

Risk Reduction

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2023 Statewide Symposium in Support of Service Members, Veterans & Their Families

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 arizona coalition
for military families



Risk Reduction

April 20, 2023



The Upstream Approach to Suicide Prevention

Briefing I



Welcome!

Speakers & Facilitators



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Learning Objectives

- What is the Upstream Approach?
- Defining Suicide
- Understanding Risk Factors and Protective Factors
- Data, Statistics, and Trends

Before we begin . . .

Suicide can be an intense topic.

- Please watch for triggers and practice self care.
- If you need to step out of the room for any reason, please give us a ‘thumbs up’ if you’re okay, otherwise someone from our team will head out to check on you.

Upstream Approach & Risk Reduction



Upstream prevention means earlier intervention to positively impact the whole health of service members and veterans. When a crisis is happening, the people surrounding the crisis are in a state of reaction. By using proactive outreach to engage and support service members, veterans and their families, there is a reduction in self-injurious behaviors and suicide gestures, attempts and deaths. This session will teach methods of proactive engagement in the upstream approach, safety practices and how to respond to and help someone who may be experiencing thoughts of suicide.



suicide

verb

1. Death caused by self-directed violence with an intent to die.
2. Is preventable.



Suicide Data & Statistics

In 2021 over 48,000 people died by suicide in the United States. That is one death every 11 minutes.

Suicide rates increased 37% between 2000-2018 and decreased 5% between 2018-2020. However, rates nearly returned to their peak in 2021.

Firearms are the most common method used in suicides, accounting for over 50% of deaths.



Veteran Suicide Data & Statistics

In 2020, 6,146 veterans died by suicide. Suicide was the 13th leading cause of death among veterans overall, and the second leading cause of death among veterans under age 45.

Veterans have an adjusted suicide rate that is 57.3% greater than the non-veteran U.S. adult population.

Nearly 70% of veteran suicides involve firearms.



What can we do?

INCREASE Protective Factors

AND

DECREASE Risk Factors

MythBusters - A Risk Factors Game

Seven tables for seven risk factors:

- Demographics - Connie
- Mental health issues - Nicki
- Substance abuse - Nicki
- Access to lethal means - Connie
- Social/relationship issues - Dean
- Financial and employment challenges - Martin
- Basic needs – Joy

Mythbusters - A Risk Factors Game



People at Greater Risk of Suicide

Demographics

In the US:

- Men ages 85 and older have the highest rate of any group in the US
- Youth and young adults: Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people between 10 to 24
- Middle-aged men, have the highest rate of suicide compared to other groups. 80% of all deaths by suicide in the U.S. are among men age 45-54.
- Young American Indian males—especially in the Northern Plains—are at high risk for suicide compared to other groups.
- LGBTQ
- Anyone can be at risk

Demographics

In the Military/Veteran population:

- 18-25 year-olds
- Enlisted
- Male
- All minority groups

Mental Health Issues

- Prior attempts of suicide
- History of abuse, family violence, neglect, or trauma
- Medical issues such as chronic pain
- Mental health challenges such as depression
- Family history of suicide
- Impulsiveness and aggressiveness
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Severe or prolonged stress or combat-related psychological injuries
- Overwhelming grief from a loss (death of a loved one, divorce, disabling injury, etc.)
- Trauma - PTSD
- Moral injuries
- Stigma associated with asking for help

Substance Abuse

- Acquaintance assault and rape
- DUI/DWI arrests and other legal issues
- Falls, drowning, and other injuries
- Medical issues
- Relationship problems
- Problems with work, mission, or school performance
- Sexually-transmitted infections including AIDS; and unwanted or unplanned sexual experiences and pregnancy
- Developing tolerance, dependence or addiction
- Death from alcohol poisoning or alcohol-related injury

Mental Health/Substance Issues

- Ask about suicide and/or risk!
- Listen without judgment
- Assess treatment level and risk mitigation: eg, detox needed or hospitalization
- Access mental health resources and other services
- Create a network of resources and individuals for support and safety
- Take medications and attend services as prescribed
- Address social determinants of health
- Create a follow-up system or follow up personnel/groups

Access to Lethal Means

- Unsecured firearms
- Knives and other sharps
- Stockpiling or having multiple medications

Access to Lethal Means

- When lethal means are made less available or less deadly, suicide rates by that method decline
- Unsecured firearms:
 - Lock up firearms and ensure the person at risk has no access to the key/combination
 - Gun locks
 - Store weapons away-from-home
 - Lock the ammunition separately, or keep ammunition out of the home until the situation improves
 - Disassemble the guns and store a critical part like the slide or firing pin locked or away from home
- Knives and other sharps
- Stockpiling or having multiple medications:
 - Safely dispose of unused, expired, and unwanted medications
 - Lock abuse-prone medications like opioids, anxiety pills, muscle relaxants, amphetamines, sedatives, and barbiturates
 - Keep small quantities of those medications the family needs on hand

Social / Relationship

- Withdrawing or isolating themselves
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Loss from deaths and/or suicides among family or community
- Loss of, or problems within, a close relationship
- Divorce
- Poor social support system
- Transition from military to civilian life
- Children or spouses with special needs

Social / Relationship

- Connect to support systems: treatment groups, support groups, peers groups, or faith based groups
- Encourage volunteering
- Address spiritual needs
- Connect to interests, hobbies, and passions
- Encourage couples counseling or family counseling or retreats

Financial and Employment

- Owing money from debt or gambling
- Not paying bills on time
- Spending unwisely
- Taking out loans to cover bills; e.g., PayDay Loans
- Difficulty re-adjusting following deployment
- Lack of advancement
- Having a sense of a loss of honor due to a disciplinary action
- No job or underemployed
- Lack of interview skills, a resume, and/or dress clothes

Financial and Employment

- Connect to local financial help programs
- Educate on financial literacy
- Connect to employment skills programs where help can be given with resume building, interview skills, and dress attire

Basic Needs

- Unemployed or underemployed
- Limited access to health care
- Homeless or housing insecurity
- Food insecurity
- No or unreliable transportation

Basic Needs

- Connect to social programs that help with basic needs; e.g., Be Connected, 211, and others.

- Where to find them
 - What they can tell us
 - How to use them to inform change

Q & A



Session Evaluation

We want to hear from you!

