Veteran Affairs Suicide Prevention Programs

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Be there for someone in your life.

Connect fellow Veterans and Servicemembers in crisis with support.

VeteransCrisisLine.net

https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/
According to the CDC, an average of 121 Americans die each day from suicide.

According to the VHA, approximately 20 Veterans die each day from suicide.

Although there are key differences between Veterans and civilians, suicide is a serious public health problem for our entire nation.

Addressing Veteran suicide on a national level is a complex challenge that will require a national approach, not just a VA solution.
Objectives

• What are the VA Suicide Prevention Programs?
• VA Whole Health Initiative
• Pilot Projects
• Way Forward
VA Suicide Prevention Programs

• Suicide Prevention Program
  • Suicide Program Coordinator (SPC)
  • Program Case Manager

• Veterans Crisis Line

• General Mental Health Clinics
• **Tracking and Reporting** — The SPC is responsible for tracking and reporting all events. Ensure that safety plans are in place and tracked for all high-risk Veterans.

• **Enhanced Care Delivery** — Work with other VA clinicians who refer potential high-risk Veterans to coordinate care. Ensure that there is a safety plan and personal contact with all high-risk Veterans.

• **Access and Referral** — SPC works with the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) to ensure the Veteran accesses care, makes personal contact, makes appointments at the VAMC, ensures appointments are completed, and conducts other follow-up as needed.

• **Awareness and Outreach** — Build relationships both internal and external to the VAMC. Serve as a resource to suicide prevention issues.

• **Training** — Provide training and education to VA staff, community partners, and veterans.
Suicide Prevention is Everyone’s Business

Continue to increase impact of Office for Suicide Prevention

Reach Veterans and their families

Develop innovative prevention strategies

Change the conversation around suicide

Build community engagement
Operation SAVE will help you act with care and compassion if you encounter a Veteran who is in suicidal crisis. The acronym SAVE helps one remember the important steps involved in suicide prevention:

• 1. Signs of suicidal thinking should be recognized.
• 2. Ask the most important question of all.
• 3. Validate the Veteran’s experience.
• 4. Encourage treatment and expedite getting help.
What is REACH VET?

Recovery Engagement and Coordination for Health Program

• New program that uses Predictive Modeling to identify Veterans at high statistical risk for adverse outcomes, including suicide.

• Veteran Centric: REACH VET promotes collaboration by offering Providers an opportunity to involve Veterans in their own healthcare.

• By engaging Veterans early, REACH VET may decrease the likelihood that more serious conditions develop, improving Veterans’ overall health and well-being.
• Primary Care Mental Health Integration

• The mission of the program is to provide Veterans with **immediate access** to mental health services in the primary care setting with the goal of **improving overall health care**.
  • Screen for issues identified by primary care providers.
  • Provide services for mild to moderate.
  • Assess and refer to specialty mental health.
The Public Health Approach to Suicide Prevention

The public health perspective asks the foundational questions: Where does the problem begin? How could we prevent it from occurring in the first place? To answer these questions, public health uses a systematic, scientific approach for understanding and preventing violence.

**Step 1:** Define and monitor the problem.
**Step 2:** Identify risk and protective factors.
**Step 3:** Develop and test prevention strategies.
**Step 4:** Disseminate successful strategies widely.

Adapted from CDC Suicide Prevention at https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/index.html

Goal for Whole Health

Primary
• Full implementation of Whole Health across all VISN facilities by 2024.

Secondary
• Improve health outcomes.
• Reduce costs and improve access.
• Improve Veteran and Employee satisfaction.
• Build strategic partnerships with the DoD and the Community.
VHA Whole Health
Whole Health Initiative – as a Suicide Prevention Technique

• **Goals:**
  
  • Implement Intro to Whole Health Orientation twice monthly at each VISN 6 facility.
  
  • Create warm handoff between Whole Health Orientation peer and Mental Health provider.
  
  • Target transitioning Service Members to attend orientation prior to separation or immediately after separation.
Projects

• Partnering with Veteran Service Agencies and Faith-Based Organizations to Prevent Veteran and Service Member Suicides – VA Mental Health and Chaplaincy national program has developed several training programs to train chaplains in identifying and managing suicidality in coordination with mental health services. They have also developed this training to collaborate with faith-based community partners to address the need to help Veterans in our communities that may not be using VA services.

• Community Rural Suicide Prevention – this is a prevention and intervention program (also developed by the VISN 19 MIRECC) targeting Veterans who live in pockets of North Carolina that have been identified as having higher rates of Veteran suicide than the rest of the state. The first 5 levels focus on community engagement and training in awareness via strategies like public health campaigns.
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Comments/Questions?