



**Department of
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News Release

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VA Suicide Prevention Hotline Credited with 2,600 “Saves”

WASHINGTON – As the military deals with a record number of suicides among active-duty forces, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki reminded Veterans and their families that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has an extensive array of services to help Veterans in distress.

“I urge Veterans and their loved ones to take advantage of our suicide-prevention program,” said Shinseki. “Help for these heroes is a phone call away.”

Since July 2007, VA has operated an around-the-clock suicide-prevention hotline that has received about 100,000 calls and has been credited with rescuing over 2,600 people. The number for VA’s suicide prevention hotline is 1-800-273-TALK.

VA operates the largest mental health program in the country, with special efforts in each of the Department’s 153 medical centers and more than 750 outpatient clinics to identify and treat at-risk patients.

In addition to operating the suicide-prevention hotline, VA has given all medical workers training in suicide prevention, created suicide prevention coordinators at each medical center, and given primary care clinics responsibility for mental health screening.

“We are reaching out to our newest generation of heroes – the Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan – to ensure they are aware of the services available to them,” Shinseki added.

New requests or referrals for mental health appointments receive a preliminary evaluation within 24 hours and a comprehensive evaluation within 14 days. Emergency cases are dealt with immediately.

VA operates Readjustment Counseling Centers, commonly called Vet Centers, in 232 communities, where Veterans can receive care for a wide variety of issues related to leaving the military. Vet Center personnel are trained to identify at-risk Veterans and to counsel and connect them to appropriate VA medical services.

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