

Steps to take after the suicide attempt of a Veteran loved one



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

For a family member, caregiver, or friend, a loved one's suicide attempt can come with many mixed emotions, including fear, anger, and confusion. You are not alone. There are tangible steps you can take and resources available to guide you and your loved one through this journey of hope and healing in the short term, directly following the attempt, and in the long term.

Short term

In the hospital or emergency room

- Talk with your loved one and the medical staff about completing a **release of information (ROI) form**, which will allow you to participate in your loved one's medical and/or mental health care on their journey to wellness.
- Ask to meet with **the treatment team** prior to discharge from the hospital. The treatment team consists of medical professionals and staff involved in the patient's care. They provide care at the facility and develop a plan for the patient to receive follow-up care after discharge.
- Bring a list of all medications taken by the patient when you meet with the treatment team.
- Ask what mental health and physical conditions (if any) are present and being treated and what medications are being prescribed.
- Talk about **safe storage or removal** of guns and medications from the home. Hospital staff can assist with obtaining safe storage items, such as gun locks and medication dispensers or pill boxes.
- If receiving services at VA, ask how to connect with the **VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC)**. An SPC is a social worker, psychologist, or nurse who has the responsibility to provide resources to those at risk.
- Request a copy of the patient's **safety plan** prior to leaving the facility. Created using the patient's own words, a safety plan lists out warning signs of crisis, internal coping strategies, and people to contact for support.
- Ensure all follow-up appointments are scheduled prior to discharge.
- Keep your contact information up to date in your loved one's medical record.
- Add the Veterans Crisis Line number (**1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, text **838255**) to your phone and encourage your loved one to do the same.

Long term

Getting home and getting well

- Know the **warning signs** of suicide.
- Keep the **safety plan** handy and discuss it as often as needed.
- Remain connected and communicate often with your loved one about any swift changes in mood. Reach out to medical providers, should you have concerns.
- Find out about **other VA programs**, such as Peer Support, Whole Health, Case Management, and VA Chaplains.
- Educate yourself and others on suicide prevention and resources available, including:
 - **Make the Connection:**
[MakeTheConnection.net](https://www.maketheconnection.net)
 - **VA Suicide Prevention website:**
www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention
 - **Veterans Crisis Line:**
[VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net)
 - Call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, text **838255**, or chat online.
 - Find local resources:
[VeteransCrisisLine.net/Get-Help/Local-Resources](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Get-Help/Local-Resources)

**Caring for yourself is key
to caring for others.**

For more information, read VA's Suicide Prevention **Toolkit for Caregivers** and visit [Caregiver.VA.gov](https://www.caregiver.va.gov).