FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb. 16, 2023

Winners revealed in VA's $20M Mission Daybreak Grand Challenge to reduce Veteran suicides

WASHINGTON — Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced the 10 winners of Mission Daybreak, a $20 million grand challenge aimed at developing innovations to reduce Veteran suicides.

During this challenge, VA received more than 1,300 innovation submissions from Veterans, Veteran Service Organizations, community-based organizations, health technology companies, startups, and universities – with solutions ranging from lethal means safety concepts, to targeted virtual care programs, to other promising suicide prevention solutions that offer healing and recovery to Veterans. Mission Daybreak is the largest cash federal incentive prize since the establishment of the Prize Authority. An overview of the winning solutions is outlined below.

Preventing Veteran suicide is VA's top clinical priority and a top priority of the Biden-Harris Administration. This effort is a key part of VA's 10-year National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide and the Biden-Harris administration's plan for Reducing Military and Veteran Suicide. In September, VA released the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, which showed that Veteran suicides decreased in 2020 for the second year in a row, and that fewer Veterans died by suicide in 2020 than in any year since 2006.

"Our Veterans need and deserve suicide prevention solutions that meet them where they are, rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, and that's exactly what Mission Daybreak has delivered," said **VA Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D.** "By drawing on a range of focus areas and life experiences, the Mission Daybreak winners have developed innovations that will save Veterans lives – and there's nothing more important than that."

The two first-place winners will each receive $3 million:

- **Stop Soldier Suicide's** Black Box Project is a technology solution that identifies and analyzes data from digital devices of Veterans who died by suicide to develop machine learning models that can identify never-before-known risk patterns. Paired with evidence-based, suicide-specific intervention services, the Black Box Project will accelerate precision methodologies in suicide prevention for the Veteran community.

- **Televeda's** Project Hózhó is the first mental health app and comprehensive operational plan for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) populations. Televeda designed the tool in partnership with AIAN and Veteran communities for Navajo Veterans with plans to adapt and expand for use with other tribes. The solution incorporates traditional healing practices like storytelling and talking-circle interventions to reduce Veteran suicide and improve access to VA resources.

The three second-place winners will each receive $1 million:

- **ReflexAI** is an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered tool that can help the Veterans Crisis Line train and maintain a team of responders that can meet the needs of every Veteran who reaches out. The tool utilizes a three-pronged approach of simulation, feedback, and quality assurance, which is nationally recognized as an innovative and responsible use of AI in crisis services.

- **Sentinel** is a mobile app designed to reduce Veteran suicide by encouraging safe storage of firearms. The application integrates smart firearm and medication locking devices with a Veteran-specific learning and community support network that facilitates strong connections with other Veterans, family, and friends.

- **Battle Buddy** is a virtual human-led mental health and wellness application that promotes resiliency among Veterans at risk for suicide. The application's interactive, conversational AI utilizes content from VA's Suicide Safety Planning program during brief daily check-ins with Veterans. The mobile application will also connect with wearable sensors to leverage sleep, exercise, and other health signals. Battle Buddy is a partnership between the USC Institute for Creative Technologies and the SoldierStrong Foundation.

The five third-place winners will each receive $500,000:

- **Even Health's** Cabana® is a virtual reality-based group support platform for Veterans who have survived a suicide attempt. The solution adapts an established support group model shown to reduce suicide and associated factors as well as increase resilience and a sense of belonging.

- **NeuroFlow** is a two-sided technology platform that offers Veterans tailored resources and digital care 24/7 while measuring their evolving behavioral health needs to inform care teams of potential crises before they happen. Providing virtual and in-person support for Veterans who would typically fall through the cracks, NeuroFlow assesses and triages Veterans and caregivers to get them to the right level of behavioral health care and community services based on their available benefits, geography, and clinical presentation.

- **Overwatch Project** is a peer-based intervention program that empowers Veterans to intervene with at-risk buddies, offering to temporarily hold onto their guns or take protective storage measures before it is too late. This comprehensive program includes training, community engagement, and communications initiatives crafted in a direct, authentic Veteran voice. The Overwatch Project, an initiative of the 501(c)(3) nonprofit FORGE, aims to transform the conversation about firearms and suicide prevention through an approach

modeled after the "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" campaign.

- **OxfordVR's** gameChange, a digital therapeutic with the Food and Drug Administration's Breakthrough Device designation, treats severe social isolation common to PTSD, psychosis, and severe depression, and a precursor to suicidal thoughts and behavior. Through virtual reality gameChange offers an immersive and scalable opportunity to treat Veterans where they are before a crisis moment.

- **Team Guidehouse's** data platform integrates social determinants of health and social media data into the health record and an external dashboard to identify Veterans at risk in real time and provide actionable insights for suicide prevention. Team Guidehouse is a partnership between Red Hat and Philip Held, Ph.D., Rush University Medical Center.

Visit missiondaybreak.net for more information on the challenge.

Over the past year, VA has announced or continued several additional efforts to end Veteran suicide. In January, VA announced that Veterans in acute suicidal crisis can go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for emergency health care at no cost – including inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days. VA has also established 988 (then press 1) as a way for Veterans to quickly connect with caring, qualified crisis support 24/7; proposed a new rule that would reduce or eliminate copayments for Veterans at risk of suicide; conduced an ongoing public outreach effort on firearm suicide prevention and lethal means safety; and leveraged a national Veteran suicide prevention awareness campaign, "Don't Wait. Reach Out."

<center>###</center>

Reporters covering this issue can download VA's Safe Messaging Best Practices fact sheet or visit ReportingOnSuicide.org for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.

If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive 24/7 confidential support. You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect. To reach responders, Dial 988 then Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text 838255.