Suicide Prevention

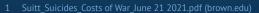
for Military Service Members and Veterans

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



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

