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# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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We invite any media interested in interviewing our VA staff to learn more about care and services to contact our Public Affairs Officer at 989-497-2500, extension 13010 or e-mail [tara.scheuer@va.gov](mailto:tara.scheuer@va.gov)

## Suicide Rates Increase in the Spring – Gunlocks Available for Veterans

The Spring season, for most, is a time we start feeling better after the long, cold winter months of hibernation. Enjoying the sunny warmth and seeing the blossoming buds improves our moods with a sense of renewal, which Spring always seems to bring. However, contrary to what we might expect, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, national suicide rates spike each Spring. Michigan is no exception to this trend. “With that, please be attentive to the mental health needs and concerns of our Veterans and remember suicidal thoughts, statements, or threats are to be taken seriously. It’s also important to know that bringing up the topic of suicide does **not** “put the idea in their head,” stated Wendy Schultz, Suicide Prevention Coordinator.

Nearly 70 percent of Veteran suicides are by gun, many of which are owned by the Veteran. Using a gunlock is a proactive strategy to create a barrier to an impulsive act of self (and other) directed violence. For this reason, our medical center has a large supply of gunlocks to give to our Veterans and at no cost. Please help us spread the awareness of the free gunlocks and help decrease the potential act of Veteran suicide. Learn more about how to get a gunlock and what mental health services are available by contacting Wendy Schultz at 989-497-2500, Extension 11778.

Mental health walk-in services are available at the Urgent Care Clinic, during business hours and their local ER 24/7. The Veterans Crisis Line (800/273-8255; press “1” for Veterans) is available 24/7. “Please remind our Veterans,” Wendy shared, “if they are distressed or down, that there is hope, that behavioral health treatment works, is available, and can help them get through difficult times.”

The Aleda E. Lutz VAMC in Saginaw, Michigan operates an 81-bed skilled nursing and rehabilitation Community Living Center. It provides care to over 38,263 Veterans in a 35-county geographic area, from mid-Michigan to the Mackinac Bridge. Veterans also receive care at one of our nine VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics located throughout Michigan. More information about this VA can be found at [VA Saginaw Health Care | Veterans Affairs](#).

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