

MONTHLY REPORT

Northwest Pennsylvania Veteran Suicide Prevention Program

Funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program

December 2022

Program Overview

The Northwest Pennsylvania Veteran Suicide Prevention Program (NWPASVPP) is a five-year collaborative effort between federal and state-level entities, community-level service providers, and organizational experts in suicide prevention to create significant and lasting change in the 15-county region by August 2025. Funding is through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program. This report outlines key findings and recommendations based on data collected for the NWPASVPP as of December 31, 2022.

The program aims to reduce Veteran suicide attempts and death by an average of 10% over five years (2020-2025) using a three-tiered approach of community, healthcare, and upstreaming. Goals include increasing awareness of suicide risk, promoting community connection and resilience, and improving the delivery of suicide care. Each tier has its own reporting section within this document.

TIERS	PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering suicide awareness and interventional trainings Promoting connection within communities
HEALTHCARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing healthcare provider military cultural competency Streamlining procedures for screening, intervention, and referrals Emphasizing treatment options to prevent reattempts
UPSTREAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing awareness of existing mental health parity laws Improving coordination of physical, behavioral, and mental health care

To review the methodology for this report, including data collection and analysis details, please contact the NWPASVPP Program Manager, [Katie Krancevich](#). Additional information can be found on the [NWPASVPP website](#), the Resilient Veteran.

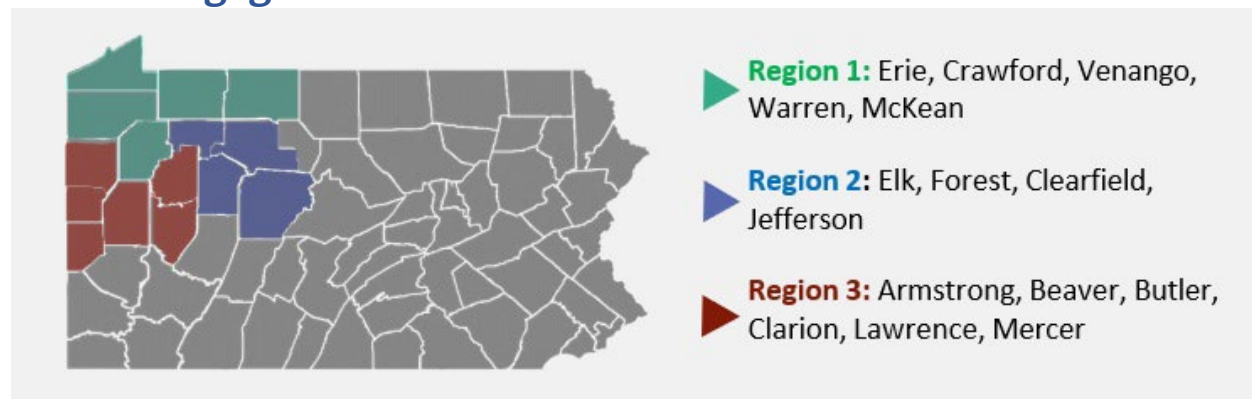
December 2022 Highlights

- **Engagement:**
 - 9 partner meetings were held
 - **14/33 (42%)** Advisory Group members attended the December meeting
 - **14/14 (100%)** Advisory Group members completed meeting evaluations, with unanimous agreement that the meeting moved the project forward and they were glad they attended
- **Tier 1:**
 - **103** people attended gatekeeper training sessions (Annual goal: 600 gatekeepers trained)
- **Tier 2:**
 - Engaged with partnering site to progress data reporting processes
 - Identified several recruitment meeting opportunities for January 2023
- **Tier 3:**
 - **1** educational material about VA benefits eligibility for Military Sexual Trauma under internal review (Annual goal: 3 educational campaigns completed)
- **Data Collection:**
 - Continued engagement with county coroners to encourage reporting of suicide death data
- **Evaluation:**
 - Completed **1** Key Informant Interview (KII)

Next Steps

- **Engagement:**
 - Reassess Advisory Group member engagement and seek new membership opportunities
- **Tier 1:**
 - Schedule a Region 2 training series on military culture and/or suicide prevention to occur in early 2023
- **Tier 2:**
 - Develop a new draft of the partnering site data report in early 2023
 - Recruit an additional healthcare site to participate in early 2023
- **Tier 3:**
 - Finalize an educational material about VA benefits eligibility for Military Sexual Trauma in early 2023
- **Data Collection:**
 - Finalize agreements with VA VISN4 MIRECC in early 2023
 - Recruit an additional county coroner to participate in early 2023
- **Evaluation:**
 - Determine additional stakeholders to complete KIIs in early 2023

Partner Engagement



PERU is working to enhance local suicide prevention, intervention, and response efforts and work to address gaps in efforts or services. Implementation is being phased across three geographic regions selected based on resource availability and existing healthcare and community partnerships. Currently, implementation efforts are focused on Regions 1 and 2. The program's outreach and engagement strategy aims to build and maintain positive relationships with community partners in each county to support implementation efforts. The *Partner Meetings Table* below represents the number and types of meetings held in December.

Region 1 Summary

- Engagement efforts in December focused on planning a training symposium with safety and justice officials scheduled in February 2023.

Region 2 Summary

- Engagement efforts in December continued with county coalitions and justice officials to discuss scheduling a local training series on military culture and/or suicide prevention in early 2023.

Region 3 Summary

Due to the program's phased implementation approach, engagement in Region 3 will begin in September 2023.

Partner Meetings in December 2022

Entity Type & Meeting Purpose	Meeting (#)
Advisory Group Partners: Project Planning	2
Community Stakeholders: Continued Engagement	1
County Coalitions/Task Forces: Continued Engagement	2
Healthcare Partners: Recruitment/Engagement	3
State-Level Agencies: Continued Engagement	1
Total	9

Meeting Outcomes

- The December Advisory Group meeting included an end-of-year recap and discussion of early 2023 project goals.
- A total of 14 out of 33 members external to the PERU team (42%) attended the December Advisory Group meeting.

Tier 1: Community Activities

Tier 1 activities target three community-based interventions:

1. Creating protective environments by reducing access to lethal means among Veterans.
2. Identifying and supporting people at risk through implementing gatekeeper training for community members and Veterans.
3. Promoting connectedness through community greening and engagement activities.

Safe Storage Update

Distributing gun locks at events and trainings began in August 2022. The following table provides monthly and year-to-date (YTD) distribution amounts.

Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	YTD
50	32	358	95	0	535

Gatekeeper Training Update

In December, 63 individuals attended a QPR (Question. Persuade. Refer) training and 40 individuals attended a Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) training.

The following table provides monthly and YTD amounts for the total number of gatekeepers trained.

Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
40	113	179	89	19	91	34	146	85	103	899

Community Greening Update

A day of Equine Assisted Activities (EAA) for Veterans at Storm Harbor Equestrian Center in Butler County is scheduled for January 2023. Throughout December, the program team continued to work with the Butler VA Medical Center and other local partners to coordinate registration, transportation, and other logistics for this event.

Tier 2: Healthcare Activities

Tier 2 activities target healthcare-based interventions:

1. Strengthening access and delivery of suicide care through implementing system change initiatives in healthcare systems.
2. Identifying and supporting people at risk through implementing gatekeeper training for providers and treatment to prevent reattempts.

Healthcare Recruitment – Next Steps:

- The implementation team is reviewing potential support services for UPMC emergency department support and will determine a course of action by the end of 2022.
- The implementation team rescheduled the Meadville Medical Center meeting to January 2023, and will also meet with UPMC primary care practices on January 10th and Allegheny Health Network (AHN) on January 16th.

Healthcare Implementation Updates

- In December, the program team worked with PHN Wayne Primary Care (Erie County) representatives to improve the data export.
- The implementation team sent PHN a proposal for 2023 activities, including utilization of the monthly data report, protocol development, and quality improvement initiatives.

Tier 3: Upstream Activities

Tier 3 activities target upstream (policy) interventions: Raise awareness and educate healthcare providers and community members about upstream suicide prevention strategies and mental health parity.

Upstream Implementation Updates

The new educational material about VA benefits eligibility for Military Sexual Trauma is under internal review and will be shared with external partners by the end of 2022. To learn more, visit the Program's website for information about [Pennsylvania's mental health parity laws](#).

Data Collection Updates

PERU collaborates with county coroners to collect and analyze county- and municipality-level suicide mortality data among adults. This surveillance data will be used to identify in as close to real-time as possible the factors associated with regional suicide deaths, study the impact of the project interventions on community suicide rates, and apply a psychological autopsy methodology for Veteran decedents from which potential suicide risk and protective factors will be identified.

- 3 coroners, Erie, Mercer, and Venango Counties have committed to partnership and submit quarterly data related to the suicide deaths in their respective counties.
- No known Veteran suicide deaths have occurred in either Erie (34 suicide deaths to date), Mercer (8 suicide deaths to date), or Venango (4 suicide deaths to date) Counties.
- During December, the implementation team continued engaging with the 10 county coroners to solidify ≥ 1 additional partnership by early 2023.

PERU and the Veterans Affairs VISN4 Mental Illness Research Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC), under the direction of Dr. Gretchen Haas, are working together to share deidentified electronic health record information for Veterans who screen positive for suicide risk. PERU will use this information to understand better healthcare utilization preceding and following a positive suicide risk screen. Additionally, VISN4 MIRECC will help to certify the Veteran status of suicide decedents involved in the psychological autopsy protocol.

- The budget plans to support these efforts are nearing completion. VISN4 MIRECC and PERU will meet in January 2023 to finalize the budget.
- Once these agreements are in place, this report will include progress updates on data transfer planning and facilitation.

Program Evaluation

Meeting Evaluations

- Real-time meeting evaluation polls gather feedback from Advisory Group members following the monthly meeting.
- The poll asks members to rate agreement (Yes/No) on two questions (below) about the content and relevance of the meeting. An open-ended comment space was also included.
 - "Today's meeting moved the project forward."
 - "I'm glad I attended this meeting."
- A total of 14 attendees out of 14 responded to the evaluation (100%).
- This month, there was unanimous agreement with both statements for the Advisory Group meeting.
- Six qualitative comment was collected and positively remarked on the progress of the project and the focus of the meeting.

Key Informant Interviews

- Key informant interviews (KIIs) are conducted quarterly to gather stakeholder feedback on PERU's project management and leadership, quality and strength of partnerships, and communication and data reporting.
- A total of 3 KIIs were completed in November and December 2022. The project team will request additional partners to participate in a KII in early 2023.

Training Evaluations

- Training evaluations are administered to stakeholders following every training. They are used to inform continuous quality improvement efforts and assist the program implementation team in identifying improvement areas for training delivery.
- A full analysis of training evaluation data is conducted twice per year. The next analysis will occur in spring 2023.

Suicide Awareness and Perceptions Survey

- The Suicide Awareness and Perceptions Survey is used to track community attitudes and perceptions concerning suicide to provide evidence of increased awareness of suicide over time.
- A full analysis of survey data is conducted twice per year. The next analysis will occur in spring 2023.