

# OUR PLAN

- Identify Service Members, Veterans, and their Families wherever they are, and screen for suicide risk
- Promote connectedness and improve care transitions, making it easy to locate and access necessary resources to support our SMVF
- Increase lethal means safety and safety planning through a targeted educational approach for health care professionals and access to the needed safety strategies

# OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Convened a team of over 25 policy-level decision makers and stakeholders that are working together to implement suicide prevention best policies and practices for SMVF.
- Developing a Vermont Ask the Question toolkit to implement a common definition and practice to identify SMVF served to determine eligibility for services, identify risk factors and get a complete medical history, and to provide information on resources
- Developing a statewide resource map to promote connectedness by increasing awareness of existing resources for SMVF to facilitate access to care across systems.
- Implementing in-hospital outreach and education to increase the use of safety plans in Emergency Departments and distributed over 800 gunlocks.

# KEY DATA POINTS

- Vermont loses an average of 18 veterans to suicide each year.
- Older Vermont veterans (65+) account for the highest numbers of death by suicide but the highest rate of veteran death by suicide is for those between 18-34.
- 78% of veterans who die by suicide use a firearm.
- Rural counties account for most veteran suicide deaths (84%).

*If you or someone you know is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide dial or text 988 or chat online at **988lifeline.org**, for confidential support available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. If you are a Service Member, Veteran, or Family Member **Dial 988 then Press 1**, chat online at **VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**, or text **838255** for the Military and Veterans Crisis Line.*

*For more information on suicide prevention resources in Vermont, please visit: [facingsuicideVT.com](http://facingsuicideVT.com)*

*For more information on firearm safety storage and gunlocks, please visit: [GunSafeVT.org](http://GunSafeVT.org)*

*For more information on this initiative, contact Vermont Governor's Challenge Team Leads **Monica Hutt** ([monica.hutt@vermont.gov](mailto:monica.hutt@vermont.gov)), **Alison Krompf** ([alison.krompf@vermont.gov](mailto:alison.krompf@vermont.gov)), and **Colonel Paul Rowe** ([paul.r.rowe.mil@army.mil](mailto:paul.r.rowe.mil@army.mil)).*

# VERMONT GOVERNOR'S CHALLENGE



*To Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families*

Suicide is a national public health concern that affects all Americans, including Veterans, their families, and their friends. All our nation's health systems and communities must work collectively using the best available information and practices to reduce suicide rates. Coordinated efforts at the federal, state, territory, and local levels are key to preventing Veteran suicide.

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# MISSION CONNECT VERMONT

Suicide is a national public health concern that affects all Americans, including **Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF)**, and those who love them. “In 2020, **Vermont veterans died at a rate 36% higher than the U.S. rate** (Vermont 43.0 vs. U.S. 31.7 per 100,000). In 2021, **Vermont veterans died at a rate 71% higher than Vermont non-veterans** (83.1 Veterans vs 23.7 non-Veterans per 100,000).”

Vermont’s team of dedicated partners work with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and with U.S. Department of Health & Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to identify innovative ways to deliver support and care to Service Members, Veterans, and Family Members whenever and wherever they need it. We do this by using a public health approach, combining community-based prevention strategies and evidence-based clinical interventions.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing suicide. We can all make a difference. Join us in making our community healthier and safer for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families.

# HELP SUPPORT OUR CAUSE

**Mission Connect Vermont** has recently released a survey to assist with our project. Our hope is to use this survey to better understand what resources our SMVF community currently utilizes, and what the gaps in those services are. We want to create an easy, confidential way for military families to identify and access whatever services they might need. To do this, we need your help.

**To access the survey scan the QR code below:**



*\*Please note Information gathered for this survey will be anonymous and will be used only to improve the resource information the Governor's Challenge Team is developing for our Service Members, Veterans and their Families.*

To thank you for your time, once you complete the survey, you can enter your email to win a prize!



# OUR TEAM

With the support of Governor Phil Scott and Adjutant General Gregory Knight, members of state government, the Vermont National Guard, the Veterans Administration, healthcare organizations, community partners, and military family members have come together to form the Vermont Governor’s Challenge team: **Mission Connect Vermont**.

In partnership with the VA and the SAMHSA, the Governor’s Challenge brings together teams from states all over the country to support Service Members, Veterans, and their Families.

**Mission Connect Vermont** is developing a strategic action plan to prevent SMVF suicide across the state. Through the partnership with VA and SAMHSA, we receive tools and technical assistance to get this done.

While we focus on education, information, and intervention as core components of Vermont’s overall suicide prevention efforts, critical to our success with **Mission Connect Vermont** is our focus on the specific challenges facing the SMVF population. We recognize the unique needs of SMVF – both during and after active deployment and as serving members of our Army and Air National Guard- and we want to build a system to prevent lives lost to death by suicide.

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