



# Reducing SI/SA/Suicides in Veterans By Destigmatizing Mental Health Care

## Community Outreach Project

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### Introduction

**Date:** 02 April 2022 0900-1130

**Location:** American Legion Regional meeting at the Elks Lodge in Burns, OR

**Target Audience:** Veterans

**Total Attendees:** 45

**Demographics:** Veteran leaders in the American Legion aged 28 to 88 years old with average age of 61.4 and 4:1 male to female

### Background/Content

#### General Population Statistics

- National rate of 13.9 suicides per 100,000
- US veteran suicide rate is 27.5 per 100,000
- For those Veterans known to have depression, the suicide rate is 66.4 per 100,000
- For those Veterans known to have anxiety, the suicide rate is 67.0 per 100,000

**BUT...Veterans who have reached out to the VA even once had a 2.4% reduction in suicides.**

**Take Aways:** Early effective mental health care reduces SI/SA and what we have been doing up to now has not been working.

### Discussion

#### Challenges

- Addressing years and decades of resistance and avoidance about mental health concerns in a traditionally stoic community

#### Opportunities

- Speaking to the leadership of a veteran's organization, people that have contact and influence over many veterans over the region and the country.

#### Observations

- Was told that the audience would likely not be very engaged, the exact opposite was true.

#### Evaluations

- The veterans learned not only how to help others in crisis but how to be proactive in preventing the crisis from occurring.
- Several identified areas in their own lives that resonated with examples given in stress reactions where mental health care would have helped.
- Many were appreciative to be made aware of the resources available to them and their peers.

**Special Thanks to the American Legion and all who have served**

### Conclusion

Recognition that help exists and that it is OK for the veteran to seek it out.

#### Surveyed Impact

- **76% Very likely** to change their behavior in recognizing and speaking about mental health. 12% Likely and 12% Neutral
- **71% Strongly Agreed** the topic was effectively taught and 29% Somewhat Agreed
- **88% Strongly Agreed** the presentation was done well and it was a valuable topic, with 12% Somewhat Agreeing.

### References/Acknowledgements

- 1)Grief on combat related posttraumatic stress disorder, guilt, suicide, and functional impairment in a clinical trial of post-9/11 service members and veterans [published correction appears in *Depress Anxiety*. 2020 Sep;37(9):944]. *Depress Anxiety*. 2020;37(1):63-72. doi:10.1002/da.229112020 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. ; 2020. <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2020/2020-National-Veteran-Suicide-Prevention-Annual-Report-11-2020-508.pdf>
- 2)Barnes SM, Monteith LL, Forster JE, et al. Developing Predictive Models to Enhance Clinician Prediction of Suicide Attempts Among Veterans With and Without PTSD. *Suicide Life Threat Behav*. 2019;49(4):1094-1104. doi:10.1111/sltb.12511
- 3)Suicide Prevention - Mental Health. [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov). Accessed September 7, 2021. [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/lethal-means/index.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/lethal-means/index.asp)
- 4)Hubers AAM, Moaddine S, Peersmann SHM, et al. Suicidal ideation and subsequent completed suicide in both psychiatric and non-psychiatric populations: a meta-analysis. *Epidemiol Psychiatr Sci*. 2018;27(2):186-198. doi:10.1017/S2045796016001049
- 5) Simon NM, Hoepfner SS, Lubin RE, et al. Understanding the impact of complicated