Community Based Interventions for Suicide Prevention: Community Engagement and Partnerships Program

VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP)
Suicide Prevention Program

Cleared for External updated September 2021
Overview

• Suicide Prevention: A Public Health Issue
• Suicide Prevention: Key Data
• Suicide Prevention 2.0 Public Health Strategy
• Suicide Prevention 2.0 Community Based-Interventions for Suicide Prevention (CBI-SP)
• Community Engagement and Partnerships Program
• VHA Suicide Prevention Resources
Suicide Prevention: A Public Health Issue
Suicide as a National Problem

• Suicide is a national issue, affecting both the Veteran and general population.
• Societal factors, such as economic disparities, race/ethnicity/LGBT disparities, homelessness, social connection and isolation, and health and well-being, play additional roles in suicide.
• Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has also placed additional strain on our Nation and on individuals and communities.
• One suicide is heartbreaking, notably affecting an estimated 135 surviving individuals for each death by suicide.
• Our nation grieves with each suicide, necessarily prompting the collective tireless pursuit of evidence-based clinical interventions and community prevention strategies, critical to the implementation of VA’s National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide.
Suicide Prevention: Key Data
2021 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report

• Annual Report
  • Reports on trends in Veteran suicide deaths from 2001-2019
  • Focuses on suicide counts and rates among various Veteran subpopulations

• State Data Sheets
  • Examines state-level Veteran suicide deaths and compares to national and regional trends
  • 53 data sheets available for all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories

Access the reports online:
www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mentalhealth/suicide_prevention/data.asp
In 2019, the number of Veteran suicides (6,261) was the lowest since 2007.
Veteran-Specific Age- and Sex-Adjusted Suicide Rates, 2001-2019

• The Age and Sex-Adjusted Suicide Rate decreased 7.2% percent in 2019 compared to 2018.
• This is a decrease from 29.0 Veteran suicides per 100,000 in 2018 to 26.9 Veteran suicides per 100,000 in 2019.
### Suicide Deaths, Methods Involved, 2019 and Change from 2001

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**Non-Veteran**

- **Firearms**: 47.9% (-4.8%), 69.2% (+2.7%), 31.3% (-4.2%), 49.8% (+12.8%), 53.0% (-5.0%), 70.2% (+2.9%)
- **Poisoning**: 13.9% (-4.5%), 8.4% (-4.8%), 31.0% (-7.1%), 26.3% (-16.6%), 8.5% (-3.8%), 7.5% (-4.9%)
- **Suffocation**: 29.6% (+8.8%), 16.9% (+2.9%), 27.7% (+12.0%), 20.5% (+10.1%), 30.2% (+7.9%), 16.8% (+2.7%)
- **Other**: 8.7% (+0.6%), 5.4% (-0.9%), 10.0% (-0.7%), 3.4% (-6.3%), 8.3% (+1.0%), 5.5% (-0.8%)

* Change Versus Among Suicide Decedents in 2001

Veteran suicides were more likely to involve firearms. This difference increased from 2001 to 2019.

Anchor 2: From 2005 to 2018, identified Veteran suicides increased on average by 48 deaths per year. A reversal totaling 399 lives within one year is unprecedented, dating back to 2001.

Anchor 3: Decrease in the adjusted suicide rate for Veterans from 2018 to 2019 (7%) was larger than any observed for Veterans 2001 through 2018. Veteran rate of decrease (7.2%) exceeded by four times the non-Veteran population decrease (1.8%).

Anchor 4: There was a nearly 13% one-year (unadjusted) rate decrease for female Veterans, which represents the largest rate decrease for Women Veterans in 17 years.

Anchor 5: COVID-19-related data continues to emerge and clarify, but data thus far does not indicate an increase in Veteran suicide-related behaviors.
Suicide Prevention 2.0
Public Health Strategy
VA's public health strategy combines partnerships with communities to implement tailored, local prevention plans while also focusing on evidence based clinical strategies for intervention. Our approach focuses on both what we can do now, in the short term, and over the long term, to implement VA’s National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide.
Suicide Prevention 2.0 Vision for the Distance: Combining Community & Clinical Interventions

**Community-Based Prevention Strategies**
- Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN)-Wide Community Prevention Pilots (community coalition building)
- Together With Veterans (Veteran-to-Veteran building)
- Governor’s/Mayor’s Challenge (state-driven suicide prevention planning)

**Clinically-Based Interventions**
- Evidence-based psychotherapies implemented across the nation (including cognitive behavior therapy for suicide prevention, dialectical behavior therapy, and problem-solving therapy)

**Foundation of Adequate Mental Health Staffing**
(7.72 outpatient mental health full-time equivalent employees/1,000 Veterans in outpatient mental health)
Suicide Prevention 2.0
Community-Based Interventions for Suicide Prevention (CBI-SP)
CDC’s Preventing Suicide Technical Package

- Strengthen Economic Supports
- Strengthen Access and Delivery of Suicide Care
- Create Protective Environments
- Promote Connectedness
- Teach Coping and Problem-Solving Skills
- Identify and Support People at Risk
- Lessen Harms and Prevent Future Risk
Focused Priority Areas Across CBI-SP Unifying Model

- Identify Service Members, Veterans, and their Families and Screen for Suicide Risk
- Promote Connectedness and Improve Care Transitions
- Increase Lethal Means Safety and Safety Planning
Priority Areas & CDC Strategies are Complementary

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Increase Lethal Means Safety and Safety Planning

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- Create Protective Environments
Community-Based Interventions

Community-Based Interventions for Suicide Prevention (CBI-SP) serves as a unifying model, from national to community levels, for all community-based efforts to end Veteran suicide.

- **The Governor’s Challenge** is a collaboration with VA and SAMHSA where state policy makers partner with local leaders to implement a comprehensive suicide prevention plan.

- **Together with Veterans** is focused on Veteran-to-Veteran coalition building and Veteran leadership development for suicide prevention.

- **Community Engagement and Partnerships for Suicide Prevention (VISN Expansion)** is focused on facilitating community coalition building for suicide prevention.

  Outreach and Education provides SAVE, VHA facility partnerships, events, etc. through local Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs) and does not change their critical role.
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- **Governor’s Challenge** is a collaboration with the VA and SAMHSA where state policy makers partner with local leaders to implement a comprehensive prevention plan. This partnership involves forming an interagency team to develop a strategic action plan that addresses Veteran suicide at the state level that includes community, municipal, military and other stakeholders.

- **Together with Veterans** (TWV) is a collaborative, evidence-informed and community centered program that enlists rural Veterans to act as change agents by providing training and support to their peers and local partners. This program is focused on Veteran-to-Veteran coalition building and Veteran leadership development for suicide prevention.

- **Community Engagement and Partnership for Suicide Prevention** is focused on community coalition-building and enhanced capacity for outreach and education.

*While the local Suicide Prevention Coordinators provide outreach and education, the Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinators focus on community engagement and coalition building.*
Community Engagement and Partnerships Program
Suicide Prevention Team Integration and Coordination

Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinators (CEPC)

- Establish New Community Coalitions / Support Existing Coalitions
- Facilitate Community, Regional, and State-Level Efforts to Implement Evidence-Informed Community-Based SP Practices
- Bolster the public health approach through:
  Community engagement, coalition building, needs assessment and environmental scans, action planning, implementation of systems and community-level change initiatives, program evaluation, and sustainment of community efforts/coalitions

Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPC)

- Enhanced Care Management of Veterans at High Risk of Suicide
- Facility Suicide Prevention Program Coordination and Implementation of Clinical Evidence-Based Practices for SP
- Veterans Crisis Line Facility Consultant
- Community Outreach and Education
- Facility Suicide Prevention Training

Both SPCs and CEPCs work together to fully implement the public health approach combining community and clinical interventions to reach all Veterans across the universal, selective and indicated populations.
Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinator

The CEPC serves a subject matter expert of public health approaches, coalition leadership and management, and other community-based models for suicide prevention regarding Veterans.

Key roles of the CEPC:

- Develop, facilitate, and strengthen CBI-SP at community, state, and VISN levels
- Collaborate with VA programs and community stakeholders
- Provide leadership for coalition management
- Disseminate program evaluation and surveillance data
Effective Community-Based Suicide Prevention

For successful coalition building, it is important that all members actively participate in:

1. Developing Shared Vision
2. Needs Assessment
3. Organizational Capacity
4. Planning
5. Implementation
6. Evaluation
7. Sustainability
Community Engagement and Partnerships Program: Anticipated Outcomes

Short-Term Objectives
• Enhanced suicide prevention networks
• Increased engagement with Veterans
• Increased reach and adoption of CBI-SP
• Reduced gaps in community-based suicide prevention systems
• Improved community climate outcomes

Intermediate Objectives
• Increased formal help-seeking / use of care
• Increased referrals from multiple sources
• Improved treatment engagement and retention among Veterans seeking care
• Enhanced community collaboration regarding Veteran services and suicide prevention
• Increased access to safe firearms storage options
• Increased willingness to discuss and use safe firearms storage

Population Impact
• Reduced Veteran suicide deaths and attempts
• Reduced all-cause mortality
• Reduced suicide ideation
Thank You
VHA Suicide Prevention Resources
Free, Confidential Support 24/7/365

- Veterans
- Service members
- Family members
- Friends
- Coworkers
Make the Connection

• Online resource featuring hundreds of Veterans telling their stories about overcoming mental health challenges

www.MakeTheConnection.net

MakeTheConnection.net/conditions/suicide
VA SAVE Training

• Suicide prevention training video available to everyone, 24/7
• Less than 25 minutes long
• Offered in collaboration with the PsychArmor Institute

Available online for free: psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e/
Coaching into Care

• National VA telephone service which aims to educate, support, and empower family members and friends who are seeking care or services for a Veteran

CALL 888-823-7458
Show a Veteran loved one you care.

be there. BeThereForVeterans.com
Social Media Safety Toolkit

• As discussed in the National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide, social media is an important intervention channel and a key piece of VA’s comprehensive, community-based suicide prevention strategy.

• The Social Media Safety Toolkit for Veterans, their families, and friends equips everyone with the knowledge needed to respond to social media posts that indicate a Veteran may be having thoughts of suicide.

• The toolkit includes best practices, resources, and sample responses.

Lethal Means Safety Toolkit

• Developed in partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), the trade association for the firearms industry.

• Toolkit guides communities through the process of building coalitions to raise awareness about safe storage and its connection to suicide prevention.

• Safe storage can put time and space between an individual and a firearm during suicidal crisis and shows promise for reducing rates of suicide.

• VA respects the important role firearms play in many Veterans’ lives and is dedicated to providing safe storage options that are consistent with each Veteran’s values and priorities. Help Veterans and their loved ones make their homes safer and share these resources with your network.

Access the toolkit online:
Safe Firearm Storage Toolkit
National VA Suicide Prevention Lethal Means Safety (LMS): Public Service Announcement (PSA)
From Science to Practice

• In 2019, VA launched a literature review series to help clinicians put suicide prevention research into action.

• The series translates evidence-based research into informative and practical steps that health care providers can use to help support their Veteran patients.

• The series is updated monthly.
Together We Can

- VA recently launched a new suicide prevention informational series for Veterans, their families and caregivers.
- The series is backed by scientific findings designed to provide families and caregivers with resources and practical steps to take to Be There for Veterans in their lives.
- Both series describe several suicide risk and protective factors.

https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/resources.asp
Resources for Clinicians

SUICIDE RISK MANAGEMENT Consultation Program
FOR PROVIDERS WHO SERVE VETERANS

Why worry alone?
The Suicide Risk Management Consultation Program provides free consultation for any provider, community or VA, who serves Veterans at risk for suicide.

#NeverWorryAlone

To initiate a consult email:
SRMconsult@va.gov

www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/consult

Common consultation topics include:
- Risk Assessment
- Conceptualization of Suicide Risk
- Lethal Means Safety Counseling
- Strategies for How to Engage Veterans at High Risk
- Best Practices for Documentation
- Provider Support after a Suicide Loss (Postvention)

www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/srb
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@veteransmtc

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration

@deptvetaffairs
@veteranshealth

Make the Connection

be there.
TRAIN Learning Network

• TRAIN is a national learning network that provides quality training opportunities to over 1.8 million professionals who protect and improve the public's health.

• Many of the trainings used for internal VA staff and clinicians are included on this public portal as an opportunity to train community providers.

• The Suicide Prevention Program wants to ensure the high level of training provided to VA employees is also accessible to those assisting Veterans in their communities.

www.train.org
References


- CDC. Violence Prevention Suicide Fast Fact: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/fastfact.html


References

