

Dear VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives,

The health and well-being of our nation's Veterans is our highest priority. Suicide is a national public health concern, and a coordinated effort at the federal, state, and local levels is key to saving lives. The goal of VA's suicide prevention efforts is not to enroll every Veteran in VA care, but rather to equip communities to help Veterans get the right care, whenever and wherever they need it.

This means using prevention approaches that include all sectors in which Veterans interact; service organizations, state and local leaders, medical professionals, criminal justice officials, private employers, faith-based communities, and many other stakeholders. Put simply, VA must work to ensure suicide prevention is a part of every aspect of Veterans' lives, not just their interactions with VA.

In support of that effort, Manchester VA is participating in the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families. An interagency team of military and civilian leaders from NH joined together to develop a comprehensive plan to implement promising and evidenced based practices to prevent suicide. Members of this team will take part in a policy academy facilitated by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) with the purpose of recommending changes at the state policy-level.

Additionally, VISN 1 will be hosting a suicide prevention conference in June in Concord, NH to strengthen our collaboration with our community partners, and provide training to enhance knowledge of available resources to assist Veterans in getting the best possible care, in and out of VA.

VA Suicide Prevention efforts adopt a broad public health approach to serve all Veterans. Manchester VA also provides recovery-oriented care that is based on each Veteran's unique needs. VA Enrolled Veterans assessed as a high clinical risk for suicide are offered enhanced care with frequent appointments for treatment, support, and risk assessment.

VA's REACH VET program uses predictive analytics to identify Veterans with high statistical risk for suicide. When identified, the Veteran's team will review care and reach out to the Veteran to ensure s/he is engaged in care that meets the his/her needs. Veterans who call the Veterans Crisis Line

(1-800-273-8255, press 1) are offered referrals to Manchester VA's local suicide prevention coordinators who are able to provide additional support and connect the Veterans with care. Our suicide prevention coordinators also provide outreach and education for the community about prevention programs and resources, and are available to come to your agency/organization to offer training on how to recognize signs of someone in crisis and what to say and do to help the person.

Through the national Suicide Risk Management Consultation Program, VA also offers free, one-on-one consultation for any community provider working with Veterans. These consultations can address specific questions about suicide risk management. Additionally, VA's Coaching into Care program is available to educate and empower family members or friends seeking care for a Veteran and can provide information on services available at VA or locally in their community. Family and friends of Veterans are also able to call the Veterans Crisis Line, available 24/7, when they believe their loved one is in crisis.

We appreciate your partnership in working to prevent Veteran suicide. If you have any questions or would like additional information about any initiatives or resources discussed above, please contact Beth Alves or Amy Frechette, for non-crisis Suicide Prevention Coordinator assistance at 603-624-4366 extension 2150 or 3271. **If you are concerned about a Veteran in crisis, please contact the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, press 1.**

With respect,

Al

Alfred A Montoya Jr., MHA, FACHE, VHA-CM
Medical Center Director
Manchester VA Medical Center
Assistant Professor of Medicine, Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth
718 Smyth Road
Manchester, NH 03104
603-624-4366 Ext 6004
203-500-2983 (bb)
www.accesstocare.va.gov