Suicide Prevention and Crisis Intervention with Veterans

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Veterans Chat Service

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Facts about Veteran suicide

• 20 percent are Veterans (National Violent Death Reporting System)

• Veterans are more likely than the general population to use firearms as a means for suicide (National Violent Death Reporting System).

• 950 suicide attempts per month among Veterans receiving VA health care services (VA National Suicide Prevention Coordinator reports, October 1, 2008 – December 31, 2010)

• 33 percent of recent suicides have a history of previous attempts (VA National Suicide Prevention Coordinator reports, October 1, 2008 – December 31, 2010)

• Decreased suicide rates in Veterans aged 18-29 who use VA health care services (National Violent Death Reporting System and VA Serious Mental Illness Treatment Resource and Evaluation Center)
Veteran specific risks

- Frequent deployments
- Deployments to hostile environments
- Exposure to extreme stress
- Physical/sexual assault while in the service (not limited to women)
- Length of deployments
- Service related injury
Homelessness and Suicide

- Between 2000-2008 there were a total of 561 suicides among Veterans with history of housing instability/homelessness.
- 3.6% of all suicides identified between 2000-2008 had history of at least one homeless service intake assessment.
- Between FY09-FY11 more than 3,000 homeless Veterans attempted suicide.
- Between FY09 – FY11 more than 3,800 reports of suicide attempts were received for Veterans with a history of homelessness.
- The rate of non-fatal suicide attempts among Veterans with history of homelessness (3,800 per 100,000) is approximately 20 times higher than the overall rate of non-fatal attempts among all VHA users.
- Approximately 20% of all homeless Veterans who survived a suicide attempt had a report of at least one repeat suicide attempt within the next 12 months.
- Approximately 29% had report of one or more repeat suicide attempts within 24 months of their index attempt.
- In contrast to a larger trend of decreasing rates of non-fatal attempts among older adults (identified among the larger population of Veterans) – rates of non-fatal suicide attempts remain high for older homeless Veterans.
- On average, Veterans with a history of homelessness who die from suicide are younger than those who do not have a history of homelessness (48 vs. 61 years of age).
- Placement in VA grant and per diem, transitional housing, VA contracted housing and placement in psychosocial residential programs has been associated with a decreased probability of suicide ideation or attempt.

** these are non-verified numbers obtained through multiple internal VA data bases presented only to demonstrate risk.
What is needed is housing with support and services...

**Based on preliminary un-verified data**
VA Suicide Prevention Strategy

- Suicide can be prevented by providing ready access to high quality mental health care and other Services as needed.
  - Ready access can be achieved through:
    - Crisis Line
    - Veterans Chat
    - Veterans Text
    - Walk-in and ER visits
    - Referrals to Suicide Prevention Coordinators
    - Word of mouth referrals
    - Outreach efforts and community training
Specific Initiatives Established for Suicide Prevention

• Hubs of expertise
  – Center of Excellence (CoE)
  – Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC)
• National programs for education and awareness
  – Operation S.A.V.E (Know the Signs, Ask the question, Validate the feelings, Expedite help)
  – Suicide Risk Management Training for Clinicians
  – Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Suicide
  – Women Veterans and Suicide
  – Older Veterans and Suicide
  – Primary Care Provider
• Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK (8255) Press “1” for Veterans
  – Veterans Chat
  – Veterans Text
• Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPC)
• Federal partnerships
Veterans Crisis Line

- A toll-free, confidential resource that connects Veterans and Service Members in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) responders.
- Responders are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances
- Background
  - July 25, 2007 – Hotline went live; first call was at 11:20 AM
  - Based in Canandaigua VA Medical Center in upstate New York
  - Partnership with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) / LIFELINE
  - Current staff size: 180
Veterans Crisis Line (continued)

- Since its launch in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 590,000 calls and made more than 21,000 life-saving rescues. In 2009, the Veterans Crisis Line added an anonymous online chat service, which has helped more than 50,000 people.

- Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net), or text to 838255 to receive free, confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, even if they are not registered with the Department of Veterans Affairs or enrolled in VA health care.
### Veterans Crisis Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Calls</th>
<th>Veterans</th>
<th>Family/Friend</th>
<th>SPC Referrals</th>
<th>Rescue</th>
<th>Active Duty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March, 2012</td>
<td>18,874</td>
<td>12,275</td>
<td>1,533</td>
<td>3,440</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 11</td>
<td>164,101</td>
<td>102,446</td>
<td>12,221</td>
<td>29,334</td>
<td>6,670</td>
<td>2,290</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 10</td>
<td>134,528</td>
<td>81,805</td>
<td>9,925</td>
<td>19,970</td>
<td>5,732</td>
<td>1,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 09</td>
<td>118,984</td>
<td>63,934</td>
<td>7,553</td>
<td>13,960</td>
<td>3,709</td>
<td>1,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 08</td>
<td>67,350</td>
<td>29,879</td>
<td>4,517</td>
<td>6,264</td>
<td>1,749</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 07</td>
<td>9,379</td>
<td>2,918</td>
<td>No avail.</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>93</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From: Veterans Crisis Line database
Veterans Chat

• Anonymous, online chats occur with trained VA counselor

• Potential to transfer the visitor to the VA Suicide Prevention Hotline, where further counseling and referral services are provided and crisis intervention steps can be taken.

• Intended to reach out to all Veterans and Service Members

• Started in July 2009
### Veterans Chat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Chats</th>
<th>Transfer to Crisis Line</th>
<th>Transfer to Back-up Center</th>
<th>Suicide Mentioned</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>March, 2012</em></td>
<td>3,628</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>1,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (through 3/12)</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,762</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,224</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,089</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,731</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>FY 11</em></td>
<td>18,438</td>
<td>2,445</td>
<td>2,182</td>
<td>7,265</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>FY 10</em></td>
<td>8,471</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>3,433</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>FY 09</em></td>
<td>864</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From: Veterans Crisis Line database
Veterans Chat

Hello, your Vets representative is JasonG

Sometimes technical issues cause a chat to end unexpectedly. If this happens, please come back to chat again or call us at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press 1.

Welcome to VeteransChat, JasonG will be right with you.

Hi Jason

Send
Veterans Text

- 838255 (VETALK)
- Free!!
- Same clinical skills as Chat
- Primary differences between Chat and Text
  - Text is limited to 160 characters
  - Performance of Texting software is dependent on Visitor’s cell phone and cell phone provider.
    - Some phones/phone companies don’t work well with our interface – so texts may not appear or may appear later than submitted
    - Difficult with lengthy texts – carrier may break them up; they may come in the wrong order
### Veterans Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total Texts</th>
<th>Veterans</th>
<th>Family/Friend</th>
<th>SPC Referrals</th>
<th>Transfer to phone</th>
<th>Active Duty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 11</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 11</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 12</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 12</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,307</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From: Veterans Crisis Line database

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
www.VeteransCrisisLine.net
Crisis Line Materials

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

"I AM A VETERAN."
Calling the confidential Veterans Crisis Line can help. I know."
• **Mental Health**
  – VHA provides specialty inpatient and outpatient mental health services at its medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics. All mental health care provided by VHA supports recovery, striving to enable a person with mental health problems to live a meaningful life in their community and achieve full potential.
  – For more information on VA Mental Health Services visit [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov).

• **Vet Centers**
  – Vet Centers are VA community based centers that provide a range of counseling, outreach and referral services.
  – For more information about Vet Centers and to find the closest Vet Center to you visit [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov)
• **Make the Connection**
  
  MakeTheConnection.net is a one-stop resource where Veterans and their families and friends can privately explore information about physical and mental health symptoms, challenging life events, and mental health conditions. On this site, Veterans and their families and friends can learn about available resources and support. Visit [www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net) to learn more.

• **PTSD**
  
  Each VA medical centers have PTSD specialists who provide treatment for Veterans with PTSD. For more information about PTSD and to locate the VA PTSD program nearest you visit [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov).
  
Resources

• Veterans Crisis Line/Chat/Text
  – 1-800-273-8255 press 1
  – VETALK (838255)

• VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators
  – Each VA Medical Center has a suicide prevention coordinator to make sure Veterans receive needed counseling and services.
QUESTIONS?

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