Veteran suicide awareness article for community organization newsletter, local newspapers or blogs, church bulletins, or to share on personal blogs or social media. This article can be edited and modified to adapt to the publication source.

# We Must Work Together to Prevent Veteran Suicide.

The military is not just a job. It is a way of life. Unlike any other profession, the military is immersed in all aspects of a Service Member’s existence. Family, work, health, housing, and social structure, among other important characteristics of life, are largely impacted by service. In addition, family members of those in the military serve alongside their loved ones, and military service affects the entire family unit.

In our community, efforts can be made to support Veterans, military members, and their families and help address common challenges they may experience. Understanding and promoting the positive influences of military culture and acknowledging common challenges faced by those with military experience can help prevent suicide. This supportive network includes all members of the community and is not limited to those in the medical or mental health care professions. Reducing suicide requires a multi-faceted approach and there’s room for everyone at the table.

Based on information from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, military members at increased risk for suicide include those younger than 34 years old; women; individuals who identify as American Indian; and those in a period of transition or with previous exposure to suicide who have access to lethal means.

However, those who serve in the military also have several protective factors in their favor.These traitsinclude resilience, a sense of belonging and purpose through military service, access to VA mental health care and care for substance use disorders, and positive coping skills learned in high-stress settings.

Whether you’re a spouse, family member, or friend of a service member or Veteran, you may be the first to recognize changes in mood and behavior, such as expressions of anger, becoming withdrawn or isolating from others, showing signs of emotional pain, or increasing use of alcohol or drugs. No matter your relationship, you have a vital role in supporting their wellbeing and preventing a crisis.

Demonstrating concern and genuinely expressing interest can make a significant difference during a challenging time. Letting the person know they are cared for increases connectedness, an important protective factor against suicide. Willingness to talk about difficult emotions and thoughts of suicide reduces stigma around mental health and increases help-seeking behavior.

Anyone who cares deeply about this issue who lives or works in the **[Name of County]** County region is encouraged to participate in the Northwest Pennsylvania (NW PA) Veteran Suicide Prevention Program. This initiative is a collaborative effort between healthcare and behavioral health partners, community organizations, and Veterans groups designed to reduce Veteran suicide attempts, injuries, and deaths. This program aims to improve access to treatment and support services, increase awareness of suicide risk, and offer suicide prevention activities and training opportunities to all interested members of our community.

To learn more and get involved, visit the NW PA Veteran Suicide Prevention website at [theresilientveteran.org](https://www.theresilientveteran.org/).

**Need Help? Know Someone Who Does?** Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or use the online [Lifeline Crisis Chat](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/). Both are free and confidential. You’ll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor in your area.

The Veterans Crisis Line is available to Vets and families at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1), text to 838255, or chat online at the [Veterans Crisis Line](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/).

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