

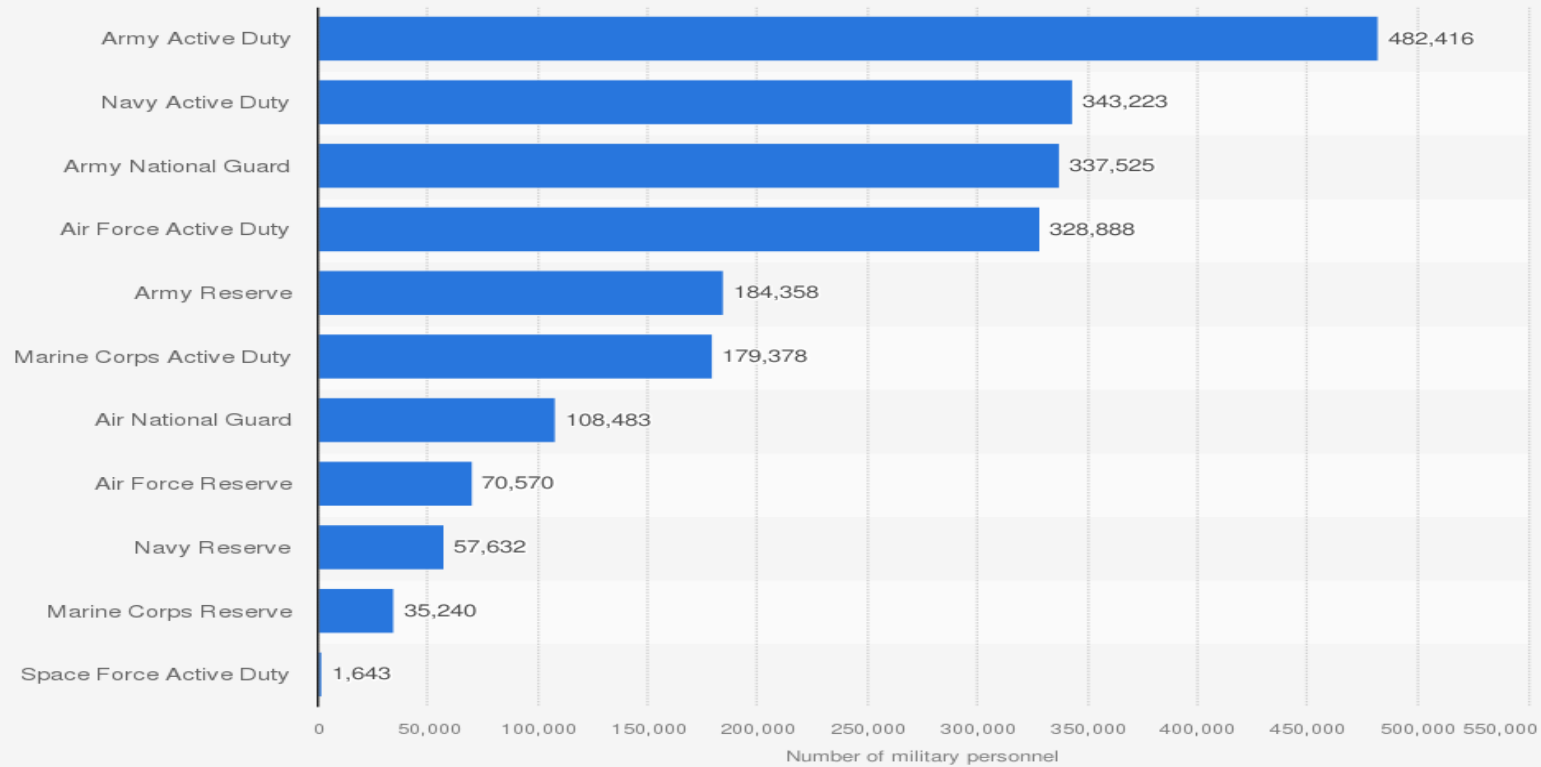
# Veteran Intervention and De-escalation

Alissa Harris, LMSW – Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinator



# America's Military

Active and reserve United States military force personnel in 2021, by service branch and reserve component



Source  
US Department of Defense  
© Statista 2023

Additional Information:  
United States; US Department of Defense; 2021



# America's Veterans

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- 2020 estimates:
  - 16.5 Million Veterans in US:
    - 167,000 WWII (1941-1945)
    - 1.1 Million Korean War (1950-1953)
    - 6 Million Vietnam Era (1964-1975)
    - 8.5 Million Gulf War Era (1990-present)
    - 3.5 Million Peacetime

Ohio ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in total veteran population with 774, 935 veterans  
(US Census 2017)

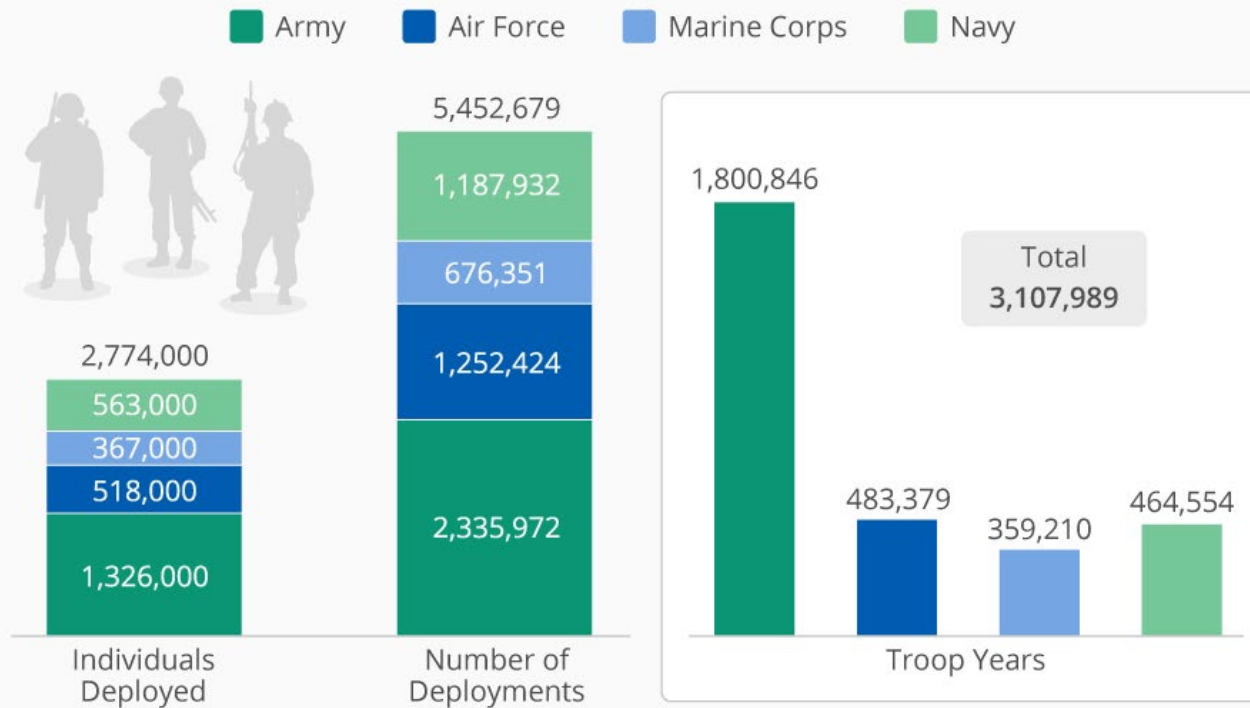


# Post 9/11 Deployments

4

## 2.77 Million Service Members Have Deployed Since 9/11

U.S. troop deployments between 9/11 and September 2015



@StatistaCharts Source: Rand Corporation

statista



## *Unique Experiences of Serving and Transitioning out of Service*

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- Unique experiences of serving: Deployment, Separation from Family, Secrecy around Missions, High Stress Situations, Important roles giving high sense of purpose, close comradery and trust, witnessing and experiencing traumas that others don't experience, feeling isolated and misunderstood as only 1% of the population is currently serving.
- Separating from the military has its own set of stressors including loss of comradery, survivor's guilt/moral injury, loss of role and identity, loss of daily structure, relationship challenges, isolation, and some have challenges with mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, and challenges seeking employment or adjusting to education as a non-traditional student.
- Veterans may have a lack of trust in mental health providers and not seek treatment. This is due to feeling not being understood by non-military personnel who have not served and due to stigma and potential loss of career for seeking treatment while serving in the military. There are challenges related to perception of being "weak"



# Mental Health & Justice Involvement

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- 9% of Post 9-11 Veterans and Service Members who served in Iraq & Afghanistan have been arrested since returning home and this is often related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, Depression, and many have turned to drugs and alcohol to cope with pain.
- More than 50% of Justice-Involved Veterans have a Mental Health Diagnosis. Most frequently: PTSD, Depression, Substance Abuse as well as increased risk of homelessness and suicide.

## THERE IS HOPE

- Treatment for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder decrease negative outcomes and recidivism of Justice-Involved Veterans.
- Studies show positive outcomes from addressing housing, treatment, and employment while involved in justice system.



# Other Than Honorable Discharge

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What is an OTH (Other Than Honorable Discharge): It is related to significant departure in conduct and performance. The rating is determined by the Commander and can lead to inequity based on how a Commander feels about a Veteran. It varies from Commander to Commander. This decision can change the trajectory of a life and create a loss of benefits.

The stress of combat, military sexual trauma, staying fit, and more can result in behaviors that are attributed to character and not mental health problems, and these behaviors can result in OTH discharges.

- In a study of OIF Marines, those with PTSD were 11x more likely to be discharged for misconduct, and 8x more likely to be discharged for substance abuse. And  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Veterans with OTH Discharges and PTSD or TBI were denied eligibility for VA benefits. Additionally, Soldiers hospitalized for a mental health disorder are 9x more likely to be discharged for misconduct than soldiers hospitalized for other conditions.
- From 2011-2015, 62% of service members discharged for misconduct had been diagnosed with a mental health condition in the past 2 year, and 23% were given an OTH discharge. And those with combat exposure are 25% more likely to be OTH Discharge.
- Veterans with OTH Discharges are a high risk for suicide subgroup who rarely obtains VA Care and Veterans with OTH Discharges are 3x as likely to experience suicidal thoughts and are twice as likely to die by suicide.



# OTH Discharge upgrades

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- Veterans with OTH can request a Character of Service Review from the VA by completing VA Form 21-526e
- Veterans may additionally appeal the COS determination and their DOD discharge status by completing DD Form 293: Application for Review of Discharge.
- Veterans can call 877-222-VETS to learn more about Discharge Upgrades and Character of Service Reviews
- Veterans can work with a Veteran Service Officer for assistance in filing the paperwork. Veterans can also work with pro bono attorneys for help with their OTH claims.



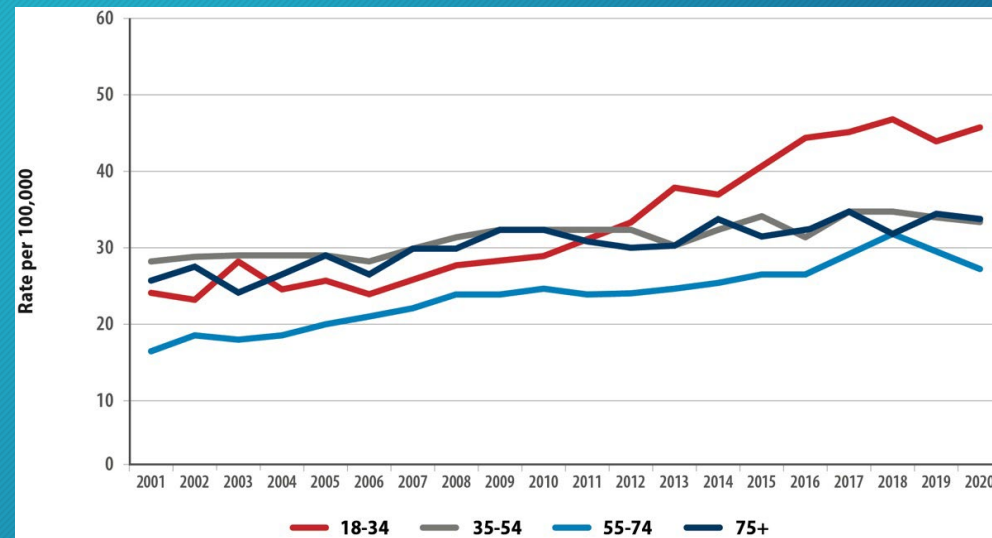
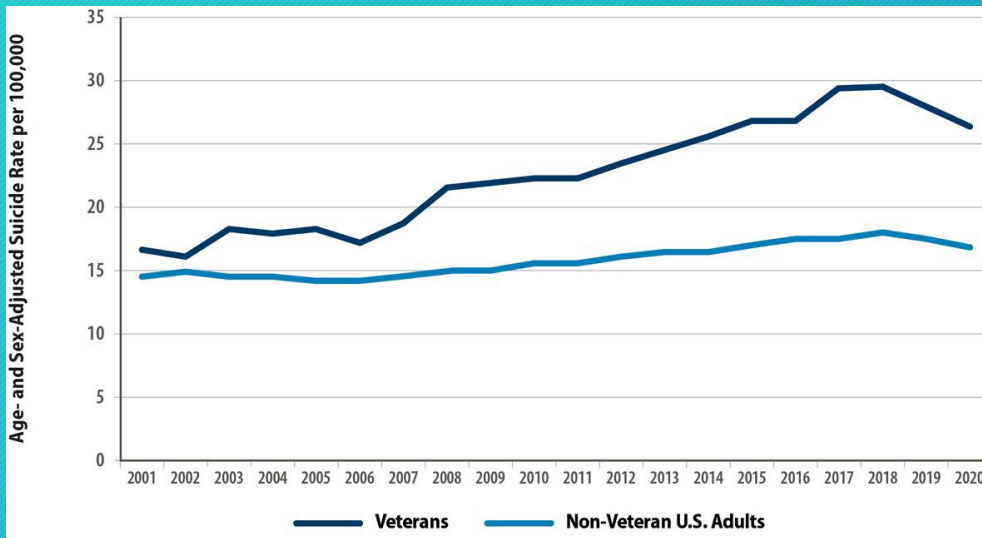


# Veteran Suicide

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Age- and Sex-Adjusted Suicide Rates, Veterans and Non-Veteran U.S. Adults, 2001-2020

Unadjusted Suicide Rate Per 100,000, Veterans, by Age Group, 2001-2020

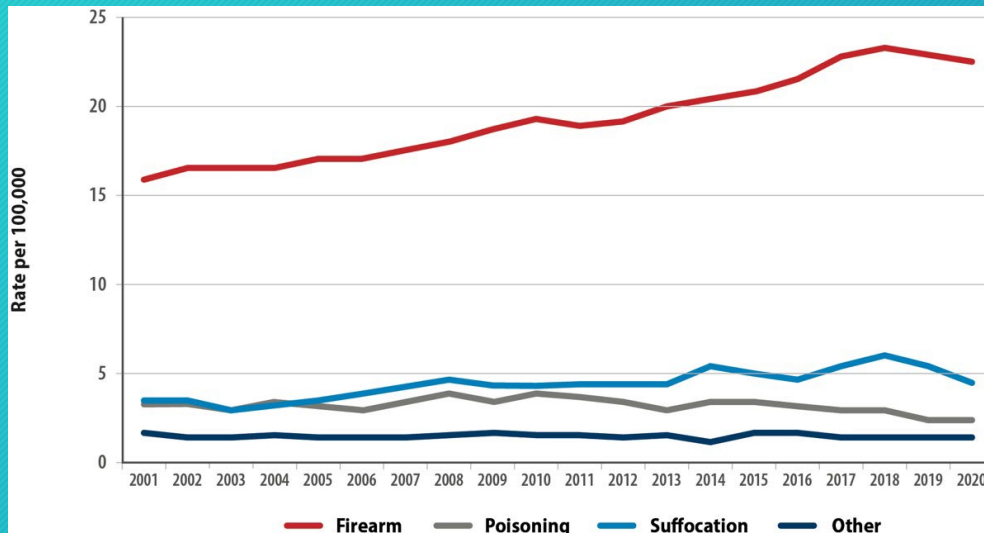




# Lethal Means Safety

10

Unadjusted Method-Specific Suicide Rates, Veterans, 2001-2020

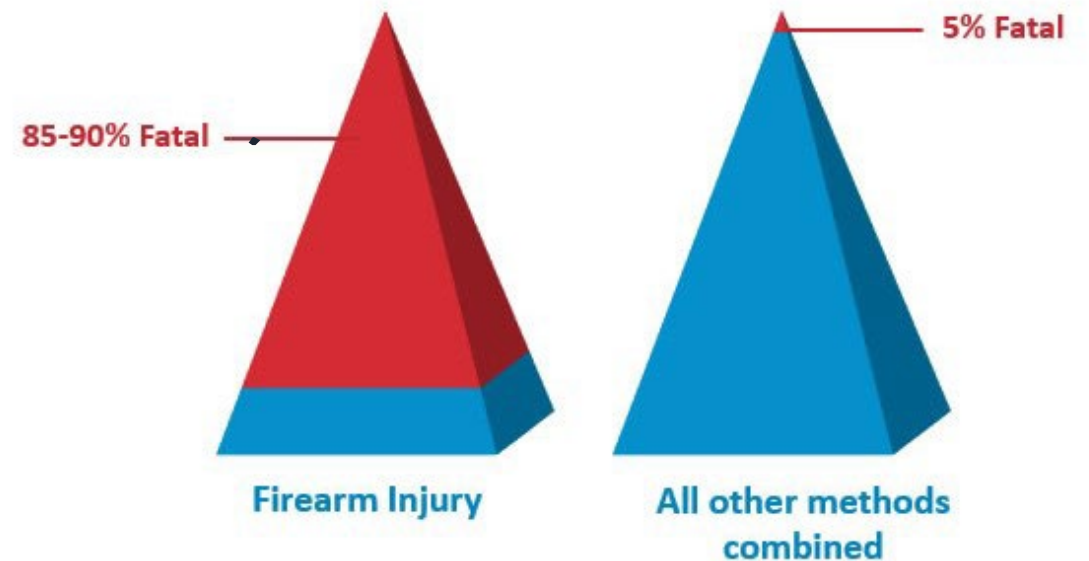
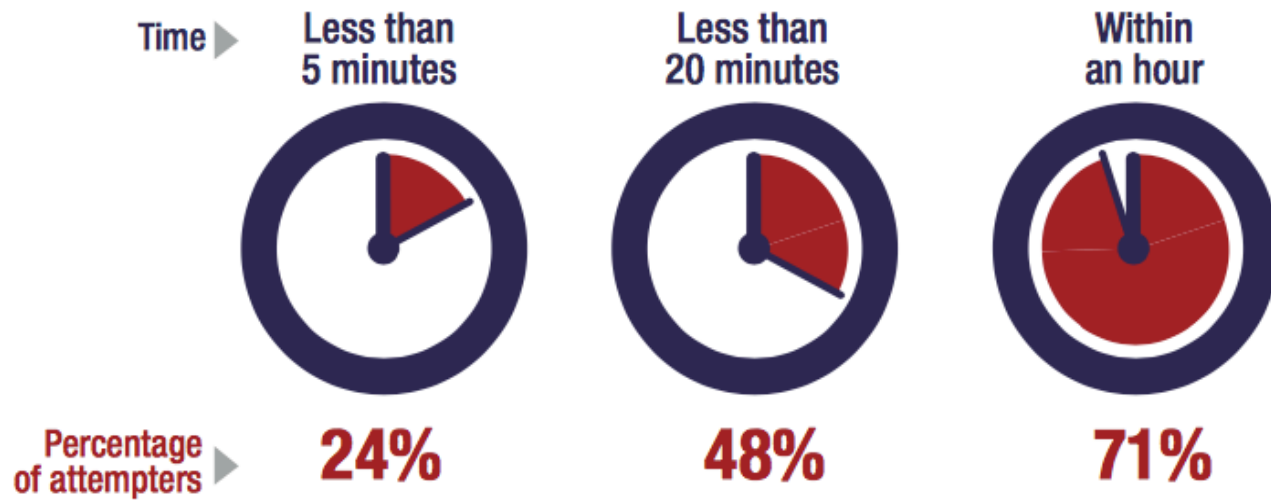


- 90% of firearm-related attempts result in death while 5% of all other attempts combined result in death
- Less than 20% of patients at high risk for suicide in the ED were assessed for access to lethal means
- Access to lethal means increases suicide risk for everyone living in the home
- The acute phase of a suicidal crisis is often brief; building in time and space can save lives
- 90% of those who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide



# Most Suicidal Crises are Brief Time from Decision to Action: < 1 hour

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CDC WISQARS: Deaths from death certificate data; nonfatal incidents estimated from national sample of hospital emergency departments



# Responding to Veterans in Crisis

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- Ask about military history: “Have you served in the US military?”
  - Many Veterans don’t identify if asked “are you a Veteran”
  - Many Veterans are not connected with their earned benefits, including financial compensation and healthcare
  - Asking about service history and providing information about how to connect to care and earned financial benefits are protective factors against suicide and improve quality of life.
  - You can use a VA program called SQUARES Database to determine whether someone served (if of interest, contact [Alissa.Harris@va.gov](mailto:Alissa.Harris@va.gov))



# How law enforcement can help

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- Avoid:
  - Threatening
  - Intimidating
  - Judging
  - Ordering
  - Advising
  - Drawing weapons
  - Use of word “surrender”
- Body language:
  - Finger-pointing may seem accusing or threatening.
  - Shoulder shrugging may seem uncaring or unknowing.
  - Rigid walking may seem unyielding or challenging.
  - Jaw set with clenched teeth shows you are not open- minded to listening to his/her side of the story.
  - Use a natural smile. A fake smile can aggravate the situation.
  - Use slow and deliberate movements -- quick actions may surprise and alarm the other person.
- Personal space:
  - Invasion or encroachment of personal space (1.5 to 3 feet) tends to heighten anxiety.
  - If possible, do not touch a hostile person -- they might interpret that as an aggressive action.
  - Keep your hands visible at all times -- you do not want the other person to misinterpret your physical actions.
  - Recall military and law enforcement training does overlap



# How law enforcement can help

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- Ask about access to firearms when someone is in crisis/experiencing increased mental health symptoms
- Signs that someone may benefit from temporary out-of-home storage for firearms:
  - Change in usual behavior
  - History of treatment for mental illness
  - Increased drug or alcohol use
  - Isolation
  - Violent or reckless behavior
  - Recent major life event like job loss, relationship loss, financial trouble, legal trouble
  - Expression of suicidal thoughts, feelings or behaviors
  - Expression of feeling hopeless or of being a burden to others



# Options for Safe Storage

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Cable Lock



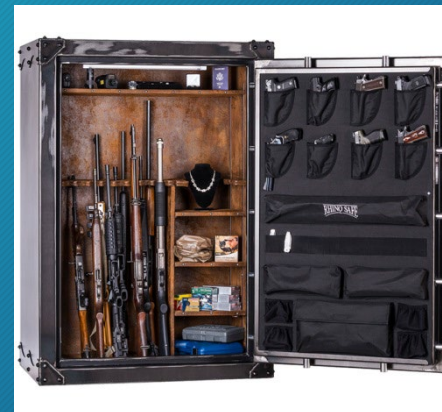
Trigger Lock



Lock Box



Lifejacket



Gun Case/Cabinet



# Suggestions on What to Say

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“How do you currently store your firearms/medications?”

“What concerns do you have about storing them more safely?”

“Who could hold the key to your gun lock/set the combination to your gun safe for awhile, until this rough part is over?”

“How can you help keep yourself safe from substances that can make things worse (e.g., by removing alcohol or deleting a dealer’s number)?”

“Who else can help support you during a difficult time? Are you interested in talking to someone else about this?”

If the Veteran doesn’t want to take steps toward safe storage now: “How will we know when it’s time to take extra steps or do something differently?”

“Let’s make a plan for following up on this.”

“Can you think of anything else you could do to increase your safety during this tough time?”





# VA Services

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## **Preventive Care Services**

- Immunizations
- Physical Examinations
- Health Care Assessments
- Screening Tests
- Health Education Programs

## **Outpatient Treatment Services**

- Primary & Specialty Care
- Emergency Outpatient Care
- Surgical
- Mental Health
- Substance Use Treatment

## **Inpatient (Hospital) Treatment Services**

- Medical
- Surgical
- Mental Health

## **Medications and Supplies**

- Prescription medications
- Over-the-Counter medications
- Medical/Surgical supplies





# VA Specialty Care Services

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- Arthritis Clinic
- Sleep Clinic
- Endoscopy
- Endocrine Clinic
- ENT
- Geriatrics
- Infectious Disease
- Invasive Radiology
- Renal
- Hemodialysis
- Liver
- Hematology/Oncology
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation Oncology
- Vascular Surgery
- MRI
- Palliative Care
- Plastics
- Cardiac Surgery
- Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement Surgical Suite
- Robotic Surgery
- Bariatric Surgery
- Optometry and Ophthalmology
- Dental
- Speech/Audiology
- Orthopedics, Orthotics and Prosthetics
- Dermatology/Plastics
- Rheumatology
- Pulmonary
- Infectious Disease
- Neurosurgery, Neurology
- Urology
- Women's Health
- Chaplain Services (Spiritual Support)
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Outpatient Spinal Cord Injury
- Visual Impairment Services (VIST/BROS)



# VA offers an array of Mental Health Services including:

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- Acute Inpatient MH Unit (AIMH)
- Consultation/Liaison Psychiatry
- Substance Use Disorder Intensive Outpatient Program
- Mental Health Clinic
- Substance Abuse Clinic
- PTSD Clinical Team
- Primary Care-Mental Health
- Neuropsychology
- Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM)
- Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Program
- Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program
- Veterans Integration To Academic Leadership (VITAL) College/University Outreach
- Veterans Justice Outreach Program (VJO)
- Suicide Prevention Coordinators
- SeRV Mental Health (provides case management, mental health screening and crisis intervention to OEF/OIF/OND Veterans)



# MyVA411

1-800-MyVA411 is a national, toll-free number that serves as a “door” to VA. You can still reach VA at any other direct or contact center numbers, but 1-800-MyVA411 offers the simplicity of a single number to call when you don’t know who to call.

The Veterans Crisis Line is always available 24/7 at 1-800-273-82 and pressing 1, by [Chat](#), or by Texting 838255. Veterans can also the White House VA Hotline at 1-855-948-2311 to share your compliments or concerns.



The infographic features a central smartphone displaying the MyVA411 app interface. The phone screen shows the VA Department of Veterans Affairs logo at the top, followed by the text "800-MyVA411" and "(800) 698-2411". Below the text is a numeric keypad with buttons for digits 1-9, 0, and #, and a green call icon at the bottom. Surrounding the phone are ten service categories, each with a colored icon and a brief description:

- LIVE ASSISTANCE** (purple icon): General information, directory assistance and technical support for VA.gov
- VA HEALTH CARE** (blue icon): Eligibility, enrollment, locations and COVID-19
- COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE** (orange icon): MISSION Act eligibility, copayments
- NATIONAL CEMETERIES** (teal icon): Burial benefits, interment scheduling and headstone/Veteran marker
- VETERANS CRISIS LINE** (maroon icon): Immediate connection to caring, qualified responders
- DEBT MANAGEMENT** (purple icon): Debt details, payment options and debtor rights
- FACILITY LOCATOR** (blue icon): Locations of medical centers, benefits offices or cemeteries
- BENEFITS ASSISTANCE** (green icon): Information about a variety of VA benefits
- HOMELESS VETERANS LINE** (red icon): Information and support for homeless and at-risk callers
- COVID-19 INFORMATION** (purple icon): Frequently asked questions and live assistance for COVID-related questions



# Telehealth

- Services available via VA Video Connect:
  - -Cardiology
  - -Mental health
  - -Nutrition
  - -Occupational Therapy
  - -Physical Therapy
  - -Primary Care
  - -Sleep Medicine
  - -Specialty Care
  - -And More

## INTERESTED IN VA CARE, BUT THE VA IS TOO FAR AWAY?

With VA Video Connect, you can access VA care through video telehealth without leaving your home!



### Services Available via VA Video Connect:

- Cardiology
- Mental Health
- Nutrition
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Primary Care
- Sleep Medicine
- Specialty Care
- And more!

With the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs VA Video Connect app, you can conduct real-life video appointments with your VA providers. Quickly and easily meet with your VA care team over a secure and private video connecting using your smartphone, computer, or tablet.

### Don't have access to internet or a video device?

The VA may be able to help! Equipment is available for loan at no cost for Veterans without access to internet or a video device. Virtual Care Training is available! Ask your provider or during enrollment if interested.



### HOW TO GET STARTED WITH VA

Simply call 734-845-5275 to speak with an Enrollment Specialist.

### ALREADY ENROLLED WITH VA?

Talk with your VA provider to see if telehealth is a good fit for your care, or if you have questions about equipment or virtual training.





# VJO Specialists

22

- Operational since 2009
- Outreach to Veterans in contact with law enforcement, jails, and courts
- Goal is to provide timely access to VA services for eligible justice-involved Veterans to avoid unnecessary criminalization and incarceration of Veteran defendants and offenders with mental illness and/or traumatic brain injury (TBI).
  - In communities where justice programs relevant for Veterans exist, VA will take the initiative in building working relationships to see that eligible justice-involved Veterans get needed care
  - In communities where no such programs exist, VA will reach out to potential justice system partners to connect eligible justice-involved Veterans with VA services
- Number of Veterans arrested each year: 1,159,500 (BJS estimate)
- Number of Veterans in local jails: 72,600 (BJS estimate)
- 10% on average



# How to find us...

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## VET HELP

We thank you for taking the initiative to help experiencing hardships. Together we can provide easier access to life-saving resources. Scan the QR code with your mobile device to help navigate VA resources available to Veterans. This contact information is designed to meet the needs of Veterans encountered by law enforcement and first responders.



**VA** |  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
W. Ann Arbor Healthcare System

## COUNTY CONTACTS

- Hancock, Lucas, Ottawa, Sandusky, Seneca, Re-Entry Services for MDOC Institutions in Southern Michigan**
  - Christy Wood LISW-S: [Christy.wood@va.gov](mailto:Christy.wood@va.gov), (734) - 934 -1607
- Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Lucas, Williams, Wood**
  - Leslie Witherell LISW-S: [Leslie.witherell@va.gov](mailto:Leslie.witherell@va.gov), (567) 225-3739
- Monroe, Jackson, Lenawee, Washtenaw**
  - Jamie Wright LMSW: [Jamie.wright@va.gov](mailto:Jamie.wright@va.gov), (734) 478- 3551
- Genesee, Livingston, Western Wayne, Western Oakland**
  - Brad Watkins LMSW: [Bradford.watkins@va.gov](mailto:Bradford.watkins@va.gov), (734) 369 -1300



# Veteran's Crisis Line

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- **We're here anytime, day or night – 24/7**
- If you are a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, connect with our caring, qualified responders for confidential help. Many of them are Veterans themselves.
- [Call 988 and select 1](#)
- [Text 838255](#)
- [Start a confidential chat](#)
- Call TTY if you have hearing loss [800-799-4889](#)
- Get more resources at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](#).





# STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS®

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## Who we Are

Star Behavioral Health Providers (SBHP) connects military service members and their families with licensed behavioral health professionals who have specialized training in military culture and treatments shown to be effective with military families. We accomplish our mission by 1.) developing and administering no-cost [trainings](#) in participating states and 2.) adding trained professionals to a no-cost online [registry](#).

# Mental Health. For Life.

We create resilient communities by improving mental health and emotional wellbeing, one hour at a time.

— Organization Overview



# Resources

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# OHIOCARES.OHIO.GOV



SERVICE MEMBERS

VETERANS

FAMILY MEMBERS

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

PROVIDERS

Contact

Search

## Your Service Matters. You Matter.

ASK yourself how you're feeling, BE aware of signs & symptoms, CARE for yourself & others

[Learn More](#)



Ohio CareLine - 1-800-720-9616

Behavioral health professionals are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Veterans Crisis Line

24/7, confidential crisis support for veterans and their loved ones.



Ohio Domestic Violence Network

Visit the Ohio Domestic Violence Network's referral list to find a shelter or support program near you.



# Free, Confidential Support 24/7/365

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Be prepared.  
Save the number.  
Dial 988 then Press 1



- Veterans
- Service members
- Family members
- Friends
- Coworkers



# Homeless veterans & those at-risk for being homeless




- Conducting coordinated outreach to proactively seek out Veterans in need of assistance.
- Connecting homeless and at-risk Veterans with housing solutions, health care, community employment services and other required supports.
- Collaborating with federal, state and local agencies; employers; housing providers, faith-based and community nonprofits; and others to expand employment and affordable housing options for Veterans exiting homelessness.



# Support for Women Veterans

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## Women Veterans Call Center



**1.855.VA.WOMEN**  
**WOMEN VETERANS**  
**CALL CENTER**

★ **Call or Text:** 1-855-829-6636 **Chat Online:** [www.womenshealth.va.gov](http://www.womenshealth.va.gov)  
**YOUR GUIDE TO VA.**

**Hours of Operation:**  
Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. ET  
Saturday: 8:00 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. ET

**VA**  U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## She is a Veteran

- She is a Veteran is a women veteran's outreach campaign designed to:
  1. Connect women to their identity as veterans.
  2. Change the public perception of what veterans look like.
  3. Connect women veterans to benefits.
  4. Connect women veterans to community.

[She is A Veteran - Andrea Norton - YouTube](#)



# VA Squares & VRSS

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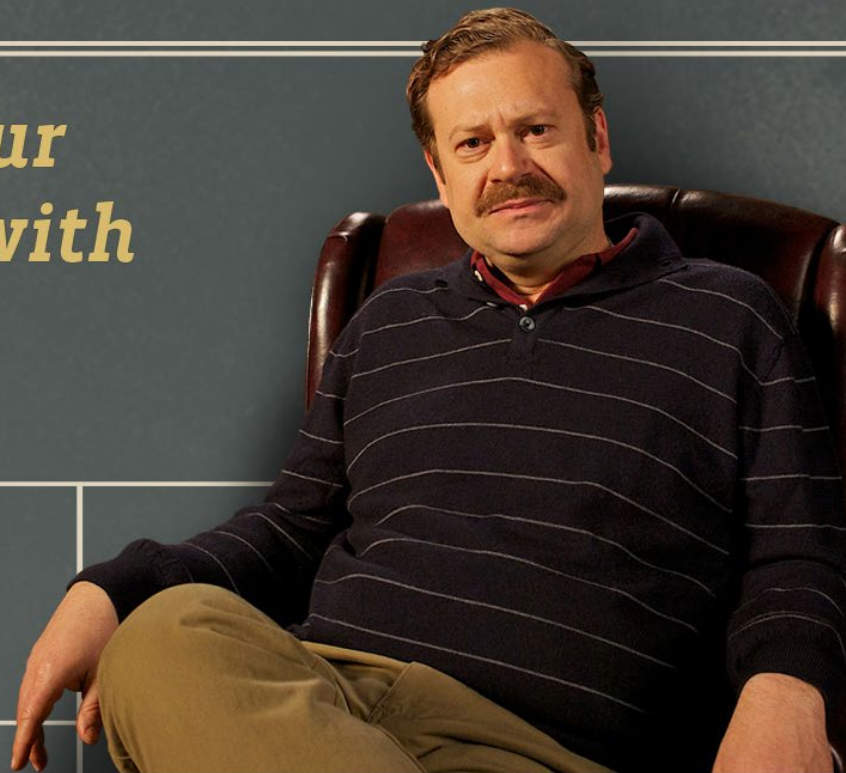
[www.mantherapy.org](http://www.mantherapy.org)

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*You can't fix your  
mental health with  
DUCT TAPE.*



**mantherapy.org**  
*Therapy. The way a man does it.*



EMOTIONAL  
PROBLEMS  
CAN BE

**HARD  
TO SPOT.**

ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE  
WEARING CAMO.

**mantherapy.org**  
*Therapy. The way a man does it.*



# What is Man Therapy?

34

Reshaping the conversation about men's mental health and suicide, by using stories of **hope, resilience and recovery**, coupled with humor.

To cut through stigma and tackle issues like...

- Depression
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Divorce
- PTSD
- Substance Use
- And More

[www.mantherapy.org](http://www.mantherapy.org)

*A place for men and their loved ones to go and learn more about men's mental health*



# Make the Connection

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- Online resource featuring hundreds of Veterans telling their stories about overcoming mental health challenges

**MAKE THE**  
**CONNECTION**

[https://www.maketheconnection.net/stories/926/?utm\\_source=site&utm\\_medium=modal&utm\\_campaign=link\\_share](https://www.maketheconnection.net/stories/926/?utm_source=site&utm_medium=modal&utm_campaign=link_share)



# Coaching into Care

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National VA telephone service which aims to educate, support, and empower family members and friends who are seeking care or services for a Veteran

**CALL 888-823-7458**

**MilLife Topics** ^

**Benefits & Resources** v

**I am a...** v

**Confidential Help** v

**Military Basics** >

Deployment >

Transitioning & Retiring >

Casualty Assistance >

Moving & PCS >

Housing & Living >

Recreation, Travel & Shopping >

Relationships >

Parenting >

Special Needs >

Health & Wellness >

Safety From Violence & Abuse >

Financial & Legal >

Education & Employment >

National Guard

**Military Basics Overview**

New to the Military

Advancing in the Military

Logistics for Service Members

Wounded, Ill or Injured, & Their Caregivers



# Gatekeeper Trainings

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## VA S.A.V.E. Training

- Suicide prevention training video available to everyone, 24/7
- Less than 25 minutes long
- Partner with facility - level Suicide Prevention Coordinators
- Offered in collaboration with the PsychArmor Institute at <https://psycharmor.org/S.A.V.E.>

## CALM: Counseling on Access to Lethal Means

- 2-hour course for people who work with those at risk for suicide (e.g., mental health professionals, health care providers, and social service professionals)
- Addresses how to ask about access to lethal means and how to reduce access to them
- <https://zerosuicidetraining.edc.org/enrol/index.php?id=20>



Available online for free:  
[psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e/](https://psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e/)



### COUNSELING ON ACCESS TO LETHAL MEANS

Learn how to counsel people at risk for suicide—and their families—on reducing access to lethal means.



Questions???

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# References

40

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2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. *Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention*. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. 2022. [2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, VA Suicide Prevention, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, September 2022](https://www.va.gov/osp/2022-national-veteran-suicide-prevention-annual-report/)

Factsheet on Character of Discharge and VA Benefits:

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