



VFW Post 683 Surgeon's corner

Suicide prevention for veterans and their families:

The VA reports that the number of suicides by veterans per year are decreasing, however, there were 6,261 veteran suicides in 2019 alone. The question is what can you do?

1. If you are thinking about death or suicide - reach out. There is help.
2. If you have lost a friend or loved one to suicide - reach out. There is help.
3. If you have a friend or loved one that is suicidal - reach out. There is help.

What are the direct warning signs of suicide?

Here is what the VA says to look out for:

1. The veteran talks or writes about death, a wish to die, or suicide.
2. Buying or storing items that can be used for suicide - weapons, ammunition, medications.
3. Preparing for their death - making sure that loved ones are taken care of, saying goodbyes.

What are the indirect warning signs of suicide?

Here is what the VA says to look out for:

1. Increase or excessive substance abuse
2. If the veteran has feelings of hopelessness
3. If the veteran has feelings of lack of purpose in life
4. If the veteran has excessive anger and has reckless behavior
5. If the veteran has feelings of being trapped

What to do if your loved one or friend shows ANY of the DIRECT warning signs or you are concerned about INDIRECT warning signs, act: Call 911 or the Military/Veteran Crisis line at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1). If there is any chance that someone might get injured:

- Stay calm
- Remove yourself and any children from any danger
- If possible, remove items that the person can use in a suicide attempt - guns, knives, pills, etc.

The above-mentioned signs are even more dangerous if the person:

Has attempted suicide before, has a family member or close friend or battle buddy who died by suicide and/or plans to use, and has access to, an effective method such as a firearm.

How can you help?

The VA says that if someone you love and care about attempted suicide, it is common that you maybe be feeling emotions such as fear, anger, and confusion. That is normal. What you can do if your friend or loved one attempted suicide or are suicidal, are the following steps:

- Complete a release of information form that allows you to participate in your loved one's mental health care.
- Meet with the VA treatment team and develop a plan for the veteran in crisis to receive follow-up care after discharge.
- Talk about safe storage strategies or removal of guns and medications from the home.
- If receiving services at a VA location, ask how to connect with the VA suicide prevention coordinator.
- Request a copy of the patient's [safety plan](#) prior to leaving the facility.
- Ensure all follow-up appointments are scheduled prior to discharge and keep your contact information up to date in your loved one's medical record.
- Add the [Veterans Crisis Line](#) number ([1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255) and Press 1, text 838255) to your phone and encourage your loved one to do the same.

Resources:

<http://veteranscrisisline.net>

<http://suicideoutreach.org>

<http://militarycrisisline.net>

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Suicide-Risk-Assessment-C-SSRS-Lifeline-Version-2014.pdf>

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