



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

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September Marks Suicide Prevention Month

WASHINGTON – The message from the Department of Veterans Affairs to the friends and families of Veterans during Suicide Prevention Month is simple: Be There.

“We [know](#) that in 2014, an average of 20 Veterans a day died in this country from suicide, which is 20 too many,” said VA Secretary David J. Shulkin. “This is a national public health crisis requiring a national public health approach. When it comes to preventing Veteran suicide, VA can’t – and should not – do this alone.”

For Suicide Prevention Month, VA has a number of outreach events planned to raise awareness. Among some of the top events planned:

- A number of declaration signings will be held throughout the month within the entire VA health care system, the Department of Defense, Veteran service organizations and with other partners around the country that show a commitment of solidarity to prevent Veteran suicides.
- Each VA facility will also be asked to commit to [Be There](#), ensuring Veterans get the mental health support they need through a “no wrong door” philosophy. The VA declaration promises:
 - To adopt a “no wrong door” philosophy for suicide prevention so every VA employee will assist Veterans in need;
 - To work with our Community Veteran Engagement Boards or other community partner in suicide prevention efforts;
 - To establish a “buddy system” so Veterans can reach out to someone when needed;
 - To continue implementation of Press 7, for our telephone systems, where feasible, to provide immediate access to the Veterans and Military Crisis Line
 - To establish open access in our facility mental health clinics and same day access in our community based mental health clinics within six months, to ensure prompt attention to the needs of our Veterans;
 - To work across clinical specialties to ensure Veterans receive integrated specialty pain management and sleep services as needed;
 - To ensure all staff and employees clinical suicide prevention training;
 - To arrange appointments for Veterans seeking care through Enhanced Enrollment procedures; and
 - To increase the number of Veterans and providers connecting through our Telemental Health services.
- A [suicide prevention toolkit](#) is being distributed around the country to stakeholders and community partners.
- A number of partnerships will be announced including a national network of volunteer professionals at [Give an Hour](#) to expand community-based mental health services for Veteran and military communities.
- Outreach efforts will target communities and military units that are experiencing high rates of suicide. We are not waiting until they are in crisis.
- VA is continuing its work with the Department of Defense to identify at-risk service members and enroll them for VA care and engage them through community programs before they transition out of the military, with a day planned in which employees of both departments will be encouraged to wear the same color to show commitment to suicide prevention.
- Monthlong social media events are planned including a Thunderclap, twitter and blog posts; Instagram takeover; Facebook live and other social media events targeted at suicide prevention.

Veterans in crisis can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to 838255. Veterans can also visit Make the Connection, a powerful network of stories of recovery, to learn more: <http://maketheconnection.net>. For more information and resources, visit and VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere VeteransCrisisLine.net/SpreadTheWord.

Reporters covering this issue are strongly encouraged to visit www.ReportingOnSuicide.Org for important guidance on ways to communicate on suicide.