

#BeThere



S.A.V.E.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VA Edition

December 2017

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, with one condition...
 - Let me know if you are okay, by giving me a “thumbs up.”
 - If you aren’t okay, give me a discreet “thumbs down” so I can follow up with you.
 - Resources (other than VCL listed below):
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273 - 8255
 - Employee Assistance Program: (800) 869 – 0276
 - Suicide Prevention Team
 - ✓ Jenifer Schramm SPC ext. 6238 pager 202
 - ✓ Jon Feiock SP Outreach/Education ext. 7888 pager 286
 - ✓ Julia Vargas SPCM ext. 7761 pager 507
 - ✓ Pat Mourer SPCM ext. 6515 pager 227

Overview

- Objectives
- Facts about suicide
- Myths/realities about suicide
- The steps of S.A.V.E.
- 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



Suicide in the United States

- **More than 42,000** deaths from suicide per year among the general U.S. population.^{1,2}
- Suicide is the **10th** leading cause of death in the U.S.³
- Every **12.3 minutes** someone dies by suicide.

Suicide in the United States

- It is estimated that close to **one million people** make a suicide attempt each year,
 - One attempt every **35 seconds**
- Gender disparities:



Women **attempt suicide 3 times** more often than men.¹



Men **die by suicide 4 times** more often than women.¹

Facts about Veteran suicide

- **18%** of all deaths by suicide among U.S. adults were Veterans.⁴
- On average, there are **764 suicide attempts** per month among Veterans receiving recent VA health care services.⁵
- Veterans are more likely than the general population to use **firearms** as a means for suicide.⁴
- **25%** of Veterans who died by suicide had a history of previous suicide attempts.⁵

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

Asking about suicide may lead to someone taking his or her life.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

Asking about suicide does **not** create suicidal thoughts. The act of asking the question simply gives the Veteran permission to talk about his or her thoughts or feelings.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

There are talkers, and there are doers.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Many individuals who die by suicide or attempt suicide have given some clue or warning. Someone who talks about suicide provides others with an opportunity to intervene before suicidal behaviors occur.

Reality

Suicide threats should never be ignored. No matter how casually or jokingly said, statements like, "You'll be sorry when I'm dead," or "I can't see any way out" may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

He/she won't die by suicide because...

- He just made plans for a vacation.
- She has young children at home.
- He made a verbal or written promise.
- She knows how dearly her family loves her.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

The intent to die can override rational thinking.

Someone experiencing suicidal ideation or intent must be taken seriously and referred to a clinical provider who can further evaluate his or her condition and provide treatment as appropriate.

S.A.V.E.

- S.A.V.E. will help you act with care and compassion if you encounter a Veteran who is in suicidal crisis.
- The acronym “**S.A.V.E.**” helps one remember the important steps involved in suicide prevention:

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.

Importance of identifying warning signs



- There are behaviors that may indicate/reveal that a Veteran needs help.
- Veterans in crisis may show behaviors that indicate a risk of harming or killing themselves.

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

S | Signs of suicidal thinking

Learn to recognize these warning signs:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's 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

Veteran Specific Factors

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

A | Asking the question

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

A | Asking the question

“Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

“Are you thinking of suicide?”

“Have you had thoughts about taking your own life?”

A | Asking the question

Do's

- DO ask the question if you've identified warning signs or symptoms.
- DO ask the question in a natural way that flows with the conversation.

Don'ts

- DON'T ask the question as though you are looking for a "no" answer.
 - "You aren't thinking of killing yourself. Are you?"
- DON'T wait to ask the question when someone is halfway out the door.

Things to consider 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 — there are no quick solutions, but help is available.

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 that help is available.



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**.

E | Encourage treatment, and expedite getting help.

Safety Issues:

- Never negotiate with someone who has a gun.
 - Get to safety, and call VA police, security, or 911.
- If the Veteran has taken pills, cut himself or herself, or harmed himself or herself in some way, call VA police, security, or 911.
- Call the Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255, Press 1**




E | Encourage treatment, and expedite getting help.

- Remember: When a Veteran at risk for suicide leaves your facility, provide suicide prevention information to the Veteran and his or her family.
 - Veterans Crisis Line number **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**
 - Veterans Crisis Line brochures and wallet cards
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YwJWKAL8PM>




No one can un-fire a firearm.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

For someone in crisis, a locked firearm can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a life saved.

Watch an informational video and learn more at VeteransCrisisLine.net

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

..... Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255

Mean?

- Means restriction involves reducing an individual's access to objects or situations that could be used to attempt suicide.

Why Means restriction

- In a moment of deep desire or rage or sadness, they turn to what is easy and quick and deadly – and that instrument allow little time for second thoughts. Remove it or create barriers and the process slows down; it allows time for the darkness to pass.
- Studies show when an individual has to overcome barriers to access the means by which they intend to kill themselves, the person is provided critical time to reconsider their decision

Resources

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 the community and achieve his or her full potential.
- For more information on VA Mental Health Services, visit 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 Vet Center closest to you, visit www.vetcenter.va.gov

Resources (cont.)



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 [MakeTheConnection.net](https://www.maketheconnection.net) to learn more.

Resources (cont.)



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Each VA medical center has 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
- PTSD Coach App: The PTSD Coach application allows phone users to manage their symptoms, links them with local sources of support, and provides information on PTSD. Visit <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/materials/apps/PTSDCoach.asp>

Resources (cont.)



Veterans Crisis Line/Chat/Text

- **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**
- [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net)
- Text to **838255**

VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators

- Each VA Medical Center has a Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) to make sure Veterans receive needed counseling and services.
- Find your local SPC at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator)

By participating in this training, you have learned:

- Suicide prevention is everyone's business.
- General facts about suicide in the U.S.
- Facts about Veteran suicide.
- How to identify a Veteran who may be at risk for suicide.
- How to help a Veteran at risk for suicide.
- How to address a crisis situation.
- What resources are available and how to access them.

References

- ¹ Suicide facts. (2016). Retrieved August 1, 2016, from SAVE Suicide Awareness Voices of Education,
http://www.save.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_id=705D5DF4-055B-F1EC-3F66462866FCB4E6
- ² United States Suicide Injury Deaths and Rates per 100,000 in 2014. Retrieved August 2, 2016, from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WISQARS,
<http://webappa.cdc.gov/cgi-bin/broker.exe>.
- ³ Suicide Facts at a Glance. (2015). Retrieved August 1, 2016, from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/suicide-datasheet-a.PDF>
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2016). Suicide among Veterans and other Americans 2001-2014. Washington, DC: Office for Suicide Prevention.
- ⁵ Based on suicide/ suicide attempts reported within the VA Suicide Prevention Application Network (SPAN) during calendar year 2014.