

**VA**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

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## VA, Health and Human Services announce Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide

**WASHINGTON** — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will convene for the inaugural Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans and their Families (SMVF) on Feb. 6, in Washington, D.C.

Through data analysis and their current suicide prevention initiatives, 10 states were formally invited to participate in the Governor's Challenge, of which seven accepted, to include, Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, New Hampshire, Texas and Virginia.

State leaders will meet to develop a plan to implement the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#), which provides a framework for identifying priorities, organizing efforts and contributing to a national focus on Veteran suicide prevention.

The collaboration between the agencies is an example of VA Secretary Wilkie's aim to partner with organizations who share the same goal of preventing suicide among the nation's Veteran population.

"Preventing Veteran suicide is our number one clinical priority," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This is a national problem that demands a nationwide response – the Mayor's Challenge and the Governor's Challenge provide a roadmap to develop that national focus of effort."

In March 2018, VA and SAMHSA initiated the [Mayor's Challenge](#) with a local community-level focus. The Governor's Challenge takes this effort to the state level, incorporating existing community strategic plans within respective states and supporting the initiative with state-level influence and resources.

Earlier this week, Secretary Wilkie mentioned the importance of the Mayor's challenge and Governor's challenge as part of an Op-Ed [outlining VA's progress on suicide prevention for Veterans](#), which is the department's top clinical priority.

VA and HHS will leverage technical expertise from both agencies to ensure the work is codified, evaluated for effectiveness and shared with municipalities to optimize the collective efforts of all partners invested in preventing suicide across the SMVF demographic group.

For more information on VA's suicide prevention campaign, visit <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/bethere>. For information on SAMHSA's suicide prevention efforts, visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/suicide-prevention/samhsas-efforts>.

Veterans in crisis or having thoughts of suicide — and those who know a Veteran in crisis — can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat), or text to 838255.

Reporters covering Veteran mental health can visit [ReportingOnSuicide.org](http://ReportingOnSuicide.org) for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.

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