

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**VA Issues New Report on Suicide Data**

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today released a comprehensive report on Veterans who die by suicide. In the past, data on Veterans who died by suicide was only available for those who had sought VA health care services. Today’s report also includes state data for Veterans who had not received health care services from VA, which will help VA strengthen its aggressive suicide prevention activities. The report indicates that the percentage of Veterans who die by suicide has decreased slightly since 1999, while the estimated total number of Veterans who have died by suicide has increased.

“The mental health and well-being of our courageous men and women who have served the Nation is the highest priority for VA, and even one suicide is one too many,” said Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. “We have more work to do and we will use this data to continue to strengthen our suicide prevention efforts and ensure all Veterans receive the care they have earned and deserve.”

In accordance with the President’s Aug. 31, 2012, Executive Order*,* VA has completed hiring and training of additional staff to increase the capacity of the Veterans Crisis Line by 50 percent. The Veteran Crisis Line has made approximately 26,000 rescues of actively suicidal Veterans to date. Additionally, VA has initiated a year-long public awareness campaign, “Stand By Them,” to educate families and friends on how to seek help for Veterans and Service Members in crisis. VA has launched a national public service announcement “[Side by Side](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/materials/spmsupport/files/side-by-side-SD-eng-60-cc.wmv).”

VA is currently engaged in an aggressive hiring campaign to expand access to mental health services with 1,600 new clinical staff, 300 new administrative staff, and is in the process of hiring and training 800 peer-to-peer specialists who will work as members of mental health teams.

The report issued today is the most comprehensive study of Veteran suicide rates ever undertaken by the Department. On June 16, 2010, Secretary Shinseki engaged governors of all 50 states, requesting their support in helping to collect suicide statistics. With assistance from state partners providing real-time data, VA is better able to assess the effectiveness of its suicide prevention programs and identify specific populations that need targeted interventions.

This new information will allow VA to better identify where those Veterans at risk may be located and improve the Department’s ability to target specific suicide interventions and outreach activities in order to reach Veterans early and proactively. The data will also help VA continue to examine the effectiveness of suicide prevention programs being implemented in specific geographic locations or care settings in order to replicate them in other areas if they have been effective.

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 reporting. Immediate help is available at [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net) or by calling the Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (push 1) or texting 838255.

The full report can be found on VA’s [website](http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/Suicide-Data-Report-2012-final.pdf) along with a [summary response](http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/Response-and-ExecSum-Suicide-Data-Report-2012-final.pdf) from VA Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Robert A. Petzel.

**Suicide Data Report 2012 final**

<http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/Suicide-Data-Report-2012-final.pdf>

**Veterans Health Administration Response - Suicide Data Report 2012**

<http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/Response-and-ExecSum-Suicide-Data-Report-2012-final.pdf>

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