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News Release

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VA seeks feedback to guide new copayment waiver program for Veterans at risk for suicide

WASHINGTON — To encourage outpatient mental health care and reduce any potential barriers associated with seeking it, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is proposing to eliminate copayment requirements for outpatient mental health visits and reduce the copayments for medications dispensed to Veterans who are identified as high risk for suicide by a VA clinician.

VA [published a notice](#) in the Federal Register Jan. 5, to solicit public feedback to guide implementation of the new VA program modifying copayments for Veterans at risk of suicide.

“Research shows increased frequency of outpatient mental health encounters for high-risk Veterans reduces their risk of suicide,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “Through these efforts, VA will continue to address this national public health crisis by further eliminating financial burdens on Veterans which may negatively influence their engagement in mental health treatment and their critical medication availability.”

Currently, there is no exemption from outpatient care copayments for Veterans who are at risk for suicide, and such Veterans have to pay a \$15.00 or \$50.00 copayment for each outpatient visit, depending on whether the visit qualifies as primary care or specialty care.

In addition, to decrease the risk of overdose on prescribed medications, prescription-based lethal means safety programs often focus on limiting the supply of medications that may, intentionally or unintentionally, contribute to an overdose. An example of this would be to prescribe a seven-day supply of medication with four refills rather than a prescribing one 30-day supply of the medication.

This proposed rule would reduce the financial burden of multiple co-payments associated with both increased outpatient visits as well as more frequent, but limited supply of prescribed medications.

The public notice requests feedback at the [Federal Register](#). The public comment period ends March 7.

More information on lethal means safety and safe medication storage can be found at [Firearm Suicide Prevention & Lethal Means Safety - REACH \(va.gov\)](#).

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*If you're a Veteran having thoughts of suicide or you know one who is, contact the Veterans Crisis Line 24/7/365 days a year. Call? **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, chat online at <http://veteranscrisisline.net/Chat> or text to 838255.*

Media covering this issue can download VA's [Safe Messaging Best Practices fact sheet](#) or visit www.ReportingOnSuicide.org for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.