

Date: November 23, 2022

From: Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services/Chief Medical Officer (CMO) (11)

Subj: Eliminating Veteran Suicide: Suicide Risk Screening and Evaluation Requirements and Implementation Update (Risk ID Strategy) (VIEWS 08914231)

To: Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) Director (10N1-23)
VISN CMOs (10N1-23)
VISN Chief Mental Health Officers (10N1-23)
Medical Center Directors (00)

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to reissue requirements for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) unified strategy for suicide risk screening and evaluation (VHA Suicide Risk Identification Strategy: Risk ID).ⁱ Each of us plays a crucial role in supporting VHA's top clinical priority to prevent Veteran suicide. This strategy ensures that the entire healthcare system is readily equipped to identify Veterans at risk for suicide, regardless of where they are receiving care, so they can be connected to life-saving resources and interventions.

2. The current two-step process is in alignment with the Joint Commission standards (National Patient Safety Goal 15.01.01). The two-step process requires timely completion of the Comprehensive Suicide Risk Evaluation (CSRE) for Veterans with a positive screen, determined by response to the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) screener. The following are required procedures for suicide risk screening and evaluation:

a. **Universal Screening Requirement:** All patients should be screened annually with the C-SSRS. Annual suicide risk screening is facilitated through the clinical reminder system. The annual suicide risk screen reminder should be satisfied by appropriate staff, at a patient's encounter, when it is due. All service areas are expected to complete the annual suicide risk screen when due.

b. **Setting-Specific Requirements:** In addition to annual universal screening, there are other setting-specific screening and evaluation requirements. These are available on the Risk ID SharePoint, <https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/ECH/srsa/SitePages/Risk-ID-Resources.aspx>

c. **When Clinically Indicated:** The universal and setting-specific requirements provide a general approach for completion of the suicide risk screening and evaluation protocols. There may be additional clinical situations, such as when a patient presents with a new behavioral health concern, when use of the C-SSRS and/or the CSRE is indicated.

ⁱ This document updates and supersedes VHA Memorandum 2021-11-13, Eliminating Veteran Suicide: Suicide Risk Screening and Evaluation Requirements and Implementation (Risk ID Strategy), November 13, 2020.

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Note: *All facilities are expected to complete 100% of required universal and setting-specific screenings and CSREs and use clinical judgment for screening when clinically indicated. Local facilities must have processes in place to facilitate timely completion of the CSRE. The CSRE should be completed and documented on the same day as a positive C-SSRS Screen in all ambulatory care settings. There may be settings where it is not logistically feasible or clinically appropriate to complete the CSRE on the same day as the positive C-SSRS screen, for example, in the Emergency Department, Acute Inpatient Psychiatry, Inpatient Medicine, Rehabilitation, Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs, or Community Living Centers. In these situations, after ensuring patient safety, it is acceptable to complete and document the CSRE within 24 hours of the positive C-SSRS.*

3. **Staff-Specific Guidance:** Staff-specific guidance, as well as education and training materials, are also available on the Risk ID SharePoint referenced above.

4. **Accountability and Metrics:** Metrics to support Risk ID implementation are reviewed in the SharePoint referenced above ("Risk ID Dashboard and Metric" folder).

5. Ongoing technical assistance calls are conducted to support implementation of Risk ID. If you are interested in joining these calls or have any questions about the Suicide Risk Screening and Evaluation procedures, please contact the Technical Assistance Team at VHAECHRiskIDSupport@va.gov.



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