

VA



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Fact Sheet

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VA Suicide Prevention Efforts

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Suicide prevention is VA's top clinical priority, and VA has adopted a public health approach to suicide prevention.

The goal of VA's suicide prevention efforts is not to get every Veteran enrolled in VA care, but rather to equip communities to help Veterans get the right care, whenever and wherever they need it.

This means using prevention approaches that cut across all sectors in which Veterans may interact, and collaborating with Veterans service organizations, state and local leaders, medical professionals, criminal justice officials, private employers and many other stakeholders.

Put simply, VA must ensure suicide prevention is a part of every aspect of Veterans' lives, not just their interactions with VA.

Reaching Veterans Where They Live, Work, and Thrive

VA's suicide prevention efforts are guided by the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#), a long-term plan published in 2018 that provides a framework for identifying priorities, organizing efforts, and focusing national attention and community resources to prevent suicide among Veterans while adopting a broad public health approach with an emphasis on comprehensive, community-based engagement.

The public health approach looks beyond the individual to involve peers, family members and communities in preventing suicide. This approach is grounded in four key focus areas:

- **Primary prevention:** Preventing suicidal behavior before it occurs.
- **Whole health:** Considering factors beyond mental health, including physical health, alcohol or substance misuse and life events.
- **Application of data and research:** Emphasizing evidence-based approaches that can be tailored to fit the needs of Veterans in local communities.
- **Collaboration:** Educating and empowering diverse communities to participate in suicide prevention efforts through coordination.

VA Suicide Prevention by the Numbers

- VA suicide prevention coordinators are managing care for almost 11,000 Veterans who are clinically at high-risk for suicide.

- VA's REACH VET program uses predictive analytics to identify Veterans with high statistical risk for suicide. Annually, 30,000 Veterans receive care review and outreach to ensure they are well engaged in care and their needs are being met.
- Under VA's new universal screening for suicidal intent, almost 900,000 Veterans have received a standardized risk screen since October 1, 2018.
 - More than 30,000 of these Veterans have received more complex screening based on a positive initial screen and more than 3,000 have received a full clinical assessment after screening positive.
- In FY18, VA provided more than 2.4 million same-day mental health appointments.
- VA hired almost 1,000 new mental health professionals in the last year.
- In FY18, more than 120,000 new Veterans enrolled in VA services within 60 days of their military separation.
- VA's Concierge for Care program called more than 99 percent of Veterans identified within the first month of their military separation.
- VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators conducted more than 20,000 outreach events in FY18, reaching almost 2 million people.
- Since its inception in July 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) has answered over 3.8 million calls and initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in imminent crisis nearly 112,000 times.
 - The Veterans Chat, an online, one-to-one "chat service" for Veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance using the Internet, has answered over 439,000 requests for chat services since its inception in 2009.
 - Since its inception in 2011, the Crisis Line texting service has answered nearly 108,000 requests for text services. The text number is 838255.
 - VCL staff have forwarded more than 640,000 referrals to local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators on behalf of Veterans to ensure continuity of care with Veterans' local VA providers.
- In FY18, VCL:
 - Dispatched emergency services for callers in immediate danger an average of 80 times per day
 - Received an average of 1,766 calls per day
 - Received an average of 203 chats per day
 - Received an average of 74 texts per day

Promoting VA Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Services

- VA spent \$12.2 million on suicide prevention outreach in fiscal year 2018, including \$1.5 million on paid media.
- In partnership with Johnson & Johnson, VA released a public service announcement, "[No Veteran Left Behind](#)," featuring Tom Hanks via social media and a communications plan led by Johnson & Johnson.

- VA continues to use the #BeThere Campaign to raise awareness about mental health and suicide prevention and educate Veterans, their families, and communities about the suicide prevention resources available to them.
 - During Suicide Prevention Month (Sept.), the suicide prevention program implemented a dedicated outreach effort for #BeThere, including several Facebook Live events that reached more than 160,000 people, a satellite media tour promoting the campaign that reached more than 8.9 million on television and 33.9 million on radio, partner outreach, and more.
 - Through this outreach we generated more than 347,000 visits to the VCL website during Suicide Prevention Month.
- The National Action Alliance helped spread the #BeThere campaign to hundreds of partners using #BeThere and the Veterans Crisis Line information during 2018 Suicide Prevention Month Activities, raising awareness to Be There for Veterans and Service members.
- VA created more than 30 new cross-sector partnerships to involve peers, family members, and communities in preventing Veteran suicide.
- VA delivers monthly partnership updates to include content about the [S.A.V.E online suicide prevention training video](#) to 60 informal and formal partners, providing communications materials (blog posts, social media, and emails) for use.
 - To date, more than 93 percent of VA personnel have taken the training, and the video has been viewed more than 17,000 times.
- VA is [implementing the Mayor's Challenge](#) to give 24 cities (expanded from seven) the tools and technical assistance needed to address Veteran suicides at the local level.
- VA is partnering with the Department of Defense and The Department of Homeland Security, as mandated by a 2018 [executive order](#), to ensure that all new Veterans receive mental health care for at least one year following their separation from military service.

Budget

VA's national Suicide Prevention Program was allocated \$41 million in FY18. This does not include funding for the more than 400 Suicide Prevention Coordinators stationed at every medical center, the VCL, or clinical care for at risk Veterans.

For More Information

For the latest analysis of Veteran suicide rates:
www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/data.asp.

For information on resources available for Veterans, families, friends, and communities, visit
www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/resources.asp.