



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Central Ohio Healthcare System

News Release

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Columbus VA Hosts Festival to Promote Suicide Prevention

Columbus, Ohio – VA Central Ohio Health Care System is raising awareness and promoting suicide prevention during its first Veteran Fall Festival on Friday, Sept. 23, from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m., at VFW Post 4719, 75 W. Johnstown, Road, in Gahanna, Ohio. The festival is designed to reduce the stigma around suicide by reminding veterans they are not alone and encouraging them to "reach out."

Columbus VA staff and several community and Veteran Service Organizations will be on hand at the festival to provide information about services and resources for veterans and family members so they can access critical care before, during and after a crisis.

Free and open to all veterans, active duty, retired, reserve and National Guard service members and their families, the festival features live music, food, games, family activities, and a vintage car show.

"Suicide Prevention month is about raising awareness, increasing knowledge, and eliminating stigma," said Dr. Michelle Harris, Psy.D., division director for suicide prevention at the Columbus VA. "It's about having open, honest conversations. It's about making it safe to ask for help and ensuring no one has to go through a crisis alone, and it's important that we know help is available."

Veterans have a higher risk for suicide than the general population. According to the [2021 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#), the suicide rate among veterans in the U.S. is 52% higher than non-veteran adults

The Columbus VA suicide prevention team (SPT) supports veterans by standardizing and improving crisis intervention services and promoting awareness about suicide. The team provides training for clinical and non-clinical staff and works with behavioral health providers and community organizations to assist veterans who are managing emotional or behavioral health crises.

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About the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System

VA Central Ohio Health Care System consists of four community-based outpatient clinics, a stand-alone behavioral health clinic, and a level 2 complexity health care center that offer a full spectrum of primary care services, urgent care, evidence based behavioral health care, specialty medicine services, and same day ambulatory surgery for more than 50,000 veterans in 14 counties throughout Central Ohio. For more information visit <https://www.va.gov/central-ohio-health-care/>.