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VA partners with National Guard to provide on-site counseling during training weekends

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense formalized a partnership June 28 between [VA's Vet Centers](#) and the [National Guard Bureau](#), to provide Vet Center counseling, outreach staff and other services to members during training or drill weekends.

"This relationship between VA and the National Guard further advances the department's efforts to decrease service member and Veteran suicide," said [VA Secretary Robert Wilkie](#). "Vet Center staff will provide counseling and referral to those who may be under stress and at risk for self-harm."

VA's 300 Vet Centers, 80 Mobile Vet Centers and a 24/7 call center provide community-based counseling for a wide range of social and psychological services, including confidential readjustment counseling and outreach and referral to eligible Veterans, active-duty, and National Guard and Reserve members and their families.

Vet Center counselors and outreach staff, many of whom are Veterans themselves, are experienced and prepared to discuss the tragedies of war, loss, grief and transition after trauma.

Suicide prevention is a top priority for the National Guard, which experienced the highest rate of suicide among military components in 2017. Since then, VA has seen a 38% increase in National Guard service members seeking Vet Center services.*

"This is an important and historic day for the National Guard and Veterans Affairs," said [Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel](#), chief of the National Guard Bureau. "This partnership will increase our ability to offer access to services to our Guard Soldiers and Airmen and their families who live in remote locations. Ultimately, this partnership will positively impact the readiness of our force."

Suicides across the Guard have dropped to the lowest point than they have been in the past 5 years when comparing annual data from January to August. NGB is carefully examining the information to determine whether a direct correlation exists between the reduction of suicides so far in 2019, and this type of strategic engagement.

Nearly 300,000 Veterans and active-duty service members received Vet Center services in 2018.

To find out more about Vet Centers, or to locate a nearby Vet Center, visit www.vetcenter.va.gov.

**Data was pulled from October 1, 2017 to July 31, 2018 and compared with data from October 1, 2018 to July 31, 2019.*

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