Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) National Grantee Webinar

Suicide Prevention 101: The Essentials of Veteran Suicide Prevention & SSVF’s New Annual Training Requirements

[Link to Audio Recording]

December 13, 2018
Webinar Format

- Webinar will last approximately 1.5 hours
- Participants’ phone connections are “muted” due to the high number of callers
  - Questions can be submitted during the webinar using the Q&A function
- Questions can also be submitted anytime to SSVF@va.gov
Questions

Submit questions and comments via the Questions panel.
Presenters & Agenda

• **SSVF’s New Annual S.A.V.E. Training Requirement**
  – Mike Boyd, SSVF Regional Coordinator

• **VA’s Suicide Prevention Program & Trainings**
  – Aimee Johnson, Program Analyst, Partnerships, VHA Office of Mental Health & Suicide Prevention

• **Q&A**
Veteran Suicide - Public Health Issue

• “VA is working hard to prevent suicide among all Veterans, including those who do not, and may not ever, use VA services and benefits.”

• Suicide is a complex public health issue requiring a broader community coordinated approach.

• The National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide reflects VA’s vision for a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention involving different sectors working together.

• “… To end Veteran suicide, we need organizations across sectors to adopt the strategy’s, framework and join us in delivering support to all Veterans.”
SSVF’s Role in Preventing Veteran Suicide

All SSVF Supervisors & Frontline Staff are required to request and receive VA Suicide Prevention Training annually.

1. First Option: In-Person S.A.V.E. Training
   - Contact your local VA Medical Center’s Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) and request an in-person training or
   - Contact the Homeless Program designated POC Certified S.A.V.E Trainer

2. Second Option: Online S.A.V.E. Training
   - View the S.A.V.E Training on the PsychArmor website
   - View this recorded webinar
VA Suicide Prevention Program

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Grantees

VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP)

Suicide Prevention Program

December 13, 2018
Agenda

• The Public Health Approach
• Putting Strategy Into Action
• Suicide in the United States
• S.A.V.E. Training: Identifying and Supporting Those at Risk
• Suicide Prevention Resources
VA Suicide Prevention Strategy

The Public Health Approach
Suicide Prevention is Everyone’s Business

- Continue to increase impact of Office for Suicide Prevention
- Reach Veterans and their families
- Develop innovative prevention strategies
- Change the conversation around suicide
- Build community engagement
National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide

Goal: Provide a framework for identifying priorities, organizing efforts, and contributing to a national focus on Veteran suicide prevention over the next decade.

- Consists of 4 strategic directions, 14 goals, 43 objectives.
- Leverages the public health approach to suicide prevention.
- Focuses on the importance of collaboration and urgency.

Download a copy at: Mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention
Implementing Strategic Directions

Healthy and Empowered Veterans, Families, and Communities
Work with community partners and policymakers to promote resources for Veterans and to promote mental health awareness and treatment.

Clinical and Community Preventive Services
Share resources, training opportunities, interventions, and lethal means safety resources with providers outside VA and with clergy, first responders, law enforcement officials, and community partners.

Treatment, Recovery, and Support Services
Work with local emergency departments and hospitals to promote Veteran suicide prevention resources and to ensure continuity of care for all Veterans admitted to an inpatient mental health unit.

Surveillance, Research, and Evaluation
Share the VA National Suicide Data Report and National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide with community partners.
Issue Overview:

Suicide in the United States
Important Figures

20 Veterans die by suicide each day.

123 Americans die by suicide each day.

14 Of these Veterans are not under VHA care.

6 Are in VHA care.

1-2 Active duty Service members die by suicide each day.
50% of Veterans Do Not Use VA Benefits or Healthcare

Veterans who do not use VA benefits or healthcare.

10.2 million

Veterans who use at least one VA benefit or healthcare service.

9.7 million

Of this group, about 6 million Veterans use VA health care (about 30 percent of all Veterans).
VA Suicide Data Reports

- National Suicide Data Report
  - Reports on trends in Veteran Suicide Deaths from 2005 – 2015
  - Examined more than 55 million civilian and Veteran death records

- State Data Sheets
  - Examined state level Veteran suicide deaths and compared to national and regional trends
  - Available for all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico

Access the reports online: https://go.usa.gov/xnMDE
Risk Factors for Suicide

• Health factors
  • Mental health challenges
  • Substance abuse and addiction
  • Serious or chronic health conditions and/or pain
  • Traumatic brain injury

• Environmental factors
  • Access to lethal means (e.g., drugs, firearms)
  • Prolonged stress
  • Stressful life events
  • Exposure to another person’s suicide or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

• Historical factors
  • Previous suicide attempts
  • Family history of suicide
  • History of abuse, neglect, or trauma
Risk and Protective Factors

**Risk**
- Prior suicide attempt
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse
- Access to lethal means
- Sense of burdensomeness
- Recent loss
- Legal or financial challenges
- Relationship issues

**Protective**
- Access to health and mental health care (including substance abuse treatment)
- Sense of connectedness and belonging
- Problem-solving skills
- Sense of spirituality
- Mission or purpose
- Physical health
- Social and emotional well-being

**Goal:** Minimize risk factors and boost protective factors
Identifying and Supporting Those At Risk

How can I help?
Those in Crisis Often Display Warning Signs

- Learn to recognize these warning signs:
  - Hopelessness, feeling like there’s no way out
  - Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
  - Feeling like there is no reason to live
  - Rage or anger
  - Engaging in risky activities without thinking
  - Increasing alcohol or drug use
  - Withdrawing from family and friends

- The presence of the following signs requires immediate attention:
  - Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
  - Looking for ways to kill yourself
  - Talking about death, dying, or suicide
  - Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, excessive drinking etc.
S.A.V.E.: Teaching Communities How to Help Veterans at Risk for Suicide

S.A.V.E. will help you act with care and compassion if you encounter a Veteran who is in suicidal crisis.

- **Signs** of suicidal thinking should be recognized.
- **Ask** the most important question of all.
- **Validate** the Veteran’s experience.
- **Encourage** treatment and Expedite getting help.
Signs of Suicidal Thinking

Learn to recognize these warning signs:

• Hopelessness, feeling like there is no way out
• Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
• Feeling like there is no reason to live
• Rage or anger
• Engaging in risky activities without thinking
• Increasing alcohol or drug use
• Withdrawing from family and friends
### Asking the Question

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<tr>
<th>Do’s</th>
<th>Don’ts</th>
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<td><strong>DO</strong> ask the question if you’ve identified warning signs or symptoms.</td>
<td><strong>DON’T</strong> ask the question as though you are looking for a “no” answer. • “You aren’t thinking of killing yourself, are you?”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DO</strong> ask the question in a natural way that flows with the conversation.</td>
<td><strong>DON’T</strong> wait to ask the question when someone is halfway out the door.</td>
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Validating the Veteran’s Experience

• Talk openly about suicide. Be willing to listen, and allow the Veteran to express his or her feelings.
• Recognize that the situation is serious.
• Do not pass judgment.
• Reassure that help is available.
Encouraging Treatment and Expediting Help

• What should I do if I think someone is suicidal?
  • Don’t keep the Veteran’s suicidal behavior a secret.
  • Do not leave him or her alone.
  • Try to get the person to seek immediate help from his or her doctor or the nearest hospital emergency room.
  • Call 911.

• Reassure the Veteran that help is available.

• Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1.
S.A.V.E Training

- Suicide prevention training video that’s available to everyone, 24/7
- Less than 25 minutes long
- Offered in collaboration with PsychArmor Institute

Available online for free: psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e/
VA Suicide Prevention Resources
Empowering Communities to Take Action

You don’t need to have special training to support the Veterans in your life, and we can all do something to help a Veteran who is going through a difficult time. Even seemingly small actions can have a huge impact:

Preventing suicide begins with the willingness to just Be There.

www.bethereforveterans.com
Make the Connection

Online resource featuring hundreds of Veterans telling their stories about overcoming mental health challenges.

https://maketheconnection.net/conditions/suicide
Coaching into Care

Program for families and loved ones of Veterans, helping them encourage the Veteran in their lives to seek support.

1-888-823-7458
8am – 8pm ET
Monday - Friday
Community Outreach Toolkit

Includes facts and myths about suicide, as well as information on:

- Establishing a suicide prevention council
- Talking to Veterans about their military service
- Assessing suicide risk
- Developing a suicide prevention safety plan
- Helping Veterans feel more connected to others
- Joining public-private partnerships

Access the toolkit online: go.usa.gov/xnwbz
VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator

**Select a Resource**
- Suicide Prevention Coordinators
  - Specially trained Suicide Prevention Coordinators or teams are available at all VA Medical Centers across the country.
- Crisis Centers
  - Search for community-based crisis centers in your area.
- VA Medical Centers
  - VA Medical Centers offer a range of acute care and community-based outpatient services, including mental health care, diagnostics, homeless and alcohol/drug abuse programs, nursing home and hospice care.
- Outpatient Clinics
  - Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) are local VA locations that provide primary care, counseling, laboratory analysis, prescriptions and radiology services.
- Veterans Benefits Administration Offices
  - Veterans Benefits Administration Offices provide services to Veterans seeking benefits related to compensation, pension, vocational rehabilitation, home loans, death benefits, employment, and disability.
- Vet Centers
  - Vet Centers provide readjustment counseling and outreach services to all Veterans who have served in any combat zone, as well as their family members.
- All
  - See all VA and community-based services in your area.

**Choose Location**

**Results for Suicide Prevention Coordinators in state ND**
- Monsebroten, Tammy
  - Fargo, ND 58102
  - P: 701-239-7070 x6556
  - F: 701-237-2542
tammy.monsebroten@va.gov; ranue.hickett@va.gov

**Results for Crisis Centers in state ND**
- FirstLink HotLine
  - Fargo, ND 58103
  - P: 701-293-6462
  - F: 701-237-2476
  - visit website

**Results for VA Medical Centers in state ND**
- Fargo VA Health Care System
  - 2101 Elm Street N.
  - Fargo, ND 58102
  - P: 701-232-3371
  - visit website
Find a Local VA SPC at VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator

More than 400 SPCs nationwide.
LGBTQ Suicide Prevention Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Veterans: Press 1

Trans Lifeline
Support for transgender people, by transgender people
1-877-565-8860

Text TALK to 741741
Text with a trained counselor from the Crisis Text Line for free, 24/7

SAGE LGBT Elder Hotline
Peer-support and local resources for older adults
1-888-234-SAGE

The Trevor Project
TrevorLifeline: Available 24/7 at 1-866-488-7386
TrevorText: Text TREVOR to 1-202-304-1200
TrevorChat: Via thetrevorproject.org

The LGBT National Hotline
Peer-support and local resources for all ages
1-888-843-4564

afsp.org/lgbtq

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
VA Partners and Resources

• **CaringBridge.org**: Service members, Veterans, and their caregivers can create their own personal online health journey that can be shared at the user’s discretion with family and friends to enhance connectedness and support. Learn more at: [https://www.caringbridge.org/military-service/](https://www.caringbridge.org/military-service/)

• **Objective Zero**: Connects Service members and Veterans (as well as their families and caregivers) to peer support 24 hours a day via text, voice, and video chat and offers access to wellness resources. Learn more at: [http://www.objectivezero.org/](http://www.objectivezero.org/)
Founded by Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen September 2005 with a mission to develop national networks of volunteers capable of responding to both acute and chronic conditions that arise within our society.

https://giveanhour.org/get-help/#providerSearch

✓ To identify at-risk populations and other groups in need that can benefit from our model of delivering services through a network of volunteer professionals.

✓ To identify professionals who have the skills to address specific needs and are willing to donate their time and expertise.

✓ To identify and address barriers that prevent those we serve from receiving the support they deserve.

✓ To improve community coordination and collaboration for populations we serve.
National Resource Directory
Highlighted Programs for our Military, Veterans and Families

https://nrd.gov/
Military and Veteran Culture

https://psycharmor.org/courses/15-things-veterans-want-you-to-know/
Free, Confidential Support 24/7/365

Veterans Crisis Line | Military Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255

- Veterans
- Service members
- Family members
- Friends
We All Have a Role to Play

#BeThere for Veterans PSA:

https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/support/be-there
Questions?

Thank you.
Stay Connected

Follow us on social media!

@deptvetaffairs

@veteransmtc

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Make the Connection

#BeThere