



Virginia Department of Veterans Services

Presentation to the:

General Assembly Military and Veterans Caucus

February 3, 2021

VDVS Update

Commissioner John Maxwell

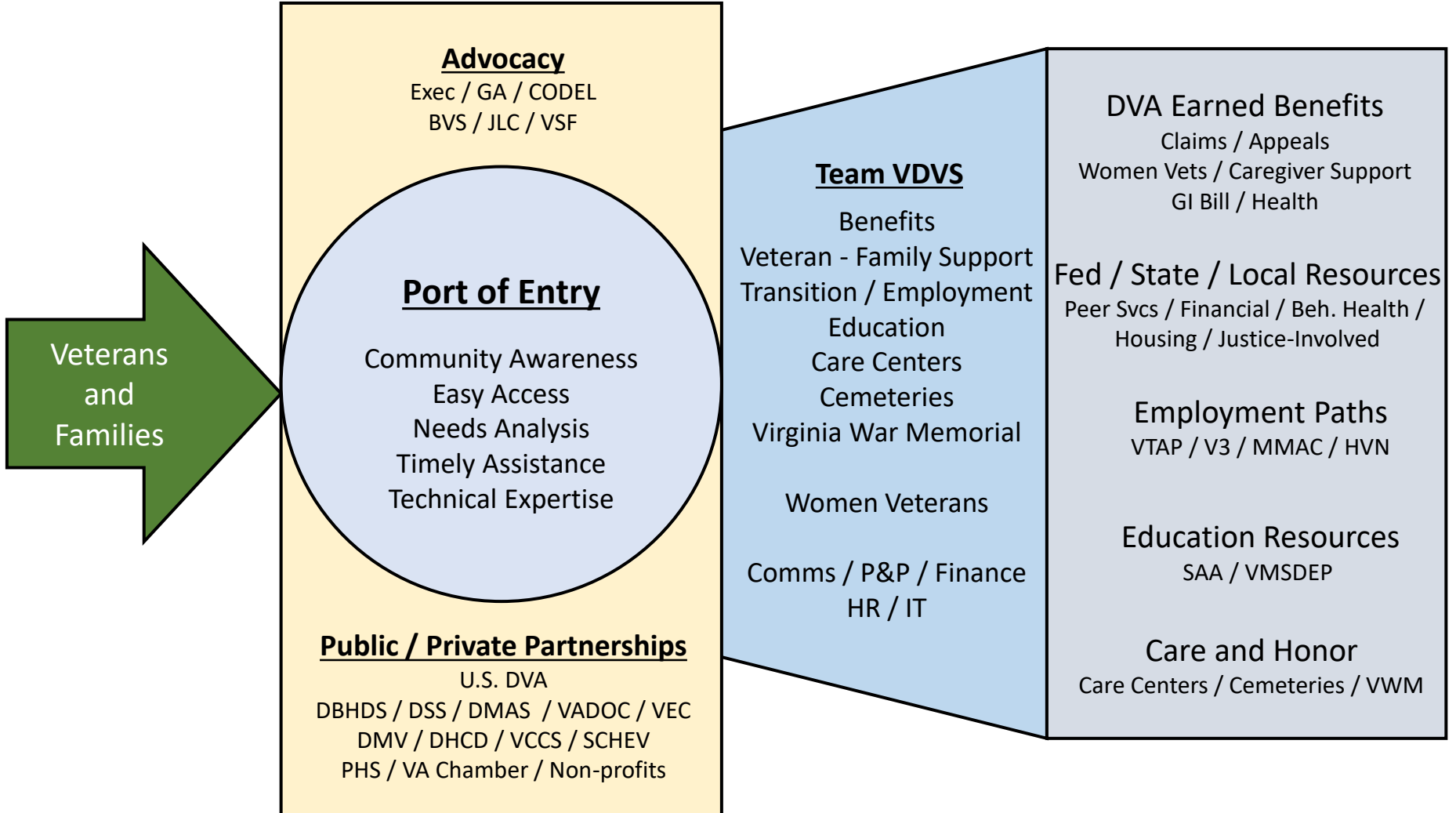
Veteran Suicide Prevention

VVFS Director Brandi Jancaitis

DBHDS Suicide Prevention Coordinator Nicole Gore



Virginia – The Most Veteran-Friendly State





VDVS Facilities



Benefits Services Offices

- 1 Abingdon
- 2 Accomac
- 3 Big Stone Gap
- 4 Charlottesville
- 5 Chesapeake
- 6 Danville
- 7 Emporia
- 8 Fairfax
- 9 Fort Belvoir
- 10 Fort Lee
- 11 Fredericksburg
- 12 Hampton
- 13 Hampton VA Medical Center
- 14 Henrico
- 15 Loudoun
- 16 Lynchburg
- 17 Manassas
- 18 McGuire VA Medical Center (Richmond)
- 19 Norfolk
- 20 Oceana/Virginia Beach
- 21 Pentagon
- 22 Petersburg
- 23 Portsmouth
- 24 Quantico
- 25 Roanoke
- 26 Salem VA Medical Center

- 27 South Hill
- 28 Springfield
- 29 Staunton
- 30 Strasburg
- 31 Tazewell
- 32 Virginia Beach
- 33 Williamsburg
- 34 Wytheville

* WFVS: Underlined offices indicate co-location of WFVS and Benefits Services offices.

Additional WFVS Locations

- 1 Suffolk
- 2 Yorktown
- 3 Chesterfield
- 4 Covington
- 5 Blacksburg
- 6 Stuart

Care Centers

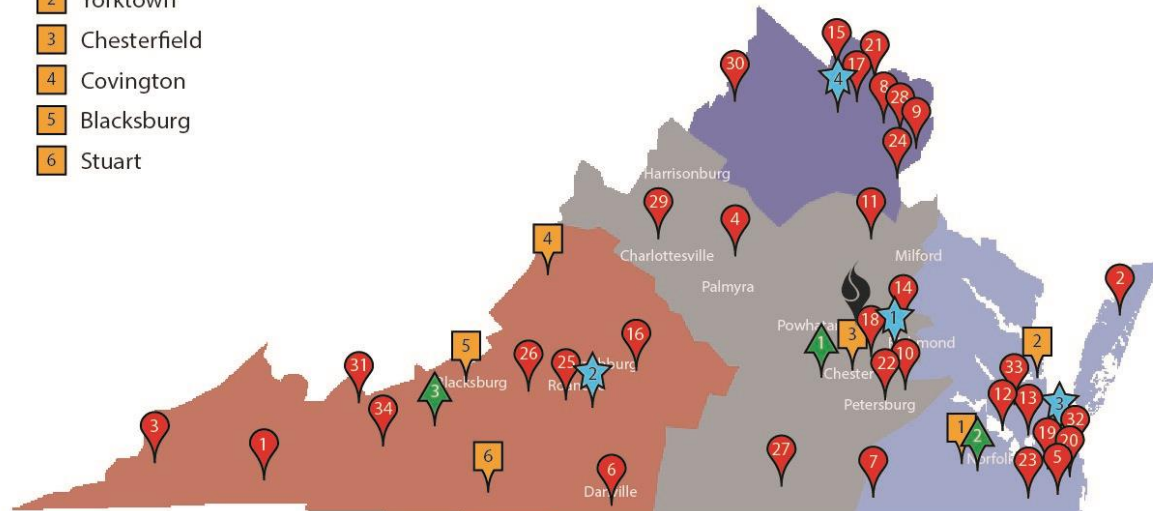
- ★ Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, Richmond
- ★ Virginia Veterans Care Center, Roanoke
- Opening 2022:
★ Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center, Virginia Beach
- ★ Puller Veterans Care Center, Fauquier County
- ★ Virginia War Memorial Richmond

Cemeteries

- ▲ Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia
- ▲ Albert G. Horton, Jr., Memorial Veterans Cemetery, Suffolk
- ▲ Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin

Virginia Veteran and Family Support Regions

- North
- Central
- East
- West





Online Appointment Request



Virginia.gov Agencies | Governor Search Virginia.Gov

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Virginia Department of Veterans Services

Benefits Education, Transition & Employment Veterans Care Centers Cemeteries Virginia Veteran and Family Support Virginia War Memorial

Veterans Services For

About DVS

About DVS





VDVS 2021 Budget and Legislative Priorities



Budget

- VCC capital projects
 - Life/safety
 - Pandemic response
- Behavioral health, suicide prevention, and homelessness
 - 3 Peer Specialists
 - 2 Resource Specialists
- Women Veterans Coordinator (i.e. WVP assistant)
- High-volume office support
 - 2 veterans services administrators – P-14
- Security improvement – shared IT system access

Legislative

- MMAC expansion - pathways to employment
- Codify VDVS transition services
- VCC Medicaid reimbursements
 - Language only – authority to increase
 - DMAS Item 313
 - VDVS Item 463



A Public Health Approach to Suicide Prevention

VVFS Director, Brandi Jancaitis

DBHDS Suicide Prevention
Coordinator, Nicole Gore

Background

- **Richmond Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide**
 - Began in March 2018
 - City-level strategic planning initiative for comprehensive suicide prevention
 - Local Public Mental Health Center, **Richmond Behavioral Health Authority**, is the lead for Mayor Levar Stoney
- **Virginia Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide**
 - Began in December 2018 and took Mayor's Challenge Work statewide
 - **Secretary Daniel Carey (Health and Human Resources) and Secretary Carlos Hopkins (Veterans and Defense Affairs) Co-Lead this effort**
 - Statewide coordination by Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and Department of Veterans Services

Best Practices in Suicide Prevention

Key Priorities:

- Identify Military Service Members, Veterans, and families (SMVF) and screen for suicide risk
- Promote connectedness and improve care transitions
- Increase lethal means safety and safety planning

Our team designed a Pilot that addresses all of these priority areas!

VISR Pilot Overview

Virginia's Identify SMVF, Screen for Suicide Risk, and Refer for Services (**VISR**) Pilot

- Provides **military culture, suicide prevention, and safety planning infrastructure and expands risk screening** in state and community agencies
- **Includes 40 agencies** - public mental health centers/Community Services Boards, Cohen Military Clinic, community hospitals, local social services and health districts, and State DVS
- Training/preparation: December 2019 – January 2020
- Data collection: February – August 2020

VISR Pilot Data Snapshot

VISR SMVF Totals for February - August 2020 (Totals Across Sectors)	
Served	3,014
Screened for Suicide	2,311
Screened at Risk	696
Safety Plan Established	619
Referred to VHA	42
Referred to MTF	18
Referred to VDVS	104

- **77% of all individuals served were screened for suicide risk**
- **30% of all individuals screened for suicide were deemed “at risk”**

VISR Pilot - Next Steps

- VISR 2.0 - Current pilot partners will continue/expand where possible
 - DSS expanding into additional Local DSS offices
 - VDVS expanding Benefits staff participation
 - CSBs reaching other local government agencies
- Expand VISR training capacity (Military Culture, Lethal Means Safety) and outreach



Lock and Talk Virginia

Promoting safe and responsible care of lethal means – while encouraging community conversations around mental wellness – is vital to the mission of preventing suicides and promoting wellness.

Key components include:

- 1.) Limiting access to lethal means for a person in crisis is an essential strategy for preventing suicide.**
- 2.) Safe handling and secure storage of lethal means at home at all times is encouraged.**
- 3.) Talking about suicide helps to save lives and reduce stigma.**

Lock and Talk Virginia

- 🔒 Promote mental health wellness and suicide prevention trainings.
- 🔒 Provide gun locks and med lock boxes
- 🔒 Implement the Gun Shop Project.
- 🔒 Promote the “We are a Lock and Talk Family Campaign.”



VVFS is a non-crisis service.
Hours: 8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Monday-Friday

If you or your family members need assistance to local resources and veteran peer support, please contact 1-877-285-1299.

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

Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net
or text to **838255**



CONCERNED ABOUT A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND?

HOLD ON TO THEIR GUNS. PUTTING TIME AND DISTANCE BETWEEN A PERSON WITH THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE AND A GUN MAY SAVE A LIFE.

SUICIDES IN VA
far outnumber homicides

FIREARMS ARE THE LEADING METHOD

ATTEMPTS WITH A GUN ARE MORE DEADLY than attempts with other methods.

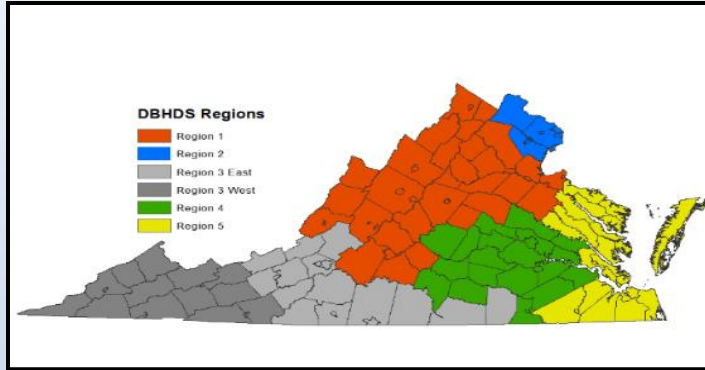
ARE THEY SUICIDAL?

- Depressed, angry, irritable?
- Going through a relationship breakup, legal trouble, or other setback?
- Using drugs or alcohol more?
- Withdrawing from things they used to enjoy?
- Talking about being better off dead?
- Losing hope?
- Acting reckless?
- Feeling trapped?
- A Lock firearm. Store unloaded. Store ammunition separately.

For other ways to get help, call National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Or text "Hello" to the Crisis Textline: 741741

LOCK AND TALK VIRGINIA
LOCKANDTALK.ORG

Lock and Talk Expansion



Long Term Outcome	Population Impact
Increase in community awareness of mental health issues	Increase in intentions to promote connectedness and link to care
Increase in knowledge about the warning signs of suicide risks	
Fewer households have unsecured firearms	Reduced deaths by firearms
Fewer households have unused medication	Reduced overdoses
Increase in community awareness of suicide prevention and mental health resources	Increase in help-seeking behaviors

National Guard Expansion

Lock and Talk Virginia
Lethal Means Safety Initiative
lockandtalk.org

Promoting safe and responsible care of lethal means – while encouraging community conversations around mental wellness – is vital to the mission of preventing suicides and promoting wellness.

Limiting access to lethal means for a person in crisis is an essential strategy for preventing suicide. Any objects that may be used in a suicide attempt, including firearms, other weapons, medications, illicit drugs, chemicals used in the household, other poisons, or materials used for hanging or suffocation, should not be easy for someone at risk to access. In crisis, objects such as firearms should be temporarily removed from the vicinity of the vulnerable individual.

Talking about suicide helps to save lives and reduce stigma. Talking encourages help-seeking behaviors and helps attempt survivors and survivors of suicide loss in their personal healing.

People at risk for suicide should be part of the lethal means safety conversation, as should their families.



Safe handling and secure storage of lethal means at home at all times is encouraged, even after a crisis has passed. Lock and Talk Virginia distributes safety devices and instruction for locking medications and firearms. Safety devices provided include gun trigger locks, gun cable locks, medication lock boxes, and medication deactivation kits.



VVSF is a non-crisis service.
Hours: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm
Monday-Friday

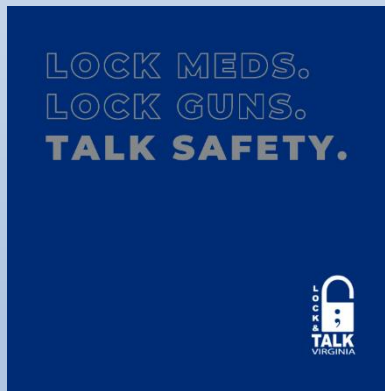
If you or your family members need assistance to local resources and veteran peer support, please contact 1-877-265-1399.



1-800-273-8255 PRESS 9

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

Lock and Talk Media Campaign



<https://lockandtalk.org/>

2021 Social Media Campaign

- GAMVC and GCPS Team introduced this key resource in the 2020 GA session – *updated 2021 version coming!*
- Messages can be used throughout the year
- Campaign Highlights/Themes:
 - National and State Suicide Statistics
 - *Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Mission* – provides key training and support resources
 - Peer and family support encourages help seeking BEFORE a crisis
 - VVFS program increases access to VA and community-based resources



Key Resources

- S.A.V.E. Training – 25 minute introductory suicide prevention training, available here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=49Vg-xM9L7Q>
- Veterans Crisis Line and Virginia Veteran and Family Support Program Resource Cards

**Veterans
Crisis Line**



1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

