



American Legion Auxiliary

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Newsletter

August 2022

www.ALAforVeterans.org/member/committees/var

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September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and we want to raise awareness on how you can protect yourself and your loved ones from this complex and tragic health issue.

In 2007 the VA established The Veterans Crisis Line, it is a free, confidential, 24-hour hotline for Veterans and their families/friends. Since its launch in 2007, the Veterans Crisis line has answered more than 1.25 million calls and made more than 39,000 lifesaving rescues. To reach someone right away you can dial a number and speak with someone, send a text, or just as easily start an online chat.

A recent report found that those receiving care from the VA had a 16 % decrease in suicide. Learning and watching for signs of concerning behavior can help you and your loved ones get help!

Some signs of concerning behavior include:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there is no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from family and friends

If you notice any signs of concerning behavior here are some things you can do:

- Start a conversation: Mention the signs that prompted you to talk to them. Stay calm and let the person know you want to help them. Don't leave the person alone.
- Listen, express concern and reassure the individual: Let the person know you care and that you take the situation seriously. Letting the person know you care will go a long way in establishing a support system.
- Create a safety plan: Ask the person if they have access to anything that could harm them and call for help if you feel the situation is dangerous.
- Get the individual help: Provide resources for the individual. Call the Veteran's crisis line at 1(800)-273-8255. Or if you feel the situation is severe, take the individual to the closest emergency room or call for help.

Individuals experiencing such thoughts and behavior can make simple yet effective lifestyle changes to help alleviate these harmful thoughts and behavior. These can include getting exercise, taking time off of work, and spending time with friends and family to avoid isolation. Ultimately, anyone at risk or feeling uneasy should talk to their health care provider.

2022 VAVS Department Orientation – *Two options!*

Join the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation leaders for the virtual Department VAVS (VA Voluntary Service) Orientation. The webinar will be offered twice.

This information is key for all Department Secretaries, Department Presidents, and Department VA&R Chairmen. It is crucial that at least one representative from each department attend at least one of the webinar times.

Dates being offered:

- **Saturday, September 10, 2022 at Noon ET**
- **Tuesday, September 13, 2022 at 7:30pm ET**

What you'll learn:

In this webinar, you will learn the processes and procedures for volunteering within the VA. We will also cover a variety of topics including how to choose a valuable rep or dep, the certification process, VA roles and expectations, the structure of VA Voluntary Service (VAVS), and much more.

Ready to register? Click here - https://legion-aux.formstack.com/forms/vavs_101_registration

How you can help 'Be The One'

The American Legion recently launched its Be The One campaign to encourage American Legion Family members, veterans, servicemembers and others to take action when they believe a veteran is at risk of suicide.

Here are some answers to common questions about this new initiative:

Question: How did the "Be The One" initiative develop?

Answer: The American Legion, the nation's largest veterans service organization with more than 1.8 million members, is guided by its Four Pillars. Among those is the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation pillar. At its core, the Legion's mission is to enhance the well-being of America's veterans, their families, our military and our communities by their devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Question: Why is this a priority right now?

Answer: Today, the No. 1 issue facing those who served is veteran suicide, according to the National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. Each day, no fewer than 17 veterans die by suicide. That's more than 6,000 each year. The rate of suicide for veterans is more than 50% higher than that of non-veteran adults. As the Global War on Terrorism continues, there will be more veterans facing mental-health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

Question: What will the Be The One campaign achieve?

Answer: At its core, The American Legion is activating a national platform to end veteran suicide. The Be the One campaign will:

- Destigmatize asking for mental health support, creating opportunity for those with mental health issues to speak freely and get the support they need.
- Provide peer-to-peer support and resources in local communities.



BE THE ONE

TO **ASK** VETERANS IN YOUR LIFE HOW THEY ARE DOING.

TO **LISTEN** WHEN A VETERAN NEEDS TO TALK.

TO **REACH** OUT WHEN A VETERAN IS STRUGGLING.

- Deploy FDA-approved therapeutics for veterans to identify issues and find resources for support.

Question: I'm not a veteran. How can I support this program?

Answer: The stigma associated with mental health issues is a barrier to veterans seeking assistance. They fear loss of their job, think they can handle their situation themselves, or don't think others can understand their situation. Family members may be the first to recognize the signs that their loved one needs help, but they may lack the knowledge of how to approach the situation. If you have a family member who is a veteran, The American Legion encourages you to Be the One to:

- **Ask veterans in your life how they are doing.**
- **Listen when a veteran needs to talk.**
- **Reach out when a veteran is struggling.**



**Military
Crisis Line**



**Veterans
Crisis Line**



1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

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

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs