

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 1, 2016

Suicide Prevention Month: #BeThere

VA Highlights Initiatives to Prevent Veteran and Servicemember Suicide

WASHINGTON – Today marks the start of [Suicide Prevention Month](#) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is asking for the entire nation's help in reducing Veteran suicide. VA is calling on community leaders, supervisors, colleagues, friends, and family members to [BeThere](#) for Veterans and Service members starting with a simple act, which can play a pivotal role in preventing suicide.

"You don't have to be a trained professional to support someone who may be going through a difficult time," said Dr. Caitlin Thompson, Director of the VA Office of Suicide Prevention. "We want to let people know that things they do every day, like calling an old friend or checking in with a neighbor, are strong preventive factors for suicide because they help people feel less alone. That's what this campaign is about - encouraging people to be there for each other."

The campaign also highlights VA resources that are available to support Veterans and Servicemembers who are coping with mental health challenges or are at risk for suicide, and it encourages everyone to share these resources with someone in their life.

"We hope our Suicide Prevention Month efforts help educate people about the VA and community resources available nationwide," said VA Under Secretary for Health David J. Shulkin, M.D. "We're committed to working with experts and organizations across the country to identify ways we can help Veterans and Servicemembers get the care they deserve and to expand the network of mental health support."

[Veteran suicide data](#) released by the VA Office of Suicide Prevention in early August 2016 serves as a foundation for informing and evaluating suicide prevention efforts inside the VA health care system and for developing lifesaving collaborations with community-based health care partners.

VA plans to host a series of roundtable discussions with key stakeholder groups in the coming months as part of its plan to develop a public health strategy for preventing Veteran suicide. In August, VA hosted its first roundtable discussion, "Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business," with corporate sector partners. In September, VA will host the [Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention Innovations](#) event, which will bring together a community of experts from business, industry, academia, and government agencies to collaboratively identify solutions for reducing suicide rates among Veterans and Servicemembers. In addition, new programs such as REACH VET are being launched nationwide in September to identify Veterans in VHA care who may be vulnerable, in order to provide the care they need before a crisis occurs.

For more information about VA's suicide prevention efforts:

- Suicide Prevention Month website: VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere
- Suicide Prevention Month toolkit: VeteransCrisisLine.net/SpreadTheWord
- [Suicide Prevention Fact Sheet](#)
- VA's Veterans Crisis Line: Call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**; chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat or text to **838255** — even if a Veteran is not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care.
- Make the Connection website: <http://maketheconnection.net>
- VA Mental Health website: <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov>

###