

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

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REPORTING DURING SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

Information for Reporting on Veteran Suicides

WASHINGTON – For Journalists writing about Veteran suicides and Suicide Prevention Month in September, the Department of Veterans Affairs is providing the following information for reporting on the sensitive issue of suicide. VA encourages journalists writing about this important issue to visit www.ReportingOnSuicide.Org, for guidance on ways to communicate suicide from the independent National Action Alliance on Suicide Reporting.

VETERAN SUICIDE FACTS AND DATA

- Suicide is an issue that affects all Americans. Recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data reported in April 2016 show that from 1999 through 2014 (the most recent year with data available from CDC), suicide rates increased 24 percent in the general population for both males and females. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reports on average that there are 117 suicides per day, making suicide a nationwide public health issue.
- **Previously, it was reported that 22 Veterans die by suicide per day.** A new VA study released August 3 representing the most comprehensive analysis of Veteran suicide rates in the United States, examining more than 55 million Veterans' records from 1979 to 2014 from every state in the nation, shows an average of **20 Veterans a day died from suicide**. The effort advances VA's knowledge from the previous report in 2012, which was primarily limited to information on Veterans who used Veterans Health Administration health services or from mortality records obtained directly from 20 states and approximately 3 million records. The complete report may be found [here](#).
- Approximately 65 percent of all Veterans who died from suicide in 2014 were 50 years of age or older.
- Veterans accounted for 18 percent of all deaths from suicide among U.S. adults. This is a decrease from 22 percent in 2010.
- Since 2001, U.S. adult civilian suicides increased 23 percent, while Veteran suicides increased 32 percent in the same time period. After controlling for age and gender, this makes the risk of suicide 21 percent greater for Veterans.
- Since 2001, the rate of suicide among U.S. Veterans who use VA services increased by 8.8 percent, while the rate of suicide among Veterans who do not use VA services increased by 38.6 percent.
 - In the same time period, the rate of suicide among male Veterans who use VA services increased 11 percent, while the rate of suicide increased 35 percent among male Veterans who do not use VA services.
 - In the same time period, the rate of suicide among female Veterans who use VA services increased 4.6 percent while the rate of suicide increased 98 percent among female Veterans who do not use VA services.

SUICIDE PREVENTION MEASURES BY VA

VA is aggressively undertaking a number of new measures to prevent suicide, including:

- 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 tracking. In addition, VA recently announced the creation of a satellite Veterans Crisis Line site in Atlanta, Georgia, for increased staffing capability and geographic redundancy; the satellite site is expected to be operational in October 2016 with 200 additional responders.
- Ensuring same-day access for Veterans with urgent mental health needs at over 1,000 points of care by the end of calendar year 2016. In fiscal year 2015, more than 1.6 million Veterans received mental health treatment from VA, including at over 150 medical centers, 820 community-based outpatient clinics and 300 Vet Centers that provide readjustment counseling. Veterans also enter VA health care through the Veterans Crisis Line, VA staff on college and university campuses, or other outreach points.
- Using predictive modeling to determine which Veterans may be at highest risk of suicide, so providers can intervene early. Veterans in the top 0.1% of risk, who have a 43-fold increased risk of death from suicide within a month, can be identified before clinical signs of suicide are evident in order to save lives before a crisis occurs.
- Expanding telemental health care by establishing four new regional telemental health hubs across the VA healthcare system.
- Hiring over 60 new crisis intervention responders for the Veterans Crisis Line. Each responder receives intensive training on a wide variety of topics in crisis intervention, substance use disorders, screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment.
- Building new collaborations between Veteran programs in VA and those working in community settings, such as Give an Hour, Psych Armor Institute, University of Michigan's Peer Advisors for Veterans Education Program (PAVE), and the Cohen Veterans Network.
- Creating stronger inter-agency (e.g. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Department of Defense, National Institutes of Health) and new public-private partnerships (e.g., Johnson & Johnson Healthcare System, Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation, Walgreen's, and many more) focused on preventing suicide among Veterans.

Suicide is a public issue that affects all Americans. Recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data reported in [April 2016](#), that from 1999 through 2014 (the most recent year with data available from CDC), suicide rates increased 24 percent in the general population for both males and females.

A link to the report may be found at: <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/2016suicidedatareport.pdf> .

Other VA mental health information can be found on the VA Mental Health page at: www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

Information about the Crisis Line is available at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net; Veterans in crisis can call Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1) or texting 838255.

A Suicide prevention fact sheet may be found at

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