

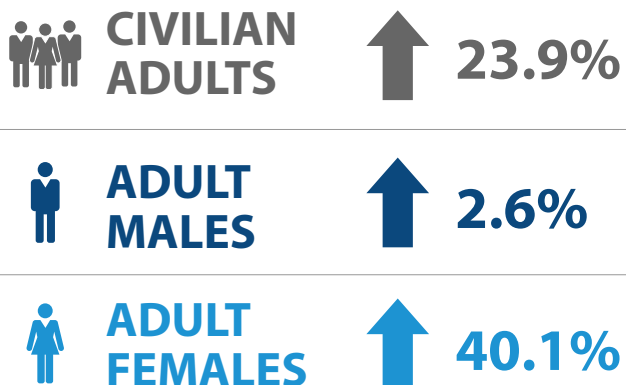


## VA Suicide Prevention: Veteran Suicide Data and VA Suicide Prevention Programs

Cohen Veterans Network and the Center for Deployment Psychology  
September 6, 2017

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Between 2001 and 2014, the age-adjusted rates of suicide in the U.S. civilian population have increased.



Slide - 2

## 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%**

Slide - 3

## Veteran Suicide Statistics for 2010-2014

Decrease in average number  
of Veteran suicides per day

**22**  
2010  **20**  
2014

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

**20.1%**  
2010  **18%**  
2014

Slide - 4

## 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



Slide - 5

## Veteran suicide rate increases were lower among those who used Veterans Health Administration care.

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

	RECENTLY USED VA Services	NO RECENT USE OF VA Services
 <b>U.S. VETERANS</b>	↑ 5.4%	38.4% ↑
 <b>VETERAN MALES</b>	↑ 8%	35.5% ↑
 <b>VETERAN FEMALES</b>	↓ 2.6%	81.6% ↑

Slide - 6

## 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

**Tailor to specific risk groups and focus on quality of mental health services for high-risk patients.**

### 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

Slide - 8

## Free, Confidential Support 24/7/365

# Veterans Crisis Line



1-800-273-8255  
**PRESS 1**

- Veterans
- Family members
- Friends
- Servicemembers

• • • Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to **838255** • • •

Slide - 9

## Suicide Prevention Coordinators

More than 400 SPCs nationwide



Slide - 10

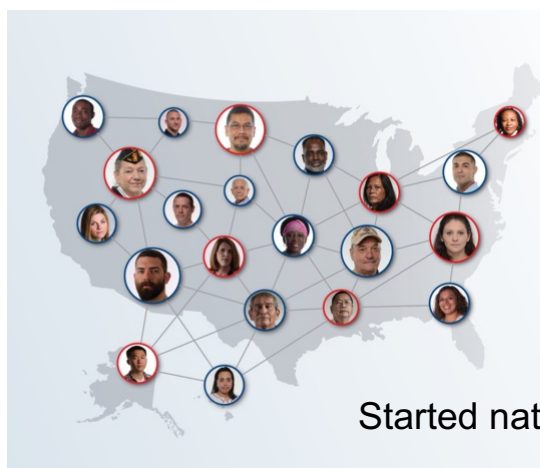
## S.A.V.E. Training: Teaching communities how to help Veterans at risk for suicide

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

Slide - 11

## The REACH VET Program Enhances 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**

Slide - 12

## VCL Gun Safety Video: Simple actions help keep individuals and families safe

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net)

**Veterans Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to 838255



Suicide Prevention Coordinators at local VA Medical Centers can provide gun locks to secure firearms in the home.

Slide - 13

## MAKE THE CONNECTION

[www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://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**

Slide - 14

## VA SUICIDE PREVENTION MOA PARTNERSHIPS

Partner Name	Partner Type	Description of Partnership/Project	Status
Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation	For Profit	Facilitate connections and sharing of best practices; focused on peer support, student Veterans, chaplaincy-mental health integration.	MOA
Give An Hour (GAH)	Non profit	Training in Evidence-Based Psychotherapy, Operation SAVE, to GAH volunteers (7000 clinicians) and other VA tools for providers.	MOA
IBM	For Profit	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.	MOA
Johnson & Johnson	For profit	Develop multi-media outreach campaign to unite the country on a call to action to prevent Veteran suicide; precision medicine; research.	MOA
Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE), University of Michigan	Non-profit	Coordination of services, resources, and training on college campuses for student Veteran peer support networks and VAMCs.	MOA
Project Hero	Non profit	Outreach generally to Veterans and clinical support during Ride to Recovery events.	MOA
PsychArmor Institute	Non profit	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.	MOA
Semper Fi Fund	Non profit	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.	MOA (pending USH signature)
Walgreen's	For Profit	MH outreach (Make the Connection, VBA); opioid overdose education; military culture training; pilot Veteran specific programs in rural community pharmacies with high suicide rates.	MOA
Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)	Non profit	Care-coordination with the 4 Wounded Care Networks; outreach and training for providers and Veterans.	MOA

Slide - 17

## How you can connect with VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

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

[www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://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](http://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](http://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/>

Slide - 16



## Coping and Symptom Management Apps

<https://mobile.va.gov/appstore>  
[www.t2health.dcoe.mil/products/mobile-apps](http://www.t2health.dcoe.mil/products/mobile-apps)



Problem-solving skills for stress



Manage physical & emotional stress



Safety plan & support during crisis



Monitor & manage PTSD symptoms



Tools for coping, relaxation, distraction & positive thinking



Enhance sleep quality & duration

Slide - 17

## 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](http://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/](http://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>

Slide - 18

**Additional information and materials available at:**

<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>  
<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/2016suicidedatareport.pdf>

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Slide - 19