



Hospital Bulletin August 2018



Hello Brothers and Sisters. I must apologize for being so late with this bulletin. I attended the National convention in Kansas City and then went on to Michigan to visit my Mom and siblings. I am back home and back on track with the VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program and helping our veterans.

I will focus this bulletin on the third goal of the Hospital Program, Veteran & Military Suicide Awareness and Prevention.

Many Veterans may not show any sign of intent to harm themselves before doing so, but some actions can be a sign that a person needs help. Veterans in crisis may show behaviors that indicate a risk of self-harm. The following can all be **warning signs**:

- Appearing sad or depressed most of the time
- Hopelessness: feeling like there is no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling as if there is no reason to live
- Feeling excessive guilt, shame, or sense of failure
- Rage or anger. Showing violent behavior
- Losing interest in hobbies, work, or school
- Increasing alcohol or drug misuse
- Neglecting personal welfare; a deteriorating physical appearance
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Giving away prized possessions
- Getting affairs in order, tying up loose ends, or writing a will

The following signs require immediate attention:

- Thinking about hurting or killing themselves
- Looking for ways to kill themselves
- Talking about death, dying or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, weapons, etc.

We all can take action to help prevent suicide, but many of us don't know what we can do to support the Veteran or Service member who is going through a difficult time. A simple act of kindness can help someone feel less alone. Suicide prevention can start with one simple act of support: BE THERE (www.veteranscrisisline.net/BeThere)

Veterans, Active Duty Service members, or their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, send a text message to 838255 or chat online (<http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ChatTermsOfService.aspx?account=Veterans%20Chat>) to receive free, confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. They do not need to be registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care.

The responders at the Veterans Crisis Line are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances. Crisis feels different for everybody and can stem from a wide range of situations. Some veterans are coping with aging, stress, or lingering effects stemming from their military service, which were never addressed. Many recent Veterans have difficulty with their relationships or the transition back to civilian life.

Here is a little background information on the Crisis Line. The Veterans Crisis Line went live on July 25, 2007. The first call received was at 11:20 AM. The Hotline was based in Canandaigua VA Medical Center in upstate New York. It began with 4 phone lines and 14 responders. It partnered with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)/Lifeline. Since then, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered nearly 3 million calls and initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in crisis nearly 82,000 times. The anonymous online chat service, which was added in 2009, has engaged in more than 354,000 chats. In November 2011, the Crisis Line introduced a text-messaging service to provide another way for Veterans to connect with confidential round-the-clock support and since then has responded to more than 75,000 texts.

The VFW and VFW Auxiliary are committed to helping change the conversation and stigma surrounding mental health in America. Make a difference in the life of a veteran or service member in crisis by educating yourself and others about the warning signs of suicide. Go to www.va.gov/health for more detailed information and resources. Wear the VFW Auxiliary's symbol, The Blue Teardrop Sticker, to open conversations and create awareness for veteran and military suicide.

Upcoming Events_(The Perfect way to build up Volunteer Hours, (hint, hint) ☺)

September 15, 2018 – Hospital North Picnic -- 11:00 AM
Livermore VAMC, Community Living Center, 4951 Arroyo Road, Livermore, CA 94550

September 16-21, 2018 – National Disabled Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, San Diego, CA
Volunteers are always needed. Contact: Teresa Parks; 858642-6426: teresa.parks@va.gov

September 21-24, 2018 -- Veteran Stand Down –Tibor Ruben VAMC, Long Beach

September 24, 2018 – Hospital South Picnic -- 11:00 AM
West LA VAMC, 11301 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90073

October 7, 2018 – Hospital Central Picnic– 11:00 AM
Fresno VAMC, 2615 E. Clinton Ave., Fresno, CA 93703

Every 4th Friday of the Month-Veterans Social Connection, Tibor Rubin VAMC, Bldg. 165,
Canteen Back Patio, 8:30 – 10:30 AM, 5901 E. 7th Street, Long Beach, CA

Please keep the 2018-19 Hospital Team informed of any and all Hospital Events in your area, so that we can get the information out to the entire department.

Respectfully submitted
Chris Schmaltz
Department of California
Hospital Chairman

