidents• Child sexual or physical abuse• Natural disasters• Torture


VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Trauma exposure is common.



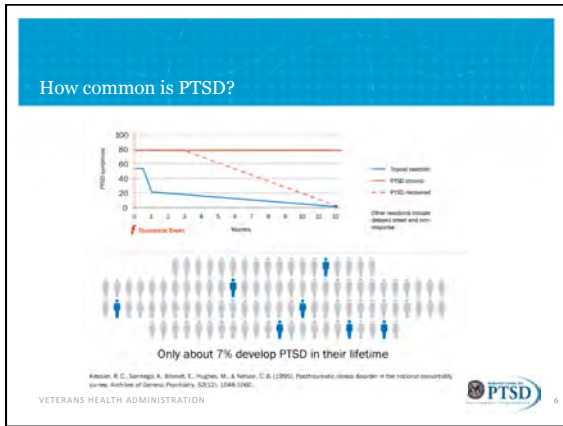
Most people you meet every day have experienced a trauma.

Kessler, R. C., Sonnega, A., Bromert, E., Hughes, M., & Nelson, C. B. (1995). Posttraumatic stress disorder in the national comorbidity survey. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 52(12), 1148-1156.

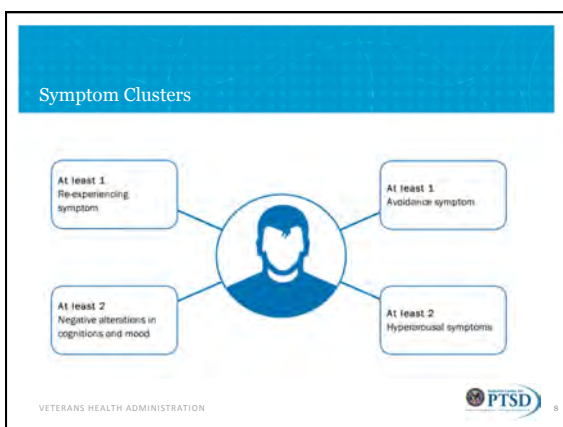
VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD



- ### Criterion A: Traumatic Event
- Directly experiencing a traumatic event
 - Witnessing, in person, an event that happened to someone else
 - Learning about the violent or unexpected death of a friend or family member
 - Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of traumatic events
- VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION




Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD


**Symptom Clusters: Intrusions (Re-experiencing)
(Criterion B)**

- Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s)
- Recurrent, distressing dreams related to the traumatic event(s)
- Dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks)
- Intense or prolonged psychological distress at exposure to trauma reminders
- Marked physiological reactions to trauma reminders

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 


**Symptom Clusters: Persistent Avoidance
(Criterion C)**

- Effortful avoidance of distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings related to the traumatic event(s)
- Effortful avoidance of external reminders (e.g., people, places, conversations, situations) related to the traumatic event(s)

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

**Symptom Clusters: Negative changes in beliefs and feelings
(Criterion D)**

- Persistent, exaggerated negative beliefs about oneself, others, and/or the world
- Distorted blame of self or others
- Persistent negative emotions
- Difficulty feeling positive emotions
- Feeling detached or cut off from others
- Diminished interest or participation in significant activities
- Difficulty remembering important aspects of the trauma


VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD


Symptom Clusters: Alterations in arousal and reactivity (Criterion E)

- Irritable behavior and angry outbursts
- Reckless or self-destructive behavior
- Hypervigilance
- Exaggerated startle response
- Problems with concentration
- Sleep disturbance


VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Prevalence rates, by service era

- 11-20% • 11-20 out of every 100 veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) have PTSD in a given year
- 12% • About 12 out of every 100 veterans who served in the Gulf War (Desert Storm) have PTSD in a given year
- 15% • About 15 out of every 100 veterans who served in Vietnam have PTSD in a given year

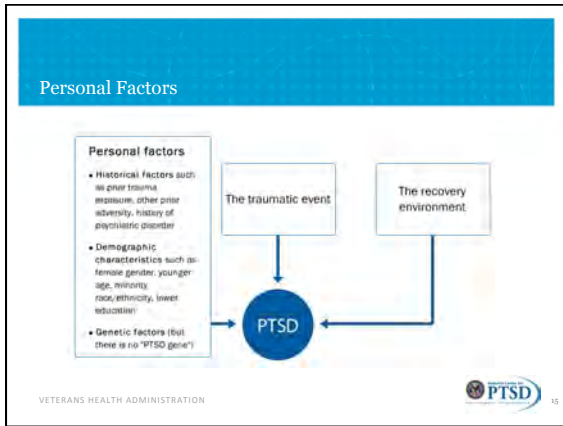
VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

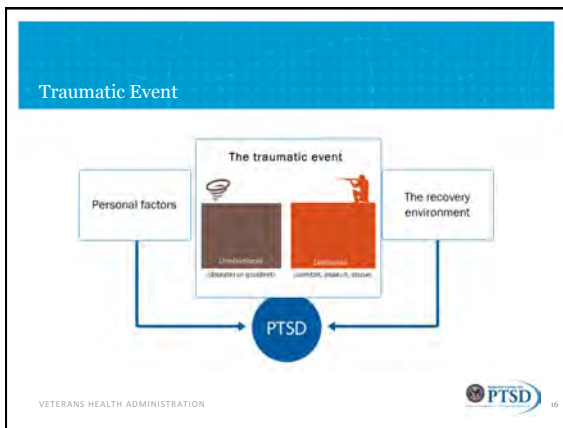
Why do some people get PTSD while others do not?

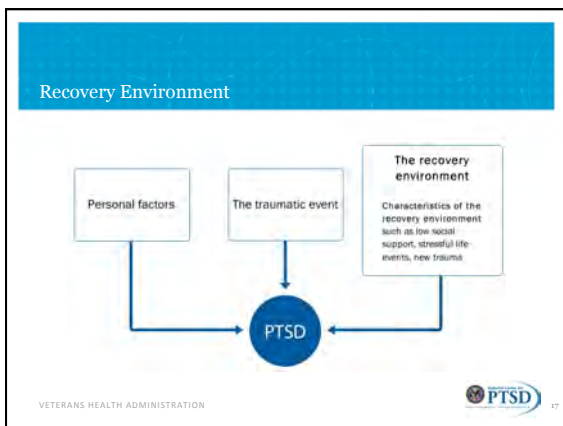
VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD

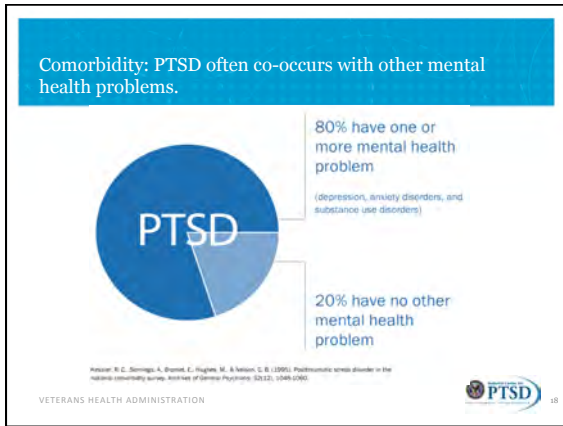


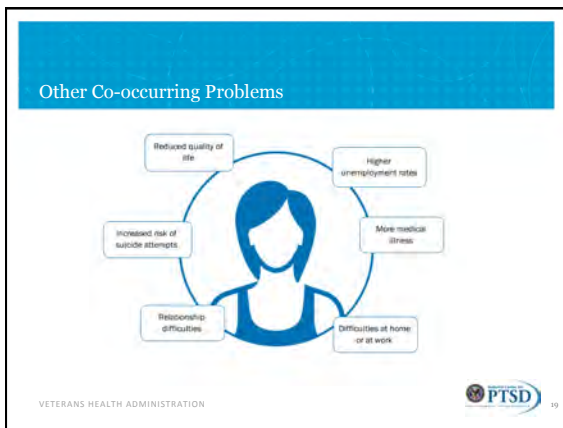


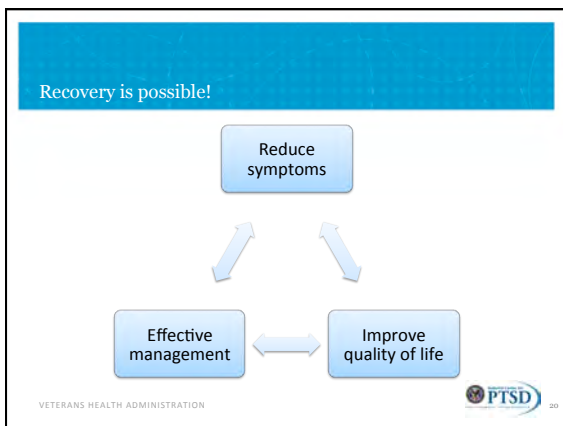


Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD







Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD

How can PTSD be treated?

Both medication and psychotherapy are effective, but psychotherapy is more effective

How effective are these treatments?

Both medication and talk therapy can help to treat your symptoms. Your customized treatment plan may include one or more of these options.

TREATMENT EFFECTS ON PTSD SYMPTOMS

Medications: 0.43
Talk Therapy: 1.26

What do the numbers mean?
The greater the effect size, the more noticeable a change in symptoms.

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

PTSD

Evidence-based Psychotherapy Treatments

- First line psychotherapies:

A **Trauma-focused psychotherapy** that includes components of exposure and/or cognitive restructuring, such as:

- **Prolonged Exposure (PE)**
- **Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)**
- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)**

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

PTSD

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Works

Prolonged Exposure

Pre-Treatment	~75
Post-Treatment	~45
9 Month Follow-up	~40
5-10 Years	~35

Cognitive Processing Therapy

Pre-Treatment	~75
Post-Treatment	~45
9 Month Follow-up	~40
5-10 Years	~35

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION


PTSD

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD


Evidence-based Pharmacological Treatments

- **First line medications:**
 - Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)
 - E.g., paroxetine (Paxil), sertraline (Zoloft), fluoxetine (Prozac)
 - Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)
 - E.g., venlafaxine (Effexor)
- **Warning: Benzodiazepines (e.g., Xanax, Valium, Klonopin)**
 - Limited efficacy
 - Increased safety concerns – potential for harm
 - Not recommended for PTSD

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 


Objective #2

RESOURCES AND SERVICES

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

National Center for PTSD
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov>

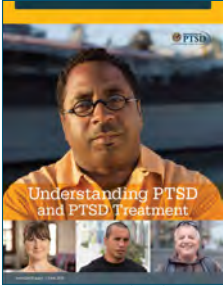
- Provide **education** about PTSD and effective PTSD treatments
- Make available resources to promote treatment **engagement**
- Develop tools to foster **self help** and **symptom management**

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 


Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD

PTSD Basics
http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/understanding_ptsd/booklet.pdf





- *Understanding PTSD and PTSD Treatment* is a booklet that explains basic information about:
 - What is PTSD?
 - What can cause PTSD?
 - What are the symptoms of PTSD?
 - What do I do if I have symptoms?
 - How do I know if I have PTSD?
 - Why get treatment for PTSD?
 - Common questions about treatment
 - What happens during PTSD treatment?
 - How do I choose a mental health provider?
 - Where can I go to get help?

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 


Animated Whiteboard Videos


- Short (~3 minute), engaging videos about PTSD and effective treatments



VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

AboutFace
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/AboutFace/>



VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD

PTSD Treatment Decision Aid
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/decisionaid>

PTSD
 TREATMENT DECISION AID:
 THE CHOICE IS YOURS

LEARN
 Understand your symptoms and how they affect you

COMPARE
 Compare your symptoms with treatment options

ACT
 Use your skills to make a decision

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Mobile Apps
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/materials/apps/index.asp>

- The National Center for PTSD has partnered with a number of organizations to develop a variety of mobile apps.
- Apps are focused on PTSD, related health problems (e.g., insomnia, alcohol use, etc.), or general well-being.
- There are apps for patients, providers, and for use with patient-provider dyads.

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

PTSD Coach
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/materials/apps/PTSDCoach.asp>

- PTSD Coach mobile app – more than 275,000 downloads in 98 countries.
- App provides:
 - Education about PTSD and PTSD treatment
 - A self-assessment tool
 - Portable skills to address acute symptoms
 - Direct connection to crisis support
- Used as stand-alone education and symptom management tool, or with face-to-face care.
- Tools are easily accessible when they are needed most.

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION


Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD

PTSD Coach Online
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/ptsdcoachonline/default.htm>


- PTSD Coach Online offers an expanded suite of 17 tools to help manage symptoms (e.g., problem solving, challenging cognitions).
- Users can choose a tool based upon a current problem or a full list of tools.
- Video instructions from "coaches" are available for each tool.




VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

PTSD Family Coach
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/materials/apps/PTSDFamilyCoach.asp>

- PTSD Coach is for family members of those living with PTSD.
- App provides:
 - Education about PTSD and self-care
 - Information to help take care of your relationship and children
 - Resources to help a loved one get treatment for PTSD
 - Tools to manage stress and build social networks
 - Tracking for stress level over time




VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Printable Materials to Share
http://www.ptsd.va.gov/about/press-room/Materials_for_Printing.asp

- A variety of handouts, posters, brochures, and flyers
- Intended for veterans, families, and general public knowledge
- Emphasis on understanding PTSD, co-occurring conditions, treatment, as well as more general readjustment issues



VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD

Veterans Crisis Line
<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

- 24/7
- Phone support
- Text messaging
- Online chat

Veterans Crisis Line
 1-800-273-8255
 PRESS 1
 Confidential help for Veterans and their families

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Make the Connection
<http://maketheconnection.net>

- "MakeTheConnection.net is an online resource designed to connect Veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources, and solutions to issues affecting their lives."
 - Information about common life challenges, problems, and conditions
 - Extensive video gallery with good sorting options
 - Information and resource locator
 - Self-assessments and self-help

MAKE THE CONNECTION

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Where to Get Help: US Dept. of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)	Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)	National Cemetery Administration (NCA)
Hospitals	Compensation	Burial and memorial benefits
Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)	Education & Training	
Vet Centers	Home Loans	

***Please note this is not a complete list of services provided by each administration*


VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD


Where to Get Help: Benefits (VBA)

- Connect to your local Regional Benefit Office
 - Locator: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?STATE=CA&dnum=3>
 - CA locations: Oakland, Los Angeles, San Diego
- Find your local County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO)
 - Assistance and advocacy in connecting veterans and their families with service and benefits
 - County locations: <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/CVSO-Locations.aspx>

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 


Where to Get Help: Health Care (VHA) Eligibility & Enrollment

- Eligibility Criteria: <https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/veterans.asp>
 - Served in the military
 - Separated under any condition other than dishonorable
 - Minimum duty requirement (24 consecutive months)
- Enrollment
 - Complete VA Form 10-10EZ
 - <https://www.vets.gov/>
 - For assistance:
 - Call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) for help completing the form
 - Contact the Enrollment Coordinator at your local VA health care facility
 - Contact a National or State Veterans Service Organization

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Where to Get Help: Health Care (VHA) Locations

- Hospitals and Community Based Outpatient Clinics
 - Hospital & Clinic Locator: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/division.asp?dnum=1>
- Vet Centers
 - Readjustment Counseling for veterans and their families
 - For those who served in a combat theater or area of hostility, experienced MST, provided mortuary services, operated unmanned aerial vehicles in support of combat operations
 - Bereavement counseling
 - CA Locations: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?dnum=ALL&STATE=CA>


VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 


Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD

**Where to Get Help:
Health Care (VHA) PTSD Treatment**

- All VA Medical Centers provide PTSD care, as well as many VA clinics
- Some clinics have specialized PTSD programs
 - VA PTSD Program Locator: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD.asp>
 - Within CA: https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state_PTSD.cfm?STATE=CA
- PTSD services may also be provided over telehealth
- Comprehensive resource list: “Where to get help for PTSD”
 - <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/where-to-get-help.asp>



VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Objective #3
COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Common Misconceptions

About trauma exposure and/or having PTSD:


- You can only have PTSD from combat
- PTSD is a lifelong, chronic disease
- Having PTSD means I am weak, crazy, broken, or damaged

About recovery:

- It is too late for me to recover
- Everyone who served in combat has PTSD

About services:


- I am not eligible for VHA services because I am not service connected
- I can only get treatment for PTSD at a VA hospital

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.


Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD

Objective #4:
INTERACTING WITH VETERANS WHO MAY HAVE PTSD


VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Interacting with Veterans with PTSD


- Many veterans will not know or disclose if they have PTSD
- Provide information and assistance connecting them to VBA benefits and VHA services
- Focus questions on ways they need help – what do you need to know in order to help them?
 - Talking about specifics of military service, including deployments, may be personal or triggering
 - Trauma exposure or details are not needed
- Be mindful of personal space (e.g., approaching from behind, physical touch, sudden movements)
- Offer validation, normalization, and gratitude
- Instill hope

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Thank you!




Laura Wiedeman, Psy.D.
925.372.2277
Laura.Wiedeman@va.gov

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Veterans and Mental Health: Learning About PTSD



Infopeople is dedicated to bringing you the best in practical library training and improving information access for the public by improving the skills of library workers. Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act administered in California by the State Librarian. This material is covered by [Creative Commons 4.0](#) Non-commercial Share Alike license. Any use of this material should credit the funding source.

Infopeople, a grant project of the Califa Group, is supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.