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

Your 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
- Build community engagement
- Change the conversation around suicide
Leveraging the Public Health Approach
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.

• Aligns with the 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.
• 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](https://www.va.gov/SuicidePrevention/researchdata/) and [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](https://www.va.gov/SuicidePrevention/researchdata/) 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
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<th>Risk</th>
<th>Protective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior suicide attempt</td>
<td>Access to health and mental health care (including substance abuse treatment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td>Sense of connectedness and belonging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Problem-solving skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to lethal means</td>
<td>Sense of spirituality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of burdensomeness</td>
<td>Mission or purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recent loss</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal or financial challenges</td>
<td>Social and emotional well-being</td>
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<td>Relationship issues</td>
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**Goal:** Minimize risk factors and boost protective factors
How can I help?

Identifying and Supporting Those At Risk
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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<th>Do’s</th>
<th>Don’ts</th>
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<tr>
<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.</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

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
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](go.usa.gov/xnwbz)
VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator
Find a Local VA SPC at VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator

More than 400 SPCs nationwide.
LGBTQ Suicide Prevention Resources

**LGBTQ+ Suicide Prevention Resources**

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

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

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

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

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

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

- afsp.org/lgbtq

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American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
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