

MONTHLY REPORT

Northwest Pennsylvania Veteran Suicide Prevention Program

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

November 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 November 30, 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.

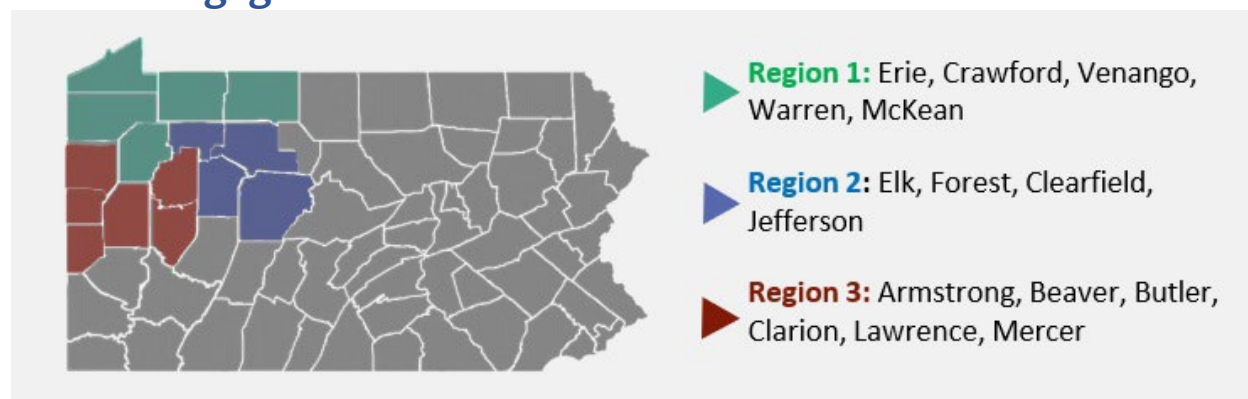
November 2022 Highlights

- **Engagement:**
 - **11** partner meetings were held
 - **14/33 (42%)** Advisory Group members attended the November meeting
 - **12/14 (86%)** Advisory Group members completed meeting evaluations, with unanimous agreement that the meeting moved the project forward and they were glad they attended
 - **3** stakeholders attended the November Journal Club
- **Tier 1:**
 - **95** gun locks were distributed (Annual goal: 360 locks distributed)
 - **85** people attended gatekeeper training sessions (Annual goal: 600 gatekeepers trained)
 - **15** community members attended an Introduction to Moral Injury training
- **Tier 2:**
 - Engaged with partnering site to progress data reporting processes
 - Identified several recruitment meeting opportunities for December 2022 and 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:**
 - **1** additional county coroner (Mercer County) began providing data to PERU
- **Evaluation:**
 - **2** Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted

Next Steps

- **Engagement:**
 - Identify a new meeting time for the monthly journal club that will allow for more stakeholder participation in 2023
- **Tier 1:**
 - Distribute 30 gun locks in December
 - 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 by the end of 2022
 - Recruit an additional healthcare site to participate by the end of 2022
- **Tier 3:**
 - Finalize an educational material about VA benefits eligibility for Military Sexual Trauma by the end of 2022
- **Data Collection:**
 - Finalize agreements with VA VISN4 MIRECC by the end of 2022
 - Recruit an additional county coroner to participate by the end of 2022
- **Evaluation:**
 - Complete Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) in November and December 2022

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 November.

Region 1 Summary

- In November, the program team attended a National Rural Health Day event in Venango County along with a variety of vendors to share information about the program and learn about local health and community resources.
- A training symposium with Erie County justice and safety stakeholders is scheduled for February 2023.

Region 2 Summary

- Engagement efforts in November 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

- Although Region 3 engagement is officially scheduled to begin next year, the program team is constantly seeking opportunities to create new partnerships throughout NW PA. In November, the program team attended a Stand Down event in Butler County to promote the program and learn about services, supports, and resources for Veterans and other community members.

Partner Meetings in November 2022

Entity Type & Meeting Purpose	Meeting (#)
Advisory Group Partners: Project Planning	2
Community Stakeholders: Continued Engagement	4
County Coalitions/Task Forces: Continued Engagement	2
Healthcare Partners: Recruitment/Engagement	1
Safe Storage Partners: Continued Engagement	1
State-Level Agencies: Continued Engagement	1
Total	11

Meeting Outcomes

- The November Advisory Group meeting included updates on implementation and evaluation activities and discussions of local stakeholder engagement and healthcare partner recruitment strategies.

- A total of 14 out of 33 members external to the PERU team (42%) attended the November Advisory Group meeting.
- The November Journal Club discussion focused on Transition Assistance Programs and Post-Military Separation Outcomes.
- A total of 3 attendees external to the PERU team attended the November Journal Club meeting. PERU will identify a new meeting date and time to increase participation beginning in January 2023.

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.

Tier 1 Highlight: Community Engagement Event

On November 16, 2022, the program team presented an Introduction to Moral Injury training to staff and residents of Lutheran Senior Life – Passavant Community in Butler County. The training was well received by attendees, including several Veterans, who were able to openly discuss their lived experiences with moral injury. The training was also highlighted by a local news outlet, [read the article](#) on the Program’s website.

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	YTD
50	32	358	95	535

Gatekeeper Training Update

In November, 59 individuals attended a QPR (Question. Persuade. Refer) training and 26 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	Total
40	113	179	89	19	91	34	146	85	796

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 November, 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 will meet with Meadville Medical Center on December 22nd, UPMC primary care practices on January 10th, Allegheny Health Network (AHN) on January 16th.
- The implementation team will develop a value proposition document to be used for recruitment efforts moving forward by the end of 2022.

Healthcare Implementation Updates

- In November, the program team worked with PHN Wayne Primary Care (Erie County) representatives to improve the data export.
- By the end of 2022, the program team will send PHN a proposal for 2023 activities, including utilization of the monthly data report, protocol development, and quality improvement initiatives.
- During November, the VA Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) 4, reviewed the template referral protocol to assist primary care sites with referrals to outpatient mental/behavioral health services for Veteran patients. This resource will begin internal review by the end of 2022.

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 November and December, the implementation team will continue 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 plans to submit its requested budget amounts to PERU by the end of 2022.
- 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 12 attendees out of 14 responded to the evaluation (86%).
- This month, there was unanimous agreement with both statements for the Advisory Group meeting.
- Five 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.
- The next round of KIIs will occur in November and December 2022.

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.