

Suicide Prevention Toolkit

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month



Think you know someone who is struggling?
Let them know they're not alone.

**Veterans
Crisis Line**

Veterans are at 50% higher risk of suicide than their peers who have not served. We're here to change that.



**DIAL 988 then
PRESS 1**

1.

2.

3.

Reach out

Listen

Seek help

#SPAM

WASHINGTON STATE
DEPARTMENT OF

**VETERANS
AFFAIRS**



"Serving Those Who Served"

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

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Each page in this toolkit will be posted individually to WDVA web & social media platforms throughout the month to recognize September as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (SPAM). Your WDVA Suicide Prevention Program invites you to join us in posting and sharing this information. Contact us at connect@dva.wa.gov

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The State of Washington



Proclamation

WHEREAS, it is estimated that over 2,900 hospitalizations in Washington were linked to intentional self-harm, including suicide attempts; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, 1,211 people in Washington died by suicide, making suicide the 10th leading cause of death for Washington residents; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, 221 veterans and military personnel died by suicide in Washington state; and

WHEREAS, suicide most often occurs when stressors exceed the current coping abilities of someone living with a mental health condition; and

WHEREAS, many people who died by suicide did not receive effective behavioral health services due to the difficulties associated with accessing services by healthcare providers trained in best practices to reduce suicide risk, prejudices and discrimination surrounding the use of behavioral health treatment, and the stigma of losing a loved one to suicide; and

WHEREAS, while there is no single cause of suicide and no single suicide prevention program or effort will be appropriate for all populations or communities, initiatives based on the goals detailed in the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and the Washington State Suicide Prevention Plan designed to increase access to quality mental health, substance abuse, and suicide prevention services will help prevent suicide;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, Governor of the state of Washington, do hereby designate September 2022 as

Suicide Prevention Month

and September 10, 2022, as

Suicide Prevention Day

in the state of Washington, and I encourage all people in our state to join me in this important observance.



Signed this 25th day of August, 2022

Governor Jay Inslee

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WDVA Program Continues to Address Veteran Suicide By WDVA Director, Alfie Alvarado-Ramos

Suicide prevention for our Veterans, Service Members, and their families is a high priority for WDVA. One suicide is one too many and the need for our communities to come together has never been more important.

Since 2019, WDVA's Suicide Prevention program has worked tirelessly to provide aid to those experiencing suicidal ideation. In the past year, our suicide prevention team has increased from a team of one to a team of eight, with four Peer Specialists placed strategically throughout the state of Washington in our NW, SW, Central and Eastern regions. Each specialist is uniquely qualified to provide peer-based consultation, education, and connections to resources.

Suicide prevention is everyone's business, and it is toward that end the Washington State Legislature provided funding to the WDVA to bolster our efforts. With these additional resources, our mission will continue to advance by:

- Reviving and co-chairing the SAFER homes task force to raise public awareness and increase suicide prevention education among new partners who are in key positions to help reduce suicide. To learn more about SAFER Homes- Suicide Aware visit their page at <https://saferhomescoalition.org>
- Creating a database of information on nonprofit, for-profit, city, county, state, and federal organizations, providers, and resources that address the mental health, well-being, and suicide prevention of SMVF's.
- Create, in consultation with the suicide-safer homes task force, a web-based application to be shared by state agencies and primary care providers with SMVF's to provide applicable information and resources including but not limited to benefits, mental health resources, and lethal means safety information.
- Co-creating the "Prevent Veteran Suicide" emblem with DOL for display on license plates
- Creating educational materials informing health care providers about the availability of the nationwide 988 phone number for individuals in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors.
- Establishing a process to receive, review, process, and award grants to organizations, including nonprofit and peer support community programs that address SMVF's who may be at risk of suicide and other mental health crisis.

If you would like to learn how to become a suicide prevention advocate, or are in need of assistance please call Codie Garza or any member of the Suicide Prevention team at connect@dva.wa.gov, or 360-522-2894.

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OUTREACH

- The Suicide Prevention team participates in community outreach with all available WA State organizations to promote the vision, mission, purpose and values of the program. The team is equipped to provide programmatic updates to the community, shedding light on the services listed below:
- Crisis Intervention
 - The Peer team are Certified Peer Counselors, having completed the 40 hour course provided by the Health Care Authority, they use the skills they gained in conjunction with the steps outlined in the LEARN Saves Lives Suicide Prevention training to connect with SMVF in crisis and provide a peer connection with them, assessing their needs and providing geographically relevant warm hand-offs to resources in their area. Our team works closely with a number of other agencies to provide the best care possible to include the Federal VA, Cohen Clinic, and more throughout Washington for behavioral health services, as well as other needs to include benefits, food, and so on.
- For more information on the Governors Challenge or to learn more about Suicide Prevention and Support please visit <https://dva.wa.gov/sp> or email connect@dva.wa.gov

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EDUCATION

- **LEARN:** This training was developed by Forefront Suicide Prevention at the University of Washington in collaboration with the WDVA. Forefront's mission is to reduce suicide by: empowering individuals and communities to take sustainable action; championing systemic change; and restoring hope. The WDVA Suicide Prevention Peer Team is available to you and your site to provide training on best practices when working with individuals experiencing crisis, using a peer-based model of support. This training lasts approximately 90 minutes and may be facilitated both in-person and digitally.
- **Veterans Cultural Engagement:** The Veterans Cultural Engagement training was developed by Veterans within the WDVA to shed light on the unique experiences Service Members have while serving in our armed forces, and how their skills, values, and strengths may translate when transitioning into Veteran status. This workshop is a discussion-based session that encourages growth through understanding and promotes civilian and veteran relationship building. This training is also approximately 90 minutes and is best done in-person, however, it can be facilitated digitally.
- For more information on the Governors Challenge or to learn more about Suicide Prevention and Support please visit <https://dva.wa.gov/sp> or email connect@dva.wa.gov



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Connectedness and Care – Suicide Prevention Month

The Washington Governors Challenge to prevent suicide among service members, veterans, and their families is in place to promote a “No Wrong Door” approach to Suicide Prevention.

The Governor’s Challenge group focuses on promoting connectedness and works to improve care transitions for Service Members, Veterans and Families (SMVF) navigating their military exit.

The Psych Armor Program (<https://www.psycharmor.org>) provides culturally competent education and trainings courses that help to enhance the level of connection between civilians and military-connected people.

The ETS (expiration term of service) Sponsorship Program supports military members as they exit the military in WA State by connecting specifically trained Sponsors to Service Members before they exit the military. The sponsor is from the service members own community and specializes in identifying the natural supports in that community that will ensure the transition process is smooth for Service members and their families. Learn more about the ETS Sponsorship Program at: www.etssponsorship.com.

The Governor’s Challenge group is committed to adding more Veteran Service Officers (VSO) to our communities statewide. These VSOs often dive into the past of the veteran they are working with and help educate them in becoming more comfortable in identifying SMVFs in crisis, learning to address risk factors, and knowing what steps to take next.

For more information on the Governors Challenge or to learn more about Suicide Prevention and Support please visit <https://dva.wa.gov/sp> or email connect@dva.wa.gov

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Identify SMVF and Screening for Suicide Risk

The first step to providing upstream SMVF suicide prevention is identifying them. Your Governors Challenge Team is working tirelessly to connect with (F)EMS & Law Enforcement to promote asking the question "Have you ever served in our Armed Forces?" This is very important due to the unique risk and protective factors, as well as the resources specific to the military and Veteran community. This may also improve belongingness for those suffering from isolation or ostracization from the community.

Since its launch in January 2022, approximately 6,600 of Washington State's Law Enforcement have gone through the Criminal Justice Training Center's annual Crisis Intervention Training, which now has the "ask the question" criteria embedded within.

Additionally, through collaboration with Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) in Colorado, the team conducts outreach to Behavioral Health providers in the state of Washington to promote the Suicide Risk Management Consultation Program, a no-cost consultation service that provides tools and guidance for providers to help SMVF experiencing suicidal ideation.

Through collaboration with First Nation Representatives the team also hopes to build relationships with Washington State Tribal & Tribal Veteran communities to provide resources and support to those in need. Rural communities see significant barriers to assistance due to distance and limited resources and have shown significant suicide rates as a result.

If you are interested in learning more, visit our suicide prevention webpage at <https://dva.wa.gov/sp>

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Tribal and Tribal Veterans Suicides

In 2015 a resolution was passed by the National Congress of American Indians creating the National American Indian & Alaska Native Hope for Life Day to be held annually on September 10th. The goal was to request a U.S. presidential proclamation designating the Hope for Life Day annually, this has not happened yet, but the day is still being honored and celebrated.

Historical disenfranchisement through genocide and institutional racism has resulted in the American Indian/Alaska Native communities experiencing poorer health and socioeconomic outcomes. These social determinants of health intersect to create a situation that is detrimental to the physical and mental health of Indian communities. Cultural disconnection, alienation, and pressure to assimilate all contribute to higher rates of suicide among American Indian/Alaska Native communities.

The AI/AN communities have the highest rates of suicide of any ethnic group according to the CDC. Since 1999 AI/AN women suicide rates are up 139%. AI/AN men are up 71%. Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death across all ages. For Native youth ages 10 - 24 it is the second leading cause of death. Native Americans/Alaska Natives serve in the U.S. Armed Forces at a higher rate than any other ethnic group[GS(1)]. They have served in every major conflict since the Revolutionary War, over 200 years, even though they were not citizens of the United States until the Indian Citizenship Act was passed in 1924. 42,000 AI/AN served in Vietnam, 90% were volunteers. That makes approximately one out of four eligible AI/AN people served. Since September 11, 2001, almost 19% of all AI/AN have served in the Armed Forces. Currently 20% of all AI/AN servicemembers are women. According to the DOD, more than 24,000 of the 1.2 million currently active-duty servicemembers are AI/AN and the 2010 census identified 150,000 AI/AN veterans.

WDVA is committed to serving all veterans and their families in a culturally appropriate manner. This includes approximately 5,000 American Indian and Alaska Native veterans in the state. This group serves in the United States armed forces at a higher rate than any other ethnic group. They also have access to unique federal programs to better meet their needs. Our goal is to better serve native veterans by supporting program expansions and making sure they can access the same benefits as other veterans. For example, we have signed memorandums with six Indian Tribes that allow us to provide training, accreditation, and technical assistance to tribal veterans representatives and service officers who are employed by the tribe. In addition, we make presentations to the Veteran Committee of the Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians and VA Puget Sound Health Care System Joint American Indian Veterans Advisory Council meetings on topics such as suicide prevention, veterans' disability benefits, professional development training available through the Veterans Training Support Center, outreach to LGBTQ+ veterans, and establishing tribal veterans service officers programs in partnership with state veterans' agencies.

For more information please contact connect@dva.wa.gov.

[CDC.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6708a1.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6708a1.htm)

Military Times, Nov. 8, 2019

NICOA (National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.), Sept. 9, 2019

NICOA, Nov. 8, 2019

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Lethal Means Safety - Governors Challenge

The Governor's Challenge is a Nationwide Suicide Prevention program focused on preventing Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) suicide. Currently we have 52 States and territories taking part in the challenge. Group 3 of the Governors Challenge is focused on Lethal Means Safety, which is about reducing access to lethal methods of suicide and increasing protective factors/environments. With firearms accounting for the majority of lethal suicide attempts this has been the most prioritized focus for all Group 3 teams. The Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs, in partnership with Forefront Suicide Prevention/SAFER Homes Suicide Aware team, is devoted to accomplishing this very mission. <https://saferhomescoalition.org/> We have gun safes, gun locks, and medication lock boxes available for free to reduce access to lethal means in crisis.

Your diverse WA State Group 3 team has led the way in working with WA State FFL (firearm dealers) to spread the message of suicide prevention, leading to many of our dealers throughout the state offering temporary safe storage of firearms.

If you or your organization is interested in this training, please reach out to your WDVA Team at connect@dva.wa.gov

We know that suicidal crises are often brief and temporary. This is why it is so important that we reduce access to lethal means. The more barriers we can put in the way of carrying out suicide attempts the more successful we will be in saving lives.

Here are a couple quick recommendations for lethal means safety in your own home- the link below has the full list of best practices:

- Lock up your firearms/medications.
- Keep firearms and ammunition stored separately. Only keep a small amount of medication on hand.
- Transfer to a trusted friend, family member, or service organization willing to temporarily hold for mental health reasons.

More info: <https://www.dva.wa.gov/sp>

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GRAPHICS & SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

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September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month — a time to raise awareness on this stigmatized, and often taboo, topic. In addition to shifting public perception, we use this month to spread hope and vital information to people affected by suicide. Our goal is to ensure that individuals, friends and families have access to the resources they need to discuss suicide prevention and to seek help.



Media Resources :
www.nimh.nih.gov/get-involved

Media Resources :

www.988lifeline.org/media-resources

September 10 World Suicide Prevention Day



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2. Listen
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Suicide Prevention Awareness Month | **Stories of Hope**

This year for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month your Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs wants to hear "Stories of Hope" from the community!

Did you have a friend support you during a difficult time? Or perhaps you helped someone in need? Please share with us your story of hope to promote solidarity and maybe help someone else in need!

We will share your story on WDVA social media channels and WILL NOT share your name or any identifying information to the public.

SHARE YOUR HOPE:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/RKTCNHK

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Counseling Services for Veterans & Their Families

The War Trauma Program, also known as the PTSD Counseling Program, provides no cost, clinical, out-patient confidential counseling.

A War Trauma Counselor is a licensed mental health professional who has graduate level training in a counseling-related field and is licensed to practice in the state of Washington. Some of the providers are veterans or family members of veterans. All providers are military and veteran cultural competent.

Click the link below to access PTSD Counselors and search the Counseling and Wellness Counselor Directory. [You can search for a counselor by county.](#)

[CLICK HERE](#)



LEARN

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LIVES

SUICIDE

PREVENTION

TRAINING

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CEU's Available!
Register at
[https://www.eventsquid.com
/event/17879](https://www.eventsquid.com/event/17879)



connect@dva.wa.gov

Sept 29th @ 11 am PST

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Your Suicide Prevention Team

	<p>Codie Garza Suicide Prevention Program Manager Region: State-wide Cell: 360-522-2894 Email: codie.garza@dva.wa.gov</p>
	<p>Jen Prewitt Suicide Prevention Peer Specialist Region 1: Clallam, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish & Whatcom Counties Email: jennifer.prewitt@dva.wa.gov</p>
	<p>Connie O'Brien-Larsen Suicide Prevention Peer Specialist Region 2: Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston & Wahkiakum Counties Email: constance.obrien-larsen@dva.wa.gov</p>
	<p>Mike Badgley Suicide Prevention Peer Specialist Region 3: Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, & Yakima Counties Email: michael.badgley@dva.wa.gov</p>
	<p>James Hansen Rural Suicide Prevention Peer Specialist Region 4: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, & Whitman Counties Email: james.hansen@dva.wa.gov</p>