

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

S.A.V.E. Training

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

Suicide Prevention Program

A Little Housekeeping Before We Start:

- Suicide is an intense topic for some people.
 - If you need to take a break, or step out, please do so.
 - Immediate Resources:
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
 - Service members and Veterans should press 1 to connect with the Veterans Crisis Line.
 - INSERT IMMEDIATE LOCAL RESOURCE, If present (e.g., EAP, Community Partners, Counselor Onsite, etc.)

Overview

- Objectives
- Facts about Suicide
- Common Myths vs. Realities
- The Steps of S.A.V.E.
- S.A.V.E. Training
- Resources and References

Objectives

By participating in this training, you will:

- Have a general understanding of the scope of suicide within the United States.
- Know how to identify a Veteran who may be at risk for suicide.
- Know what to do when you identify a Veteran at risk.

Before We Continue

What is your biggest question around suicide and talking to people in crisis?

Facts About Suicide

Data: Suicide in the U.S.

- **National public health problem (as defined by CDC)**
 - Over 45,000 Americans died by suicide in 2017, including 6,139 Veterans.
- **Service member and Veteran issue**
 - In 2017, the suicide rate for Veterans was 1.5 times the rate for non-Veteran adults.
- **Veteran populations at risk**
 - Younger Veterans
 - Women Veterans
 - Veterans in a period of transition
 - Veterans with exposure to suicide
 - Veterans with access to lethal means

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk

- Prior suicide attempt
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse
- Access to lethal means
- Recent loss
- Legal or financial challenges
- Relationship issues
- Unemployment
- Homelessness

Protective

- Access to mental health care
- Sense of connectedness
- Problem-solving skills
- Sense of spirituality
- Mission or purpose
- Physical health
- Employment
- Social and emotional well-being



Goal: Minimize risk factors and boost protective factors

Key Data Points

2017 Key Data Points



The rate of suicide was

2.2 *times higher*
among female Veterans

compared with non-Veteran adult women.

** after accounting for differences in age*



The rate of suicide was

1.3 *times higher*
among male Veterans

compared with non-Veteran adult men.

** after accounting for differences in age*



Male Veterans ages

18-34

experienced the **highest rates** of suicide.



Male Veterans ages

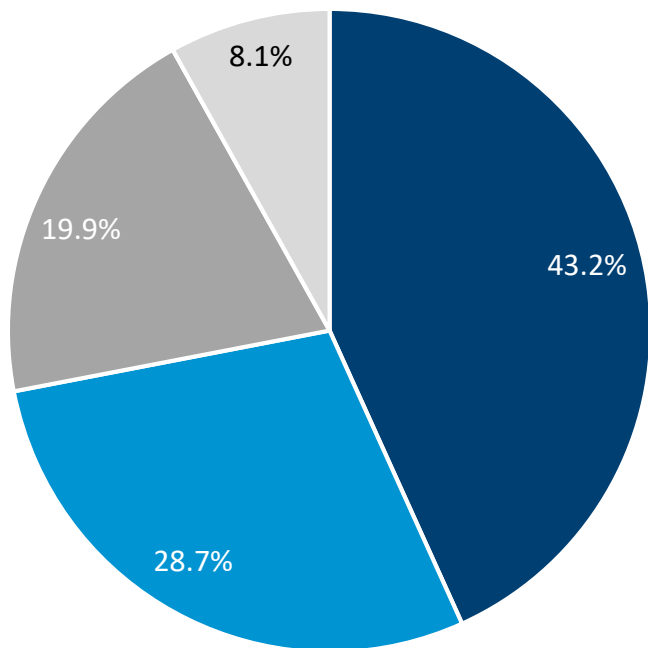
55 and older

experienced the **highest count** of suicide.

69% *of all Veteran suicide deaths resulted from a firearm injury.*

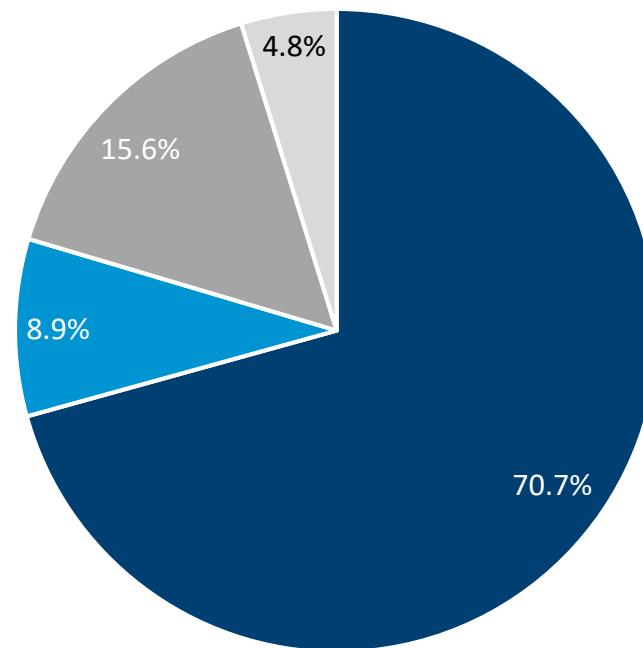
U.S. Veterans and Suicide Methods (2017)

Female Veterans



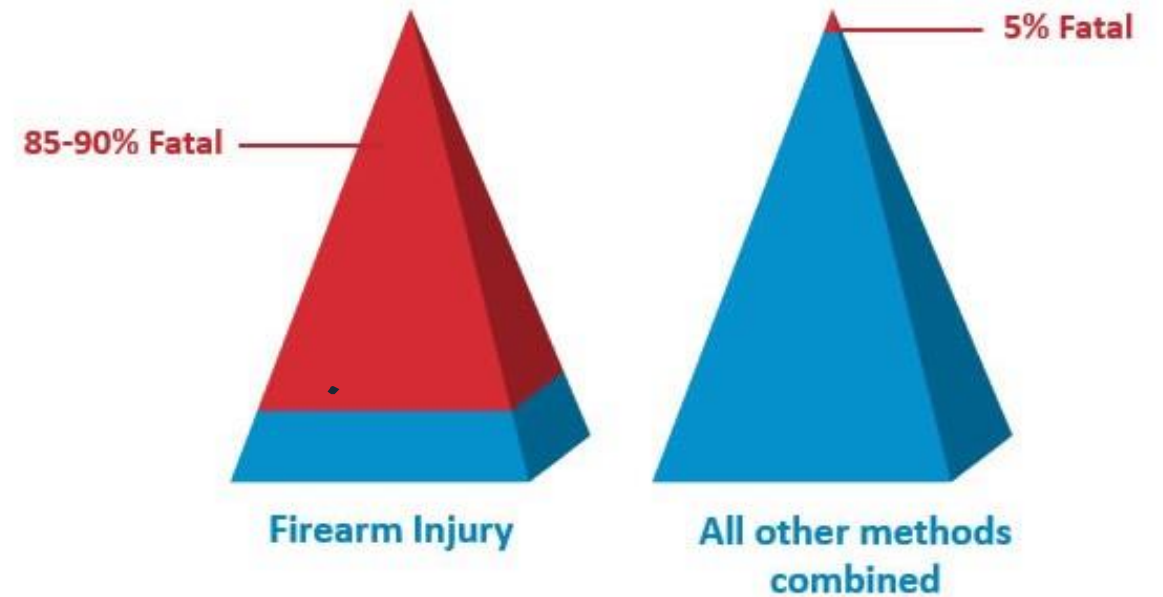
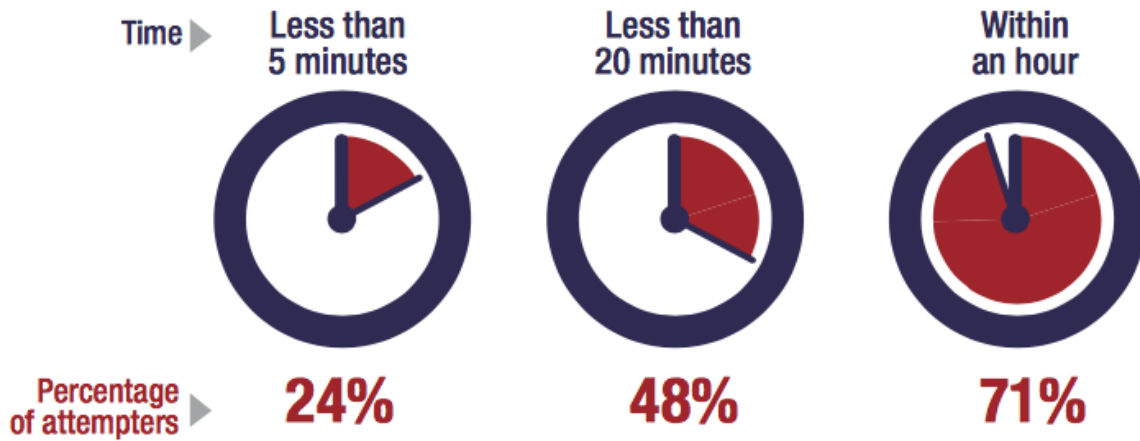
■ Firearm Injury ■ Poisoning
■ Suffocation ■ Other

Male Veterans



■ Firearm Injury ■ Poisoning
■ Suffocation ■ Other

Time From Decision to Action < 1 Hour



CDC WISQARS: Deaths from death certificate data; nonfatal incidents estimated from national sample of hospital emergency departments

Source: Simon, T.R., Swann, A.C., Powell, K.E., Potter, L.B., Kresnow, M., and O'Carroll, P.W. Characteristics of Impulsive Suicide Attempts and Attempters. SLTB. 2001; 32(supp):49-59.

Source: CDC WISQARS and US Dept. of Veterans Affairs <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/lethallmeanssafety/facts/>

**Suicide
is preventable.**

Common Myths vs. Realities

Common Myths vs. Realities

Myth	Reality
<p>People who talk about suicide are just seeking attention.</p>	

Common Myths vs. Realities

Myth	Reality
	<p>No matter how casually or jokingly said, suicide threats should never be ignored and may indicate serious suicidal feelings.</p> <p>Someone who talks about suicide provides others with an opportunity to intervene before suicidal behaviors occur.</p>

Common Myths vs. Realities

Myth	Reality
<p>The only one who can really help someone who is suicidal is a mental health counselor or therapist.</p>	

Common Myths vs. Realities

Myth	Reality
	<p>Special training is not required to safely raise the subject of suicide. Helping someone feel included and showing genuine, heartfelt support can also make a big difference during a challenging time.</p>

The Steps of S.A.V.E.

S.A.V.E.: Teaching Communities How to Help Veterans at Risk for Suicide

S.A.V.E. will help you act with care and compassion if you encounter a Veteran who is in suicidal crisis.

- **S**igns of suicidal thinking should be recognized.
- **A**sk the most important question of all.
- **V**alidate the Veteran's experience.
- **E**ncourage treatment and **E**xpedite getting help.



Signs of Suicidal Thinking

Learn to recognize these warning signs:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there is no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from family and friends

S Signs of Suicidal Thinking

The presence of any of the following signs requires immediate attention:

- Thinking about hurting or killing themselves
- Looking for ways to die
- Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- Self-destructive or risk-taking behavior, especially when it involves alcohol, drugs, or weapons

A Asking the Question

**Know how to ask
the most important question of all...**



Asking the Question

“Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

A Asking the Question

Do's	Don'ts
<p>DO ask the question if you've identified warning signs or symptoms.</p>	<p>DON'T ask the question as though you are looking for a "no" answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "You aren't thinking of killing yourself, are you?"
<p>DO ask the question in a natural way that flows with the conversation.</p>	<p>DON'T wait to ask the question when someone is halfway out the door.</p>

A Asking the Question: Check-In & Practice

- What are your thoughts about “Asking the question”?
- What initial concerns do you have?
- Let me demonstrate a few ways of asking the question — both good and bad — and you can tell me which ones you think are most effective and direct.
- Now, turn to a neighbor and practice asking the question with one of ways you feel would be most effective.

V Validate the Veteran's Experience

- Talk openly about suicide. Be willing to listen and allow the Veteran to express his or her feelings.
- Recognize that the situation is serious.
- Do not pass judgment.
- Reassure the Veteran that help is available.





Validate the Veteran's Experience: Check-In & Practice

- Who can share with me a validating statement?
- Turn to a partner and practice the following:
 - In response to an “invitation statement” such as, “Everything is so hard. I feel like a drag on my friends.”
 - Start by telling your partner, “Everything will be fine.” (Partner should respond.)
 - Shift instead to a statement that validates their feelings. (Partner should respond.)
- What did you notice?

E Encourage Treatment and Expedite Getting Help

- What should I do if I think someone is suicidal?
 - Don't keep the Veteran's suicidal behavior a secret.
 - Do not leave him or her alone.
 - Try to get the person to seek immediate help from his or her doctor or the nearest hospital emergency room.
 - Call 911.
- Reassure the Veteran that help is available.
- Call the Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1.**

When Talking with a Veteran at Risk for Suicide

- Remain calm.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Act with confidence.
- Do not argue.
- Use open body language.
- Limit questions — let the Veteran do the talking.
- Use supportive, encouraging comments.
- Be honest — let the Veteran know that there are no quick solutions, but help is available.

Remember

S.A.V.E.

S

Signs of suicidal thinking should be recognized.

A

Ask the most important question of all.

V

Validate the Veteran's experience.

E

Encourage treatment and Expedite getting help.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Resources and References

Psych Armor Institute's

S.A.V.E. Training: Spreading the Word

S.A.V.E. Training

- A PsychArmor course developed in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs and presented by Dr. Megan McCarthy, Former Deputy Director, Suicide Prevention
- After taking this 25-minute course, you will:
 - Develop a general understanding of the problem of suicide in the United States.
 - Understand how to identify a Veteran who may be at risk for suicide.
 - Know what to do if you identify a Veteran at risk.



www.PsychArmorInstitute.org

Utilize S.A.V.E. Training

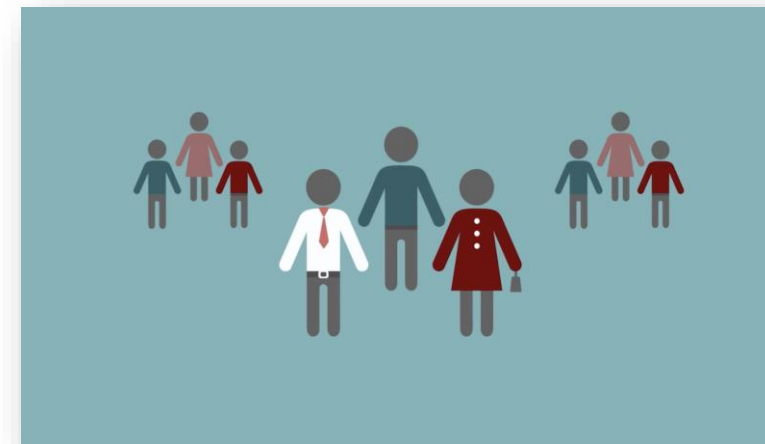
- S.A.V.E. is a free online Veteran suicide prevention training found on Psycharmor.org.
- S.A.V.E. is provided through VA suicide prevention resources across the country, which can be found using VA's resource locator at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator.



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

Utilize S.A.V.E. Training

- There are two different ways to take S.A.V.E.
 1. Group setting
 2. Individually
- S.A.V.E. was designed to be watched as a group. This allows for greater discussion and interaction of the topics and video.



Who Should Take S.A.V.E. Training?

This training is beneficial for anyone who interacts with Veterans, including:

- First responders
- Crisis line volunteers
- Law enforcement
- Members of clergy
- Individuals working in the justice system
- Health care employees
- Faith leaders
- Community members



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

What to Do if a Veteran Expresses Suicidal Ideation During a Phone Call

- Keep the caller on the line (do not hang up or transfer).
- Remain calm.
- Obtain identifying information on the caller (name, phone number, and current location).
- Conference call to VCL (don't hang up until VCL responder has the call).
- Solicit co-workers for assistance via Skype, etc.
- If caller disconnects, dial 911 and VCL (**1-800-273-8255 and Press 1.**).

Tip: Practice conferencing in calls at your desk with coworkers.

Free, Confidential Support 24/7/365

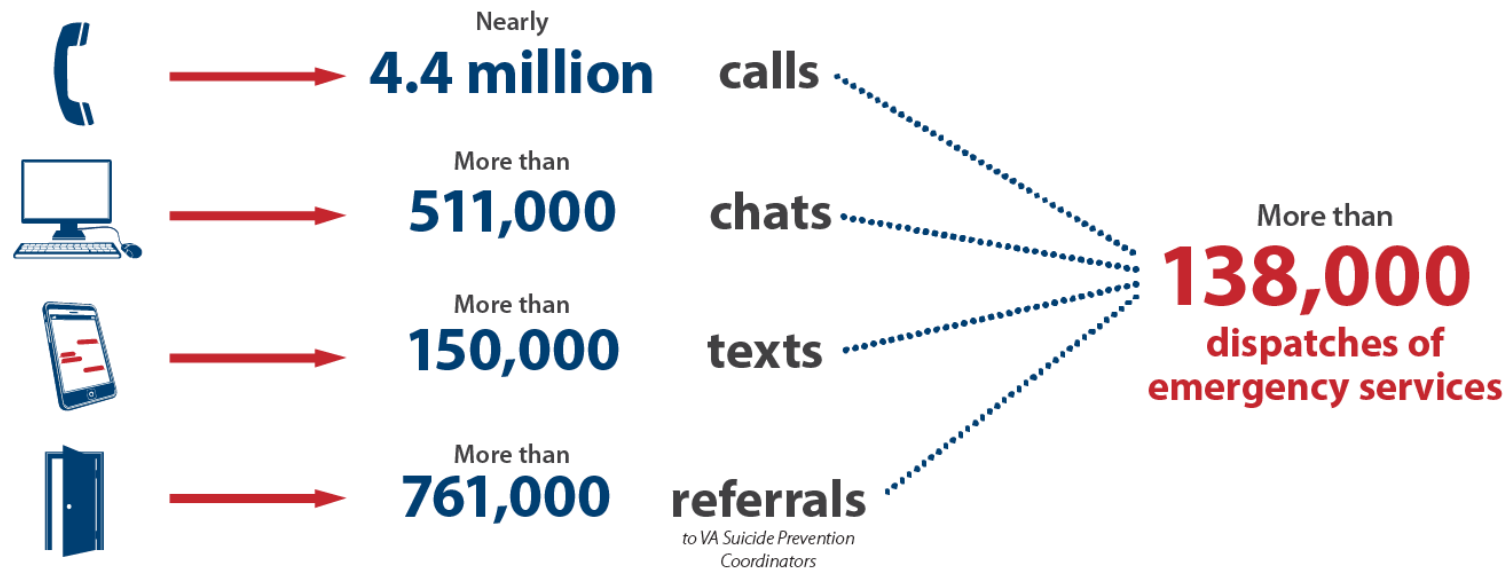
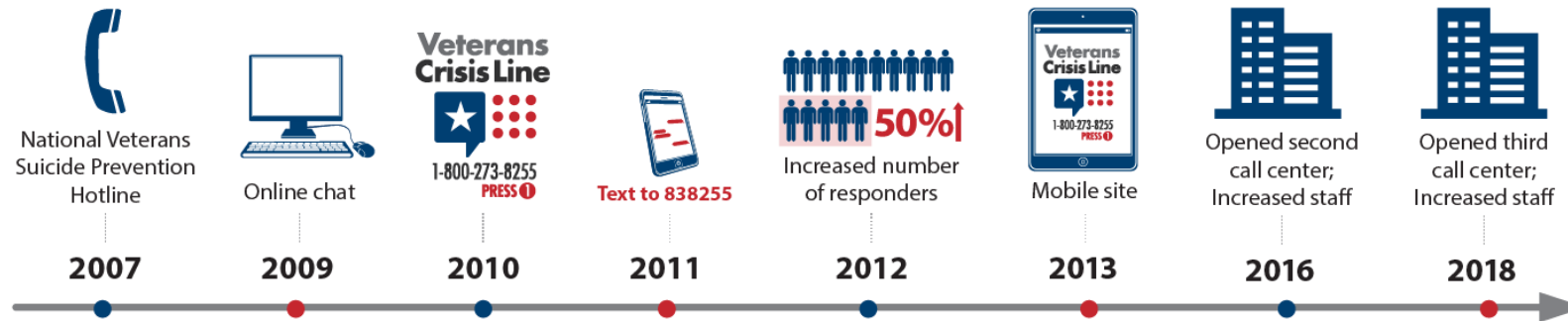


1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

• • • Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to **838255** • • •

- Veterans
- Family members
- Service members
- Friends

Veterans and Military Crisis Line



#BeThere Prevention Initiative



#BeThere
with a text or call to show you care.

BeThereForVeterans.com

 **Veterans Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

VA |  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=60&v=MCSZ7FjTq5I

Make the Connection

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

MAKE THE
CONNECTION
www.MakeTheConnection.net



<https://maketheconnection.net/conditions/suicide>

Coaching into Care

Program for families and loved ones of Veterans, helping them encourage the Veteran in their lives to seek support.



CALL 888-823-7458



Find a Local VA SPC at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ResourceLocator)

More than 400 SPCs nationwide.




VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator

Resource Locator


Locate Information and Resources

No matter what you are experiencing, there is support for getting your life on a better track. To find the Veteran resources most helpful for you, fill in your ZIP code or state below and check the boxes of the programs or topics you are interested in. You can also select the National Resource Directory or the SAMHSA Behavioral Health tab to find additional services.





U.S. Department of
Veterans Affairs
Resources



National Resource
Directory Resources



SAMHSA Behavioral
Health Treatment
Services Locator

1 Select a Resource

Suicide Prevention Coordinators
Specially trained Suicide Prevention Coordinators or teams are available at all VA Medical Centers across the country.

Crisis Centers
Search for community-based crisis centers in your area.

VA Medical Centers
VA Medical Centers offer a range of acute care and community-based outpatient services, including mental health care, diagnostics, homeless and alcohol/drug abuse programs, nursing home and respite care.

Outpatient Clinics
Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) are local VA locations that provide primary care, counseling, laboratory analysis, prescriptions and radiology services.

Veterans Benefits Administration Offices
Veterans Benefits Administration Offices provide services to Veterans seeking benefits related to compensation, pension, vocational rehabilitation, home loans, death benefits, employment, and disability.

Vet Centers
Vet Centers provide readjustment counseling and outreach services to all Veterans who have served in any combat zone, as well as their family members.

All
See all VA and community-based services in your area.

2 Choose Location

Search by Zip Code OR



2 Choose Location

Search by Zip Code OR

Results for **Suicide Prevention Coordinators** in state **ND**

Monsebroten, Tammy
 Fargo, ND 58102
 P: 701-239-3700x93556
 F: 701-237-2642
tammy.monsebroten@va.gov;
raae.bickett@va.gov

Results for **Crisis Centers** in state **ND**

FirstLink HotLine
 Fargo, ND 58103
 P: 701-293-6462
 F: 701-235-2476
[visit website](#)

--Standing Rock Line--
 Fargo, ND 58103

Results for **VA Medical Centers** in state **ND**

Fargo VA Health Care System
 2101 Elm Street N.
 Fargo, ND 58102
 P: 701-232-3241 Or 701-232-3241
[visit website](#)



Community Provider Toolkit

- Free online training on Veteran issues, including military culture, for health care providers.
- Includes tips for screening clients for military service.
- Military culture training can count for continuing education credits (CEUs): <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders/military.asp>.



Access the toolkit online:

www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders

Suicide Risk Management Consultation Program

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.

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)

#NeverWorryAlone

To initiate a consult email:

SRMconsult@va.gov

www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/consult

ROCKY MOUNTAIN
MIRECC

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Suicide Prevention Coordinators

SDCVAMCSuicidePrevention@va.gov

Dawn K. Miller, LCSW	858-964-8154
Shannon Vitale, LCSW	858-226-5795
Kimberly Beckstead, LCSW	858-731-7624
Julie Witte-Landau, LCSW	619-855-2403
Keely Wright, LCSW	858-210-9054
Dana Furtado, LCSW	619-855-2410



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs