**Mental Health and Suicide Prevention for Veterans, Service Members, Families and Communities**

<https://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/mental-health-suicide-prevention-veterans.html>

Suicide is a national public health issue that impacts people from all walks of life, regardless of whether or not they have served in the military. However, the suicide rate among Veterans was 52% higher than non-Veteran adults in the U.S. in 2019, and Veteran suicides represent approximately 22% of all suicide deaths in the U.S.

Libraries are well positioned to provide information and referral services to connect Veterans and members of military communities with Veterans Health Administration programs and initiatives that address risks and protective factors for suicidal behaviors.

Presented by: Lillie Mells, Cassie Dubicki, and Shurhonda Love, Office of Mental Health Suicide Prevention, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

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| **What are your goals for viewing this webinar?** |
| **Personal Goals** |  |
| **Team Goals** |  |
| **Learning about Veteran Suicide** |
| Consider or discuss the public health issue of suicide with your team, using information provided by the VA on [Veteran Suicide Data and Reporting](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/data.asp). On this page, review the Annual Report, view State-Level Veteran Suicide Data for your state, [Suicide Rates by State](https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-rates-by-state.html) (from the CDC), and local or regional resources, to gain a better understanding of the urgency around suicide prevention. How would you share this information with your own team, library board, or community leadership, to help frame your library’s potential role in supporting Veterans and their families? Use the [Safe Reporting on Suicide](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/docs/safe_messaging_best_practices.pdf) (pdf) for guidance on how to communicate about suicide in a safe and ethical manner, correct misconceptions, convey hope and encourage help-seeking behaviors among those at risk for suicide. |

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| **Steps of Suicide Prevention** |
| The webinar presenters introduced the S.A.V.E. model in the session. S.A.V.E. stands for: * Signs
* Ask (…the most important question)
* Validate
* Encourage & Expedite

The model is further outlined in the 30-minute [S.A.V.E. Training](https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/va-save), available for free on PsychArmor. Sign up and encourage all staff at your library to complete the short training to learn more about the steps to suicide prevention, including how to debunk common myths about suicide. Consider discussing as a team or community, to help build a culture open to discussing and supporting the mental health needs of Veterans and their families. Remember that suicide prevention is everyone’s business.  |
| **Learning about Military Culture** |
| Learning more about military culture can be a way to build understanding of the experiences of Veterans in your community. Perhaps you have members of the military or Veterans in your family and have learned from what they have shared, or perhaps you aren’t aware that you might be intersecting with Veterans at your library, but know little about their culture. Review the information shared about military culture in the webinar (including what NOT to say to a Veteran!), and consider or discuss with others, those facets of the culture that are new to you. Remember that your knowledge about their experience can help to build trust and confidence in the library and the services you provide.  |
| **Selecting Resources to Support Your Community** |
| A robust list of resources has been compiled, with information relevant to both library staff and patrons: [**Mental Health and Suicide Prevention for Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families**](https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/veterans-mental-health-suicide-prevention.html)Review those resources highlighted by the presenters along with the list above, and identify those you would like to explore for further library staff learning, and others you would like to provide to your patrons on mental health and suicide prevention. Consider resources to include on your library’s website or print resources, perhaps in an area created just for Veterans and their families. Even just adding the Veterans Crisis Line logo to your website, can help [Spread the Word](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/find-resources/spread-the-word/) about suicide prevention. **Explore further for library staff learning:**1. **Racial Literacy**

 **Provide to patrons:**1. **Mak**
2. **ing the Case for Racial Literacy**
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| **Action Plan: (include next steps, when, who, etc.)** |

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