

Suicide Prevention

for Military Service Members and Veterans

Did you know that more military service members and veterans have died by suicide than were killed in wars since 9/11? An estimated 30,177 have died by suicide versus 7,057 who were killed in war operations. That's four times as many suicides.¹

To help reduce these numbers, the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs have joined together to make suicide prevention a top priority. You can make suicide prevention a priority too. Get informed about the facts and learn how to offer support to someone in a crisis.

Key Facts

- On average, 17 veterans die by suicide every day.²
- Among active-duty service members, enlisted males under age 30 are the group most likely to die by suicide.³
- Both older and younger veterans are at high risk. Those age 55–74 have the highest total number of suicide deaths, while those age 18–34 have the highest rate, three times higher than their non-veteran peers.⁴



TEXAS
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Services

1 Suitt_Suicides_Costs of War_June 21 2021.pdf (brown.edu)
2 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, VA Suicide Prevention, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, September 2022
3 National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide (va.gov)
4 CY 2020 Annual Suicide Report.pdf (dsp.o.mil)

Facts vs. Myths

- **Myth:** Talking or asking about suicide will lead to suicide.
- **Fact:** Asking about suicide in a supportive way demonstrates care and concern and increases the chance that somebody in need will get help.
- **Myth:** Service members and veterans who have thoughts of suicide were in war zones.
- **Fact:** While many were in war zones, research shows that it is not associated with suicide risk. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), however, is a risk factor. About 11–30 percent of veterans experience PTSD in their lifetime.⁵
- **Myth:** If someone truly wants to die by suicide, they will find a way.
- **Fact:** Suicide attempts aren't usually planned. Research shows that periods for heightened risk may last for only a few minutes or an hour.⁶ Also, if the method of choice isn't available, the person won't seek an alternate method.⁷

When a Service Member or Veteran Is at High Risk

Thoughts of suicide can occur at any time, but it's worth paying extra attention during these times or situations:

- The first year after separation from service. During this time the suicide rate is two and a half times higher than during active duty.⁸
- Anniversary dates related to service, such as the date they joined or left service, or death anniversary dates of friends and battle buddies.
- When there is a noticeable change in mood or behavior, or an increase in substance use.

How You Can Help

If you are concerned about an active-duty service member or veteran, here are several ways you can help:

- Check in often, especially during periods of high risk, such as during the first year of separation.
- In Texas, the 11th day of every month is proclaimed as "Buddy Check Day."

- Ask directly and non-judgmentally if the person is experiencing thoughts of suicide. Simply ask: "Are you thinking about suicide?"
- Offer to call the Military Crisis Line with them: **Dial 988, then press 1.**
- Offer to help them put time and distance between themselves and anything they might use to end their life, such as medications or firearms.

Helpful Resources

- **TEXVET:**
texvet.org – services and resources for veterans, based on zip code.
- **Military OneSource:**
militaryonesource.mil – 24/7 support for service members and families for non-crisis concerns, such as relationship, family or financial challenges.
- **US Department of Veterans Affairs:**
vetcenter.va.gov – social and psychological services, including professional counseling to eligible Veterans, service members and their families.
- **Cohen Veterans Network:**
cohenveteransnetwork.org – serves post-9/11 veterans, active-duty service members (with a TRICARE referral), including National Guard and Reserves, and military family members.
- **TAPS:**
taps.org – support for anyone grieving the loss of a service member or veteran.
- **Veterans Crisis Line:**
veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/military-crisis-line – 24/7 support for service members, veterans and their families (dial 988, then Press 1; or text 838255).
- **Texas Veterans Commission:**
veteransmentalhealth.texas.gov – resources and support for Texas veterans and their families.



5 How Common is PTSD in Veterans? - PTSD: National Center for PTSD (va.gov)

6 Duration of Suicidal Crises | Means Matter | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

7 Means Reduction Saves Lives | Means Matter | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

8 Association of Suicide Risk With Transition to Civilian Life Among US Military Service Members - PMC (nih.gov)