

VA's Suicide Prevention Program

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PREVENTS Executive Order Task Force

Drilling Down:

Suicide Risk in the Veteran Population

Suicide

- **National public health problem (as defined by CDC)**
 - 10th-leading cause of death in the U.S. (with around twice as many homicides)
 - 45,000 deaths per year (up almost 30 percent since 1999)
- **Veteran and service member issue**
- **Veteran populations at risk**
 - Younger Veterans
 - Women Veterans
 - Veterans in a period of transition
 - Veterans with exposure to suicide
 - Veterans with access to lethal means
 - “Other than honorable” discharges (“bad paper”)

**Suicide
is preventable.**

Important Figures



The rate of suicide was

1.8 *times higher
among female Veterans*

compared with non-Veteran adult women.

* after accounting for differences in age



The rate of suicide was

1.4 *times higher
among male Veterans*

compared with non-Veteran adult men.

* after accounting for differences in age



Male Veterans ages

18–34

experienced the highest rates of suicide.



Male Veterans ages

55 and older

had the highest count of suicide deaths.

69%

of all Veteran suicide deaths resulted from a firearm.

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk

- Prior suicide attempt
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse
- Access to lethal means
- Recent loss
- Legal or financial challenges
- Relationship issues
- Unemployment
- Homelessness

Protective

- Access to mental health care
- Sense of connectedness
- Problem-solving skills
- Sense of spirituality
- Mission or purpose
- Physical health
- Employment
- Social and emotional well-being



Goal: Minimize risk factors and boost protective factors

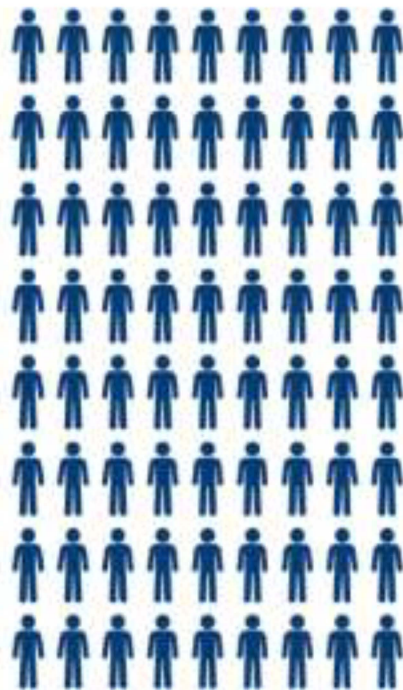
VA Suicide Prevention Strategy

The Public Health Approach

Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business



National Academy of Medicine (NAM) Classification



Universal (all)

Universal prevention strategies are designed to reach the entire Veteran population.



Selective (some)

Selective prevention strategies are designed to reach subgroups of the Veteran population that may be at increased risk.



Indicated (few)

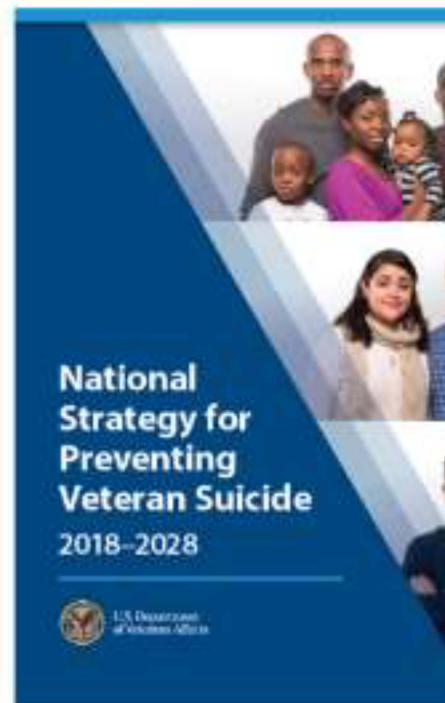
Indicated prevention strategies are designed to reach individuals in the Veteran population identified as having a high risk for suicidal behavior.

**That's where you
come in.**

National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide

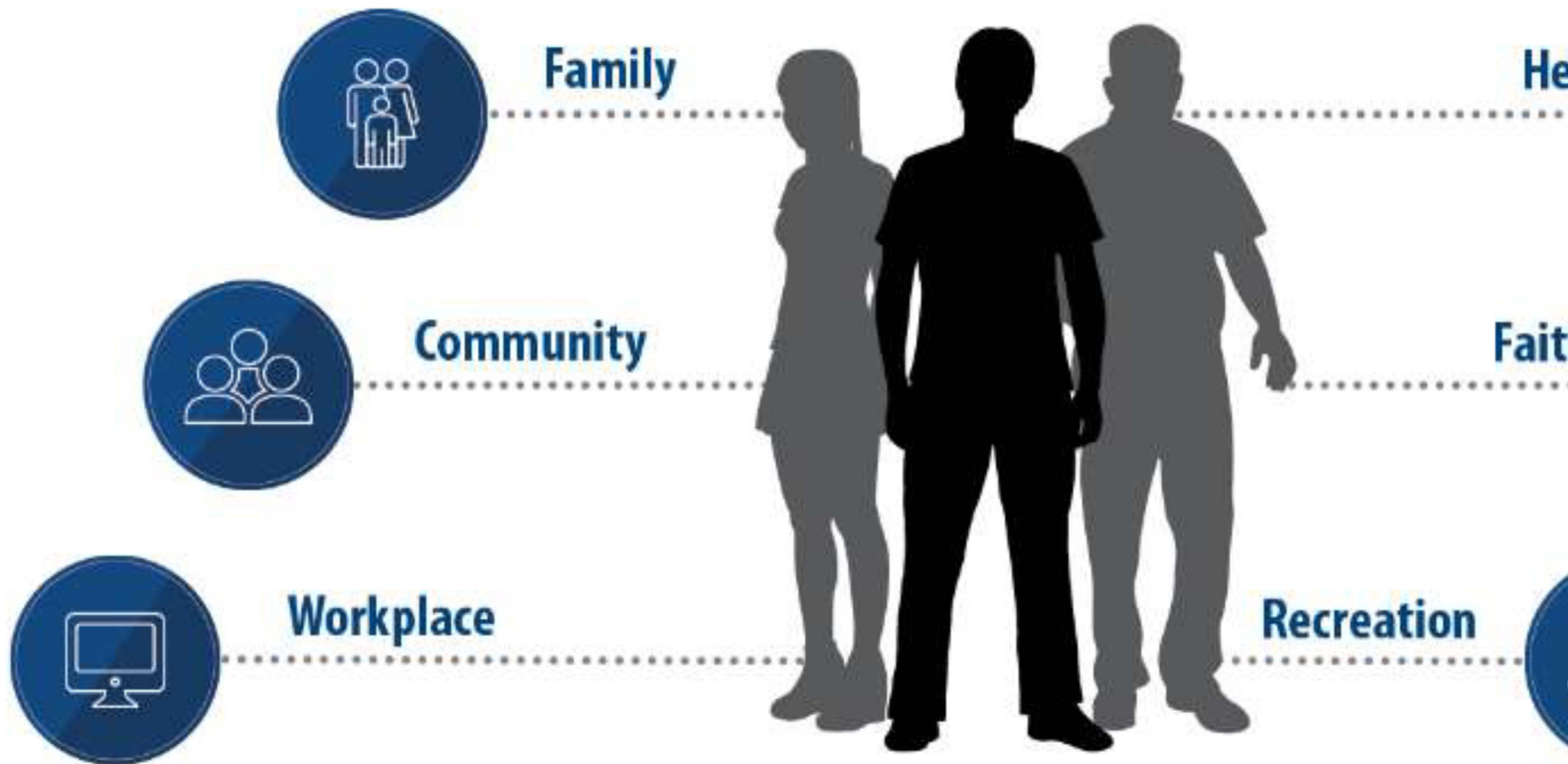
Goal: Provide a framework for identifying priorities, organizing efforts, and contributing to a national focus on Veteran suicide prevention over the next decade.

- Aligns with the 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.
- Consists of 4 strategic directions, 14 goals, and 43 objectives.
- Leverages the public health approach to suicide prevention.
- Focuses on the importance of **collaboration** and **urgency**.



Download a copy at:
Mentalhealth.va.gov/sui

Leveraging the Public Health Approach



Mayor's and Governor's Challenges

24 Mayor's Challenge Sites



Albuquerque
 Atlanta, GA
 Austin, TX
 Billings, MT
 Charlotte, NC
 Clarksville, TN
 Columbus, OH
 Detroit, MI
 Helena, MT*
 Hillsborough, NH
 Houston, TX
 Jacksonville, FL
 Kansas City, MO
 Las Vegas, NV
 Los Angeles, CA
 Manchester, NH
 Oklahoma City, OK
 Phoenix, AZ*
 Reno, NV
 Richmond, VA
 Suffolk County, MA
 Topeka, KS
 Tulsa, OK
 Warwick, RI

*Denotes one of

Puerto Rico

American Samoa

Guam

U.S. Virgin Islands

Northern Mariana Islands

Governor's Challenge



Goal: Develop state-wide plans based on the public health approach to prevent suicide.

- Partnership between VA and HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- Takes the Mayor's Challenge to the state level, incorporating existing community strategic plans within their respective states
- State leaders are meeting to develop a plan to implement the National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide

Seven states a
participi



Executive Order: National Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End Suicide

The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide – The PREVENTS Initiative

- “Executive Order on a National Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide,” 13861, was signed on March 5, 2019 by President Trump.
- The Executive Order focuses on improving the quality of life of our nation's Veterans by developing a national public health roadmap to lower the Veteran suicide rate.
- Task Force Tasks:
 - Develop a comprehensive national public health roadmap to lower Veteran suicide rate – focused on community engagement
 - Design/propose to Congress a program for grant-making to local communities to increase collaboration and outreach to Veterans
 - Develop a national research strategy to improve coordination, monitoring, benchmarking and execution of Veteran suicide research.

Public Health Video



Public health is about working within communities

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