



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Fact Sheet

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Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for America Veterans (SAV) Act Fact Sheet February 2015

On February 12, 2015, President Obama signed the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention Act into law. Sgt. Clay Hunt left Active Duty service with the U.S. Marine Corps in 2008. Following his discharge, he struggled with depression, panic attacks and post-traumatic stress but threw himself into Veterans advocacy and humanitarian work. In 2011, he died by suicide at the age of 28. Mental health care and suicide prevention are already among the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) highest priorities. This Act will give VA additional authority to address these priorities.

Statement from VA Secretary Robert McDonald on Passage of the Clay Hunt Bill

“I’m pleased that both houses of Congress have come together to pass the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for America Veterans (SAV) Act. Sgt. Clay Hunt’s death was a tragedy. Every suicide is one too many. I had the honor of meeting Sgt. Hunt’s parents and was inspired by their strength and their commitment to further improve care for Veterans like Clay. Thanks to their efforts, this legislation will help VA take additional steps to improve mental health care for those who have borne the battle.”

Anticipated Improvements to Mental Health Care:

- VA will have an independent third party conduct annual evaluations of the mental health care and suicide prevention programs that are carried out by the Department.
- VA will publish an Internet website that serves as a centralized source to provide Veterans with information regarding all of the mental health care services provided by VA. The information on the website will be updated at least every 90 days, and VA will include information about the website in outreach efforts.
- VA will conduct a pilot program for the repayment of educational loans for certain psychiatrists in VA. The pilot will pay up to \$30,000 of educational loan expenses per year and would require a service obligation period. Eligible individuals would include those licensed or eligible for licensure to practice psychiatric medicine in VA or those who are enrolled in the final year of a residency program leading to a specialty qualification in psychiatric medicine. VA will provide an initial and a final report addressing the results of the pilot program.
- VA will establish a three-year pilot program focused on assisting Veterans transitioning from active duty and improve the access of Veterans to mental health services. The pilot program will be established in at least 5 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) and will establish a community-oriented peer support network and a community outreach team for each medical center in those VISNs.

VA will produce an initial and a final report addressing the results of the pilot program.

- VA will collaborate with nonprofit mental health organizations to prevent suicide among Veterans and VA will appoint a Director of Suicide Prevention Coordination to lead the collaboration efforts.
- Combat Veterans who were discharged between January 1, 2009, and January 1, 2011, and did not enroll in the VA health care during their 5 year period of eligibility will have an additional one year to enroll. The additional one-year eligibility period begins on the date of enactment of the Act (February 12, 2015).