An In-Depth Guide to Veteran Suicide Help Resources

Each day, countless veterans contemplate suicide or attempt it. Having access to veteran suicide help resources today can help prevent these veterans from becoming tomorrow’s statistics.

*Read on to learn more about locating and using veteran suicide help resources.*

Mental Health Needs in the Veteran Community

Access to mental health resources is important for everyone. However, veterans struggle with mental health more than other segments of the population. In fact, suicide rates among veterans are [1.5 times higher than those for non-veteran adults](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_military_veteran_suicide#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20the%20VA%20released,year%20from%202008%20to%202017.). This means that veteran suicide help resources are essential to overall veteran health.

How to Help a Suicidal Veteran: Knowing the Signs

To offer veteran suicide help resources to someone you love, it helps to recognize the signs of common mental illnesses associated with suicide. [Common mental illnesses](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4638236/#:~:text=Approximately%201.15%20million%20of%20these,%2C%20and%20SMI%20(3.7%25).) among veterans include:

* Depression
* Anxiety
* [Post-traumatic Stress Disorder](http://nvf.org/effects-of-ptsd-in-veterans/) (PTSD)
* Substance use disorders (SUD)
* Other significant mental illnesses (SMI), including bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and borderline personality disorder

Signs that a veteran’s mental health conditions have left him or her considering suicide include:

* Frequently appearing sad, anxious, or agitated
* Getting too much or too little sleep
* Failing to engage in personal hygiene or care for their personal appearance
* Pulling away from friends and family
* Losing interest in activities they used to enjoy
* Describing themselves as a “failure” or saying that they lack a purpose in life
* Expressing excessive shame and guilt
* Failing to fulfill obligations for work or school or fulfilling these obligations poorly
* Engaging in violent or otherwise risky behavior
* Giving away personal items
* Threatening to commit suicide

This list of [warning signs](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/whentoaskforhelp.asp) can be helpful. However, it’s important to note that many veterans struggle in silence. In fact, many veterans who commit suicide show none of these signs in the days and months prior to their deaths.

For this reason, simply being open to talk about mental health is important. Furthermore, demonstrating this openness is important even with veterans who don’t exhibit obvious warning signs. Acknowledging mental health struggles, being willing to talk about them, and validating a veteran’s experiences and feelings can signal to a veteran that you are someone they can trust.

Being someone they can trust, in turn, requires educating yourself and preparing yourself for the conversation. The VA’s [Talking with a Veteran in Crisis](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/docs/Talking_with_a_Veteran_in_crisis.pdf) handout offers an excellent starting point for your efforts.

Locating Veteran Suicide Help Resources

Knowing the signs and being someone a veteran can talk to are important first steps. Having taken those steps, you may be able to offer veteran suicide help resources to someone who needs them. To do so, you need to know how to find those resources.

Suicide Crisis Hotlines

Suicide crisis hotlines are among the most valuable resources for veterans struggling with mental illness. They can also be valuable resources for their loved ones.

The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/) provides one option. Veterans or anyone struggling with suicidal thoughts can reach free and confidential support at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Pressing “1” on a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline call will direct veterans to the [Veterans Crisis Line](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/). There, they can speak to someone who has been trained to address the specific mental health needs of veterans. Importantly, this network of support is available 24/7. It is also available to all veterans regardless of whether they are enrolled for VA care.

*The National Veterans Foundation also offers a*[*Lifeline for Vets*](https://nvf.org/stop-veteran-suicides/)*. By dialing 1-888-777-4443, suicidal veterans can reach fellow veterans who have been trained to field crisis phone calls and get them the help they need.*

Sharing these crisis numbers with the veterans in your life is another step you can take to help prevent veteran suicide. Doing so before a veteran is in crisis ensures that the help they need is at their fingertips when they need it.

It can also ensure that they are connected to equally important day-to-day, non-emergency resources. These resources can keep veterans out of crisis.

Non-Emergency Resources for Struggling Veterans

The NVF Lifeline for Vets offers access to one of the largest comprehensive resource databases. These include local and national community and government-based organizations dedicated to serving veterans. Organizations in this network offer help in various areas of life, including:

* [Job board](https://jobs.nvf.org/)
* Housing assistance
* VA benefits and healthcare
* Individual mental health counseling
* Family counseling

Some databases of resources for veterans are also available online. The [National Resource Directory](https://nrd.gov/) offers one such searchable database. It offers information on topics ranging from benefits to travel.

The VA’s [Make a Connection](https://maketheconnection.net/what-is-mtc) program likewise offers a host of online resources. These aim to help veterans meet their day-to-day needs and connect with others.

**Veterans whose needs are met are much less likely to experience a mental health crisis. Therefore, offering suicidal veterans help involves ensuring access to these day-to-day resources.**

Non-Emergency Resources for Veterans’ Loved Ones

If you are seeking resources for a veteran, the VA’s [Coaching Into Care](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/) program can help you. Like the Lifeline does for veterans, this program helps family members locate helpful community- and government-based organizations.

Its licensed psychologists and social workers also offer counseling to veterans’ loved ones. Often, family members and friends want to help, but they don’t know how. Coaching into Care counseling helps them encourage struggling veterans to seek treatment.

Veteran Suicide Help Resources: Serving Those Who Served

Every suicide is a tragedy. Moreover, these tragedies disproportionately affect veterans and their families. These tragedies are compounded by the fact that resources exist to prevent them.

Learning more about these resources is the first step to preventing these tragedies. The next step is reaching out with veteran suicide help resources to those who need them most.

*The National Veterans Foundation contributes valuable work to these efforts. It’s here to help you and the veterans in your life.*[*Request the assistance you need*](https://nvf.org/veterans-request-assistance/)*today.*

*Read on to learn more about locating and using veteran suicide help resources.*

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At this time, limited funding means that the Lifeline for Vets operates for only 40 hours a week. If you’re wondering how to help fight against veteran suicide, [making a donation](https://nvf.org/veterans-donations/) to increase this access is an excellent step.

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