Missouri Suicide Prevention: Resources for Veterans

Resources

- Dial 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and Press 1 to talk to someone with the Crisis Line
- Start a confidential online chat session at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/chat
- Call the peer-to-peer Vet2Vet Veterans Crisis Hotline (1-877-VET2VET (838-2838))
- Send a text message to 838255 to connect to a VA responder
- Take a self-check quiz at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/quiz
- Visit www.veteranscrisisline.net/GetHelp/ResourceLocator.aspx to find services near you
- Visit www.veteranscrisisline.net/GetHelp/Accessibility.aspx to connect through chat, text, or TTY if you are deaf or hard of hearing

Missouri Suicide Prevention Coordinators
St. Louis: 314-652-4100
Poplar Bluff: 573-778-4137
Kansas City: 816-861-4700
Columbia: 573-814-6279

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The ACE Checklist is from the Defense Suicide Prevention Office Supporting Military Families in Crisis Family Guide.

The Ask Suicide Screening Questions (ASQ) is a 4-question screening instrument developed by the National Institute of Mental Health.

Information on prevention strategies was drawn from the Crisis Support Guide for Military Families produced by the Center for Disease Control and the VHA Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention.

"This is a hugely important issue not only for veterans, but for our society. How we choose to support those who served on our behalf speaks volumes about ourselves, our culture and our future."

Veterans are at far greater risk than civilians to die by suicide. This brief provides information for veterans, their families and friends to help them understand suicide risk factors and warning signs and implement suicide prevention strategies. Furthermore, it provides a list of national and Missouri resources to veterans at risk of suicide.
How to Identify a Veteran Who May be at Risk for Suicide

Risk Factors
• PTSD/Traumatic Brain Injury
• Physical illness or chronic pain
• Alcohol or substance misuse
• Easy access to lethal means
• Recent, severe loss (especially a marriage or relationship) or threat of significant loss
• Difficult times (holidays anniversaries, 1st week after release from hospital, 1st week after discharge)
• Personal or family history of mental health issues
• Prior suicide attempt
• History of violence
• Financial issues/pending legal or disciplinary

If You Feel You are at Risk, Ask Yourself the Following Questions:
• In the past few weeks, have you wished you were dead?
• In the past few weeks, have you felt that you or your family would be better off if you were dead?
• In the past week, have you had thoughts about killing yourself?
• Have you ever tried to kill yourself?

If you answered YES to any of these questions, seek help immediately by calling 911 or the Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-TALK, (8255) and press 1 for immediate assistance. See back page for other resources.

Warning Signs
• Talking about wanting to hurt/kill oneself
• Making a suicide plan
• Feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness
• Feeling disconnected from civilian world
• Anger, rage, irritability
• Changes in appetite, weight, or sleep patterns
• Nightmares or night terrors
• Difficulty concentrating or memory loss
• Giving away prized possessions
• Suddenly becoming cheerful after a period of depression
• Feeling burdensome to family, friends, and society

How to Talk to a Veteran Who Might be Thinking of Suicide

Ask the veteran
Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm and be direct
• Are you thinking of killing yourself?
• Do you have a plan?
• Do you have actual means to kill yourself?
• How can I help?

Care for the veteran
• Calmly control the situation
• Listen patiently and express care and concern
• Remove any means that could be used for self-injury

Escort the veteran to a treatment provider
• Never leave your loved one alone and if on the phone, keep them on the phone
• Escort them to an emergency room or clinic
• Contact someone the veteran trusts, including a behavioral health professional or primary care provider
• Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), press 1 or call 911

Suicide Prevention Strategies

Protective Strategies: Self Care
• Build strong connections with friends, family, and supportive significant others
• Maintain physical fitness and stay involved with work, family and community
• Maintain sobriety
• Seek counseling/treatment for emotional problems
• Learn/practice relaxation techniques
• Attend a support group

Community-Provided Supports
• Assure access to mental and physical health care
• Provide opportunities for veterans to participate in school or community projects/activities
• Promote access to adequate housing and employment opportunities
• Restrict access to lethal means
• Promote the Veterans Crisis Line at (1-800-273-TALK (8255), press 1)