VA Suicide Prevention: Eliminating Veteran Suicide

National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP)
Vet Court Conference
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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Executive Director
Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
Between 2001 and 2014, the age-adjusted rates of suicide in the U.S. civilian population have increased.

- **Civilian Adults**: 23.9%
- **Adult Males**: 2.6%
- **Adult Females**: 40.1%
[Placeholder “I’m Good” PSA]

Please copy and paste the link below into your browser to view on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPFo9EvU
UvA
VA’s largest analysis of suicide data informs prevention strategies for high-risk Veterans.

Between 2001 and 2014, the age-adjusted rates of suicide have increased.

- **U.S. VETERANS**: 31.1%
- **VETERAN MALES**: 29.7%
- **VETERAN FEMALES**: 62.4%
Veteran Suicide Statistics for 2010-2014

Decrease in average number of Veteran suicides per day

- 2010: 22
- 2014: 20

Decrease in number of Veteran suicides as a percentage of all suicides among U.S. adults

- 2010: 20.1%
- 2014: 18%
Veteran Suicide Statistics for 2014

65% of Veteran suicides are among people age 50 or older

67% of Veteran suicides are a result of firearm injury
Veteran suicide rates were lower among those who used Veterans Health Administration care.

Percentage changes in age-adjusted rates of suicide in Veterans from 2001-2014:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>USED VA Services</th>
<th>DID NOT USE VA Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. VETERANS</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>38.4%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VETERAN MALES</strong></td>
<td><strong>8%</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VETERAN FEMALES</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>81.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suicide Prevention: Everyone’s Business

Shared responsibility for eliminating Veteran suicide through:

- Engagement of staff and leadership across VA
- Strategic community partnerships
- Gatekeeper and provider training to facilitate risk identification and action
- Engagement in high-quality mental health treatment that is Veteran-centered
- Robust education about safety related to lethal means
- Proactive research and data science
# Data-Driven Suicide Prevention: Summary of Research Evidence

## Strong evidence
- Reducing access to lethal means (#1)
- Proper ID/treatment of mood disorders
- Education of PCPs regarding depression
- Structured follow-up after a suicide attempt

## Inconclusive but positive evidence
- Letter programs
- Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)
- Targeted public health campaigns

## Some evidence
- Gatekeeper trainings
- CBT, CAMS, DBT
- Family-based interventions post-suicide attempt

## Insufficient, weak, or absent evidence
- Screening in primary care populations
- Telephone/internet services, mobile applications
- Skills development
- “Reasons to live” lists

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**Tailor to specific risk groups and focus on quality of mental health services for high-risk patients.**
Free, Confidential Support 24/7/365

- Veterans
- Family members
- Friends
- Servicemembers

Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255
Suicide Prevention Coordinators

More than 400 SPCs nationwide
S.A.V.E. Training: Teaching communities how to help Veterans at risk for suicide

S.A.V.E. Training will help you act with care and compassion if you encounter a Veteran who is in suicidal crisis.

- **S**igns of suicidal thinking should be recognized
- **A**sk the most important question of all
- **V**alidate the Veteran’s experience
- **E**ncourage treatment and **E**xpedite getting help
The REACH VET program will enhance Veteran care.

- Uses data to identify Veterans at high risk for suicide
- Notifies VA providers of the risk assessment
- Allows providers to re-evaluate and enhance the Veteran’s care

Started nationwide in **fall 2016**
No one can un-fire a firearm.

For someone in crisis, a locked firearm can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a life saved.

Watch an informational video and learn more at VeteransCrisisLine.net

Suicide Prevention Coordinators at local VA Medical Centers can provide gun locks to secure firearms in the home.
[Placeholder “Gun Safety” Video]

Please copy and paste the link below into your browser to view on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fGHTvTsApg

**What:** The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) suicide prevention program office has developed an outreach video to emphasize the importance of taking precautions at home when a firearm is present.

**How it will be used:** The video is primarily used by VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs) in their community outreach and education efforts.

**The main message:** Simple actions can help individuals and families stay safe, especially during emotional or stressful times, or when someone in the home is in crisis. This video encourages Veterans, Service Members, and their families to make sure guns and ammunition are safely secured in their home, particularly when someone is experiencing a period of depression or crisis.

**Experts consulted:** Content and messaging for this video was developed with assistance from subject matter experts at the Harvard Injury Control Research Center and the National Shooting Sports Foundation. Veterans of various ages, service eras, demographics, and geographies also contributed.
MAKE THE CONNECTION

www.MakeTheConnection.net

• Is relevant to all Veterans and their families, **regardless of eligibility for VA care** or the range of mental health issues they may be experiencing

• Informs Veterans, their families and friends, and members of their communities about **resources designed to help Veterans live well**

• **Reaches Veterans where they are** — online and through trusted media and influencers — when they need support

• Features **true stories** from real Veterans, which serve as a powerful tool in breaking down barriers and can help Veterans realize they are not alone
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Name</th>
<th>Partner Type</th>
<th>Description of Partnership/Project</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation</td>
<td>For Profit</td>
<td>Facilitate connections and sharing of best practices; focused on peer support, student Veterans, chaplaincy-mental health integration.</td>
<td>MOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give An Hour (GAH)</td>
<td>Non profit</td>
<td>Training in Evidence-Based Psychotherapy, Operation SAVE, to GAH volunteers (7000 clinicians) and other VA tools for providers.</td>
<td>MOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>For Profit</td>
<td>Co-develop a data-driven, personalized mobile bot that builds trust and converses with Veterans/Service Members via text messaging to discern needs (e.g. housing, social connections, health), encourage help-seeking, and connect users to organizations that can assist with those needs; targeting transitioning Veterans.</td>
<td>MOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson &amp; Johnson</td>
<td>For profit</td>
<td>Develop multi-media outreach campaign to unite the country on a call to action to prevent Veteran suicide; precision medicine; research.</td>
<td>MOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE), University of Michigan</td>
<td>Non-profit</td>
<td>Coordination of services, resources, and training on college campuses for student Veteran peer support networks and VAMCs.</td>
<td>MOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Hero</td>
<td>Non profit</td>
<td>Outreach generally to Veterans and clinical support during Ride to Recovery events.</td>
<td>MOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PsychArmor Institute</td>
<td>Non profit</td>
<td>Collaborate to develop web-based training in Evidence-based Psychotherapies, military culture, Operation SAVE (gatekeeper training), caregiver support, etc. to help employers, community healthcare providers, volunteers, and educators better serve Veterans.</td>
<td>MOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semper Fi Fund</td>
<td>Non profit</td>
<td>Collaborate on outreach and education to post 9/11 Veterans and caregivers and the case managers who work for Semper Fi; specifically developing a program to target Marine 2-7 Battalion.</td>
<td>MOA (pending USH signature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walgreen’s</td>
<td>For Profit</td>
<td>MH outreach (Make the Connection, VBA); opioid overdose education; military culture training; pilot Veteran specific programs in rural community pharmacies with high suicide rates.</td>
<td>MOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)</td>
<td>Non profit</td>
<td>Care-coordination with the 4 Wounded Care Networks; outreach and training for providers and Veterans.</td>
<td>MOA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How you can connect with VA

VHA provides specialty inpatient and outpatient mental health services at its medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics.  
www.mentalhealth.va.gov

Crisis support for Veterans, their friends, and their families.  
Phone: 1-800-273-8255, Press 1  
Text: 838255  
Live chat: www.veteranscrisisline.net

VA community-based centers that provide a range of counseling, outreach, and referral services.  
Phone: 1-877-WAR-VETS (927-8387)  
www.vetcenter.va.gov

A free, confidential “coaching” service provided by VA that helps Veterans’ family and friends to recognize when the Veteran in their life needs support and learn how to connect them with local resources.  
Phone:1-888-823-7458  
https://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/
Coping and Symptom Management Apps

Problem-solving skills for stress

Safety plan & support during crisis

Tools for coping, relaxation, distraction & positive thinking

Manage physical & emotional stress

Monitor & manage PTSD symptoms

Enhance sleep quality & duration

https://mobile.va.gov/appstore
www.t2health.dcoe.mil/products/mobile-apps
Additional Resources

VA's center of excellence for research and education on the prevention, understanding, and treatment of PTSD.
Phone: 1-802-296-6300
www.ptsd.va.gov

Information on VA services and resources, understanding military culture and experience, and tools for working with a variety of mental health conditions.
www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders/

One-on-one consultation at no charge for VA providers with general or specific questions about suicide risk management.
Phone: 1-866-948-7880
https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/consult/index.asp
Additional information and materials available at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net)

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Helping Others Hold On: Veteran Suicide Prevention

Marjorie Morrison, Founder and CEO
The Challenge

With fewer than 1% of our country serving in uniform, most Americans are unfamiliar with military life and culture. The lack of cultural awareness about the military can make it difficult for veterans to transition back to civilian life.
PsychArmor Exists to Help Bridge the Gap

PsychArmor’s online library of FREE educational courses are:

• Available on-demand, 24/7
• Short, self-paced modules made for today’s busy schedules
• Developed by nationally recognized subject matter experts
• Evidence-based and clinically informed
• Immersive experiences – animation, gamification, videos and simulations bring the course content to life
We Have Courses For...

- Military Culture: School for Everyone
- Health Care Providers: Treat Veterans & Their Families
- Guard, Reserve & Veteran Employers
- Military Veteran Caregivers and Families
- Volunteers: Who Support Veterans
- Transitioning Service Members and Their Families
- K-12 Educators: Who Support Military Kids
- Educators: Who Support Student Veterans
Helping Others Hold On
Other Courses Available Now

Course
Supporting a Veteran in Crisis

This course is designed for businesses to educate them on the differences between their Veteran and civilian employees and ways to support their Veteran employees. Topics include how to recognize the warning signs that a Veteran may be heading for a crisis, how to approach a Veteran employee in crisis, and what steps to take to help a Veteran during an acute crisis situation.
Together We Can Help Others Hold On

We’d love for you to join us. Get in touch:

www.psycharmor.org

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