

VA



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# News Release

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## The country makes a milestone commitment to prioritize suicide prevention for Veterans and all Americans

**WASHINGTON** — The President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) Office and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today [42 states and one U.S. territory](#) signed the PREVENTS state proclamation pledging their prioritization of suicide prevention for Veterans and all citizens in their jurisdictions.

Each state pledging promises to promote and amplify the [REACH](#) public health campaign that encourages everyone to reach out to those who are vulnerable and to reach out when they themselves are in need of help.

As part of the implementation of the president’s roadmap, the [PREVENTS Office](#) is meeting with state and community leaders in all 50 states and territories to ensure best practices for suicide prevention are identified and applied, efforts are coordinated within the state and federal government and the public health messages are promoted before the initiative concludes in March 2022.

“With the commitment of our nation’s governors, this undertaking has moved beyond an idea to reality — as it is only viable when governors enlist the full authority and backing of their state to combat this crisis,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “September is National Suicide Prevention Month and through the outpouring of support echoed by governors issuing state proclamations, their efforts assist with meeting the requirements of the president’s [White House Task Force](#) for PREVENTS, which provides the nation with an essential, collaborative forum to address this national crisis through local and state-focused solutions to help us end Veteran suicide.

To engage all 50 states and five U.S. territories, the PREVENTS office developed a state proclamation for governors codifying their full commitment to preventing suicide in their states, with a special focus on Veterans and other high-risk populations, such as Native Americans, first responders, individuals age 10-34 for whom suicide is the second leading cause of death, people living in rural communities and LGBTQ individuals.

Additionally, the office is working with key community leaders — including Veterans Service Organizations, Military Service Organizations, business leaders, academic institutions and faith-based communities. To date, PREVENTS has held in-person visits in Arizona, California, Florida, Tennessee and Texas, and virtual visits in Indiana and Oklahoma.

“Collaborating with state and community leaders to advance the mission of suicide prevention for Veterans and all Americans is imperative,” said PREVENTS Executive Director Barbara Van Dahlen, Ph.D. “As we move forward to change the culture around mental health in general and suicide in particular, we will continue to elevate and amplify the great work our states are already doing as we leverage lessons learned and best practices to accelerate our efforts to heal families and save lives.”

[PREVENTS](#) was established by [Executive Order 13861, March 5, 2019](#). The Roadmap, released by President Trump June 17, emphasizes the critical role of states and local communities in suicide prevention.

*PREVENTS is charged with creating an all of government and all of nation approach to preventing suicide among the nation’s Veterans and all Americans through a national public health campaign, enhanced community integration, prioritized research activities and implementation strategies that emphasize improved overall health and well-being.*

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