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VA Announces Additional Steps to Reduce Veteran Suicide

Because even one suicide is one too many

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced new steps it is taking to reduce Veteran suicide. The steps follow a February 2 Summit, [“Preventing Veteran Suicide – A Call to Action,”](#) that brought together stakeholders and thought leaders to discuss current research, approaches and best practices to address this important subject.

“We know that every day, approximately 22 Veterans take their lives and that is too many,” said VA Under Secretary for Health, Dr. David Shulkin. “We take this issue seriously. While no one knows the subject of Veteran suicide better than VA, we also realize that caring for our Veterans is a shared responsibility. We all have an obligation to help Veterans suffering from the invisible wounds of military service that lead them to think suicide is their only option. We *must* and *will* do more, and this Summit, coupled with recent announcements about improvements to enhance and accelerate progress at the Veterans Crisis Line, shows that our work and commitment must continue.”

Several changes and initiatives are being announced that strengthen VA’s approach to Suicide Prevention. They include:

- Elevating VA’s Suicide Prevention Program with additional resources to manage and strengthen current programs and initiatives;
- Meeting urgent mental health needs by providing Veterans with the goal of same-day evaluations and access by the end of calendar year 2016;
- Establishing a new standard of care by using measures of Veteran-reported symptoms to tailor mental health treatments to individual needs;
- Launching a new study, “Coming Home from Afghanistan and Iraq,” to look at the impact of deployment and combat as it relates to suicide, mental health and well-being;
- Using predictive modeling to guide early interventions for suicide prevention;
- Using data on suicide attempts and overdoses for surveillance to guide strategies to prevent suicide;
- Increasing the availability of naloxone rescue kits throughout VA to prevent deaths from opioid overdoses;
- Enhancing Veteran Mental Health access by establishing three regional tele-mental health hubs; and
- Continuing to partner with the Department of Defense on suicide prevention and other efforts for a seamless transition from military service to civilian life.

For information about VA initiatives to prevent Veteran suicide, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/.

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