



Snapshot

Around-the-Clock Prevention Hotline Saves Lives plus New Internet Chat Service

As the military deals with a climbing suicide rate, VA reminds Veterans and the public that help is only a phone call away. Since July 2007, VA has **operated an around-the-clock suicide-prevention hotline** that has received more than 150,000 calls and has been credited with rescuing 4,000 people. The Department **operates the largest mental health program in the country**, and makes special effort at each of its 153 medical centers and more than 750 outpatient clinics to identify and treat at-risk patients. In addition to operating the suicide-prevention hotline, VA has given all



medical workers training in suicide prevention, established suicide prevention coordinators at each medical center, and given primary care clinics responsibility for mental health screening. New requests or referrals for mental health appointments receive a preliminary

evaluation within 24 hours and a comprehensive evaluation within 14 days. Emergency cases are dealt with immediately. VA Readjustment Counseling Centers -- **Vet Centers** -- in 232 communities offer Veterans counseling on a wide variety of issues. Vet Center personnel are trained to identify at-risk Veterans and to counsel and connect them to appropriate VA medical services.

Veterans Chat, an Internet adjunct to VA's Suicide Prevention program, is a relatively new service that has already helped many Veterans who have expressed their concerns regarding suicide to an online counselor. Though not intended for crisis response, live online Veterans Chat counselors work with Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline counselors to get Veterans the help they need. In one instance, a Veteran using the chat service was able to receive immediate assistance after being assessed by an online Chat counselor. Veterans Chat provides a **one-to-one Chat Service for those Veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance using the Internet**. Veterans, their families, and friends can go online and anonymously chat with a trained VA counselor. Both Veterans Chat and the Suicide Prevention Hotline are available 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. Veterans Chat is on the Lifeline suicide prevention [Web](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/) site at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/ under the Veterans/Veterans Resource Locator tab or at www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/. VA's suicide prevention hotline may be reached at 1-800-273-TALK.



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