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News Release

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Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

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VA Releases Report on Nation's Largest Analysis of Veteran Suicide

More than 55 Million Veterans' Records Reviewed From 1979 to 2014 From Every State in the Nation

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today released its findings from the nation's most comprehensive analysis of Veteran suicide rates in the United States in which VA examined more than 55 million Veterans' records from 1979 to 2014 from every state in the nation. The effort advances VA's knowledge from the previous report in 2012, which was primarily limited to information on Veterans who used VHA health services or from mortality records obtained directly from 20 states and approximately 3 million records.. Compared to the data from the 2012 report, which estimated the number of Veteran deaths by suicide to be 22 per day, the current analysis indicates that in 2014, an average of 20 Veterans a day died from suicide.

A link to the report may be found here.

THE REPORT CONCLUDES:

- Approximately 65 percent of all Veterans who died from suicide in 2014 were 50 years of age or older.
- Veterans accounted for 18 percent of all deaths from suicide among U.S. adults. This is a decrease from 22 percent in 2010.
- Since 2001, U.S. adult civilian suicides increased 23 percent, while Veteran suicides increased 32 percent in the same time period. After controlling for age and gender, this makes the risk of suicide 21 percent greater for Veterans.
- Since 2001, the rate of suicide among U.S. Veterans who use VA services increased by 8.8 percent, while the rate of suicide among Veterans who do not use VA services increased by 38.6 percent.
    - In the same time period, the rate of suicide among male Veterans who use VA services increased 11 percent, while the rate of suicide increased 35 percent among male Veterans who do not use VA services.
    - In the same time period, the rate of suicide among female Veterans who use VA services increased 4.6 percent while the rate of suicide increased 98 percent among female Veterans who do not use VA services.

SUICIDE PREVENTION MEASURES BY VA

VA is aggressively undertaking a number of new measures to prevent suicide, including:

- VA has implemented comprehensive, broad-ranging suicide prevention initiatives, including a toll-free Veterans Crisis Line, placement of Suicide Prevention Coordinators at all VA Medical Centers and large outpatient facilities and improvements in case management and tracking. In addition, VA announced this week the creation of a satellite Veterans Crisis Line site in Atlanta, Georgia, for increased staffing capability and geographic redundancy; the satellite site is expected to operational in October 2016 with 200 additional responders.
- Ensuring same-day access for Veterans with urgent mental health needs at over 1,000 points of care by the end of calendar year 2016. In fiscal year 2015, more than 1.6 million Veterans received mental health treatment from VA, including at over 150 medical centers, 820 community-based outpatient clinics and 300 Vet Centers that provide readjustment counseling. Veterans also enter VA health care through the Veterans Crisis Line, VA staff on college and university campuses, or other outreach points.
- Using predictive modeling to determine which Veterans may be at highest risk of suicide, so providers can intervene early. Veterans in the top 0.1% of risk, who have a 43-fold increased risk of death from suicide within a month, can be identified before clinical signs of suicide are evident in order to save lives before a crisis occurs.
- Expanding telemental health care by establishing four new regional telemental health hubs across the VA healthcare system.
- Hiring over 60 new crisis intervention responders for the Veterans Crisis Line. Each responder receives intensive training on a wide variety of topics in crisis intervention, substance use disorders, screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment.
- Building new collaborations between Veteran programs in VA and those working in community settings, such as Give an Hour, Psych Armor Institute, University of Michigan's Peer Advisors for Veterans Education Program (PAVE), and the Cohen Veterans Network.
- Creating stronger inter-agency (e.g. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Department of Defense, National Institutes of Health) and new public-private partnerships (e.g., Johnson & Johnson Healthcare System, Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation, Walgreen's, and many more) focused on preventing suicide among Veterans.

Many of these efforts were catalyzed by VA's February 2016 *Preventing Veteran Suicide—A Call to Action* summit, which focused on improving mental health care access for Veterans across the nation and increasing resources for the VA Suicide Prevention Program.

Suicide is an issue that affects all Americans. Recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data reported in April 2016 that from 1999 through 2014 (the most recent year with data available from CDC), suicide rates increased 24 percent in the general population for both males and females.

A link to the report may be found at: http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/2016suicidedatareport.pdf .

Other VA mental health information can be found on the VA Mental Health page at: www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

Information about the Crisis Line is available at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net; Veterans in crisis can call Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1) or texting 838255.

A Suicide prevention fact sheet may be found at
www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/Suicide_Prevention_FactSheet_New_VA_Stats_070616_1400.pdf

Reporters covering this report are strongly encouraged to visit www.ReportingOnSuicide.Org, for important guidance on ways to communicate suicide.

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