

# SUICIDE PREVENTION WITH THE MILITARY AND VETERANS



There is a need for expanded suicide prevention among the military.

Only **50 %** of returning service members with mental health needs receive mental health services.<sup>1</sup>

## SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

### Teaching Communities to Help Veterans: How to Help Veterans at Risk of Suicide

Signs of suicidal thinking should be recognized.  
Ask the most important question of all.  
Validate the Veteran's experience.  
Encourage treatment and Expedite getting help.

Access the SAVE training here:  
[psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e/](http://psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e/)

### Services for Veterans and their Families

- Veterans Administration (VA)  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)
- Vet Centers  
[www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov)
  - Individual, group, couples, and family therapy at no cost to the veteran
- Cohen Veterans Network  
[www.cohenveteransnetwork.org](http://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org)
- Maryland's Commitment to Veterans  
[1-877-770-4801](tel:1-877-770-4801)

### Warning Signs—IS PATH WARM?

Ideation  
Substance abuse

Purposeless  
Anxiety  
Trapped  
Hopelessness

Withdrawal  
Anger  
Recklessness  
Mood changes

It is important to ask directly:  
“Are you thinking about suicide?”

If someone is talking about death or suicide, showing self-destructive behavior, looking for ways to kill oneself, or unable to stay safe, **they are at imminent risk and need help right away.**

Call 911 or take them to the nearest emergency department.

## Unique Aspects of Military Culture

Strength	Guiding Ideal	Vulnerability
Placing the welfare of others above one's own welfare	<b>Selflessness</b>	Not seeking help for health problems because attending to personal health is not a priority
Commitment to accomplishing missions and protecting comrades in arms	<b>Loyalty</b>	Survivor guilt and complicated bereavement after losing friends
Toughness and ability to endure hardships without complaint	<b>Stoicism</b>	Not acknowledging significant symptoms and suffering after returning home
Following an internal moral compass to choose "right" over "wrong"	<b>Moral Code</b>	Feeling frustrated and betrayed when others fail to follow a moral code
Becoming the best and most effective professional possible	<b>Excellence</b>	Feeling ashamed of (or not acknowledging) imperfections

## MEANS SAFETY WITH VETERANS

### Veterans are more likely than the general population to use firearms as a means of suicide.

- Ensure firearms are safely stored in a gun safe or with gun locks and ammunition is stored separately. Vet Centers and VAs often provide gun locks for free to veterans.
- For medications or other substances, lock them away in a pill box/lock box. Other strategies include: asking family members to administer medications and getting a naloxone kit in case of opiate overdose.

### Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) Training

Learn how to ask a person who may be suicidal if he or she has access to items that they could use to harm themselves. Learn how to work with family members to reduce access to lethal means.

Available at : <https://bit.ly/2F65Cqv>

### What is the national strategy for suicide prevention among veterans from 2018-2028?<sup>2</sup>

- Screen veterans for mental health issues and alcohol abuse.
- Routinely assess access to lethal means.
- Provide education on military culture, veteran specific issues, and suicide risk.
- Link veterans in crisis with appropriate services and support.
- Communicate and collaborate across multiple levels of care.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**MAKE THE CONNECTION**

[www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net)

Make The Connection is an online community of veterans telling their stories about overcoming mental health challenges. In addition to the stories, the website allows veterans to connect with others that have had similar experiences.



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

**STAND BY THEM**

Confidential help for Veterans and their families

• • • • Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to 838255 • • • •



Maryland's Commitment to Veterans (MCV) is a program devoted to total wellness for veterans and their families. MCV provides training to the community about veteran-specific topics to improve awareness of available behavioral health resources. Regional resource coordinators provide assistance to veterans and their families to support a healthy transition to civilian life.

To connect to a regional resource coordinator, call the MCV referral line, **877-770-4801**.

**Family of Heroes**

**TRANSITIONS: Supporting Military Children**

Kognito's online trainings (30 minutes – 1 hour) teach users the signs of psychological distress in veterans and strategies to refer those in need to services. There are four trainings for suicide prevention among military veterans: Family of Heroes, Transitions: Supporting Military Children, Veterans on Campus: Peer to Peer, Veterans on Campus: Faculty and Staff.

Access the trainings at [md.kognito.com](http://md.kognito.com) and [www.familyofheroes.com/maryland](http://www.familyofheroes.com/maryland)