



Department of Veterans Affairs and Community Partnerships: An Update

Pamela Staves, COL (Ret.) RN, MS, NP

VISN 19 Mental Illness Research
Education and Clinical Center

Military Suicide Research Consortium



Bridging The Divide Summit
May 20, 2011

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MIRECC of the VA Rocky Mountain Network (VISN 19)

Denver VAMC Announces Groundbreaking Research Initiative

Military Suicide Research Consortium

\$17 million grant awarded to the Military Suicide Research Consortium (MSRC)

Led by
Peter Gutierrez, Ph.D., VISN 19 MIRECC
and
Thomas Joiner, Ph.D., Florida State University



Mission:
The mission of the VISN 19 MIRECC is to study suicide with the goal of reducing suicidality in the veteran population. To carry out this mission members of the VISN 19 MIRECC will:



- Focus on cognitive and neurobiological underpinnings that may contribute to suicidality.
- Develop evidence-based educational and clinical materials to identify and optimally treat veterans who are suicidal.
- Provide consultation regarding assessment and treatment planning for highly suicidal veterans.
- Mentor researchers in the area of suicidology.
- Collaborate with others in the study and treatment of veterans who are at risk of suicide.

Click on any of the images above for more information.

Key Personnel

Lisa Brenner, Ph.D., ABPP
Director
Director of Education & Psychology Fellowship Director
303.399.8020 ext. 2571



Military Suicide Research Consortium (MSRC)

<http://www.msrc.fsu.edu/>

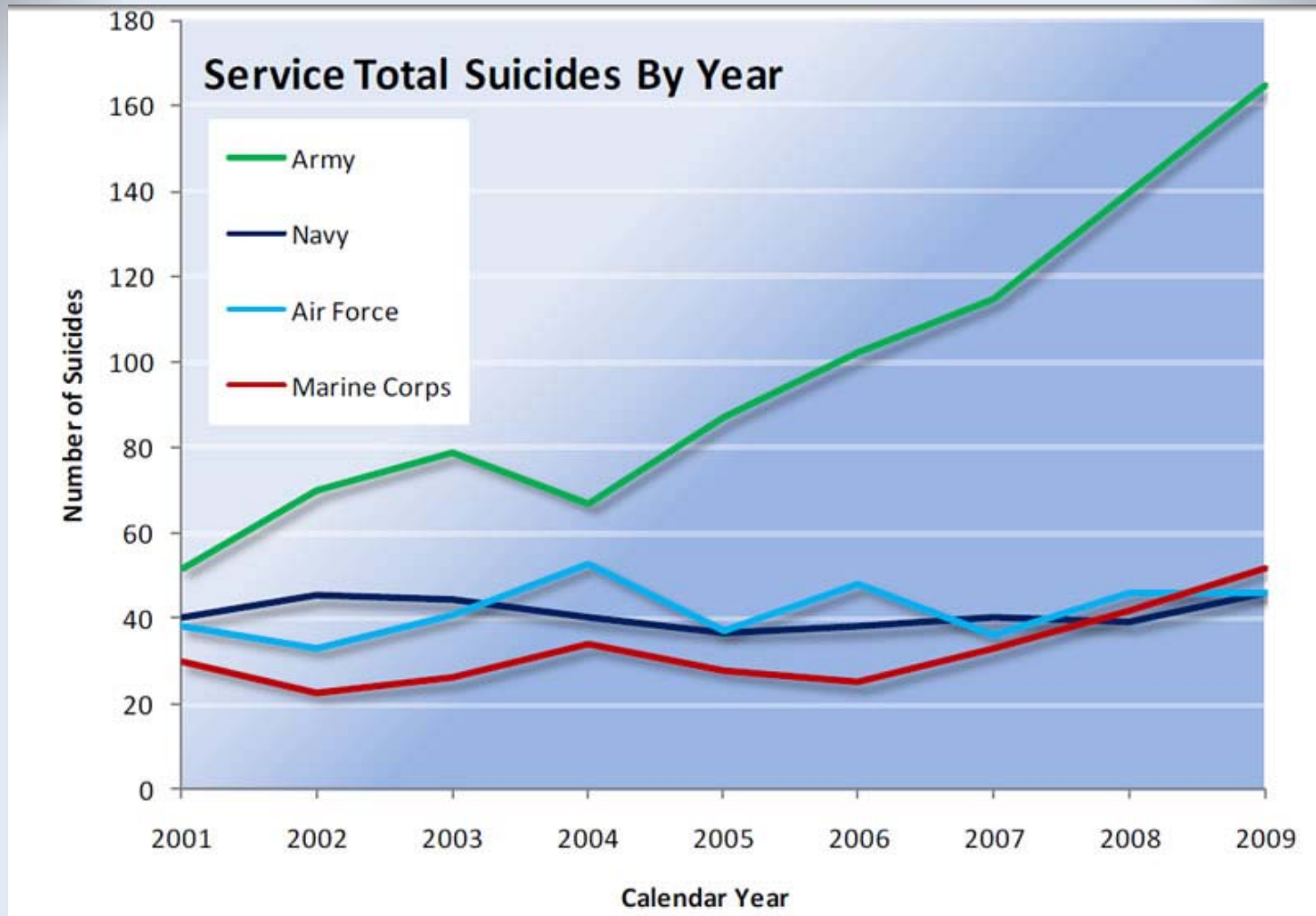
The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying the MSRC website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.msrc.fsu.edu/>. The website features a dark red header with the Florida State University logo on the left and the MIRECC logo on the right. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Home, About the Project, Announcements, Related Contents, Resources, Blog, Contact US, and Bibliogra. The main content area is titled "Welcome to the Military Suicide Research Consortium, a collaboration of the Florida State University and the VISN 19 MIRECC at the Denver Veterans Affairs Medical Center." Below this is a section titled "New Research Consortium to Study Military Suicide" with a date of "Fort Detrick, Md., October 24, 2010". The text describes the \$17 million consortium and its goals. A quote from Col. Carl Castro is also present. On the left side, there is a search bar, a user login section with fields for Username and Password, and a "Log in" button. Below that is a section for "Consortium Core Areas" with a link to "Administrative Core Directors: Thomas". On the right side, there are social media links for SHRRF, a "National Suicide Prevention Lifeline For Immediate Assistance CALL 1-800-273-TALK(8255) En Español 1-800-628-8454" box, and a "News Update NIMH" section with a link to "Army STARRS Preliminary Data Reveals Some Potential Predictive Factors for Suicide". The browser's status bar at the bottom shows "Internet" and "90%" zoom.

Objectives

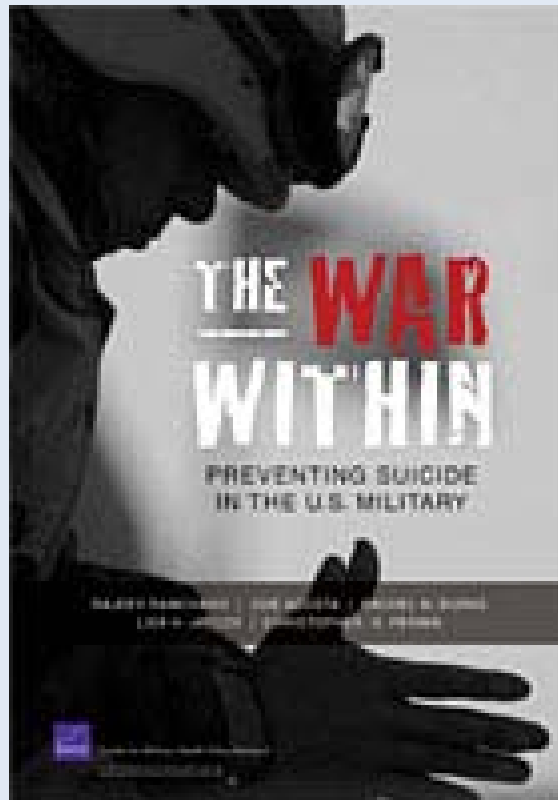
- Identify resources to learn about VA/DoD projects and research related to suicide
- Describe three “skills” from Battlemind Training that demonstrate an understanding of military culture
- Identify three products in development for the assessment, evaluation and treatment of suicidal behaviors

Suicide in the Military





<http://www.health.mil/dhb/downloads/Suicide%20Prevention%20Task%20Force%20final%20report%2008-23-10.pdf>





**The Challenge
and the Promise:
Strengthening the Force,
Preventing Suicide
and Saving Lives**

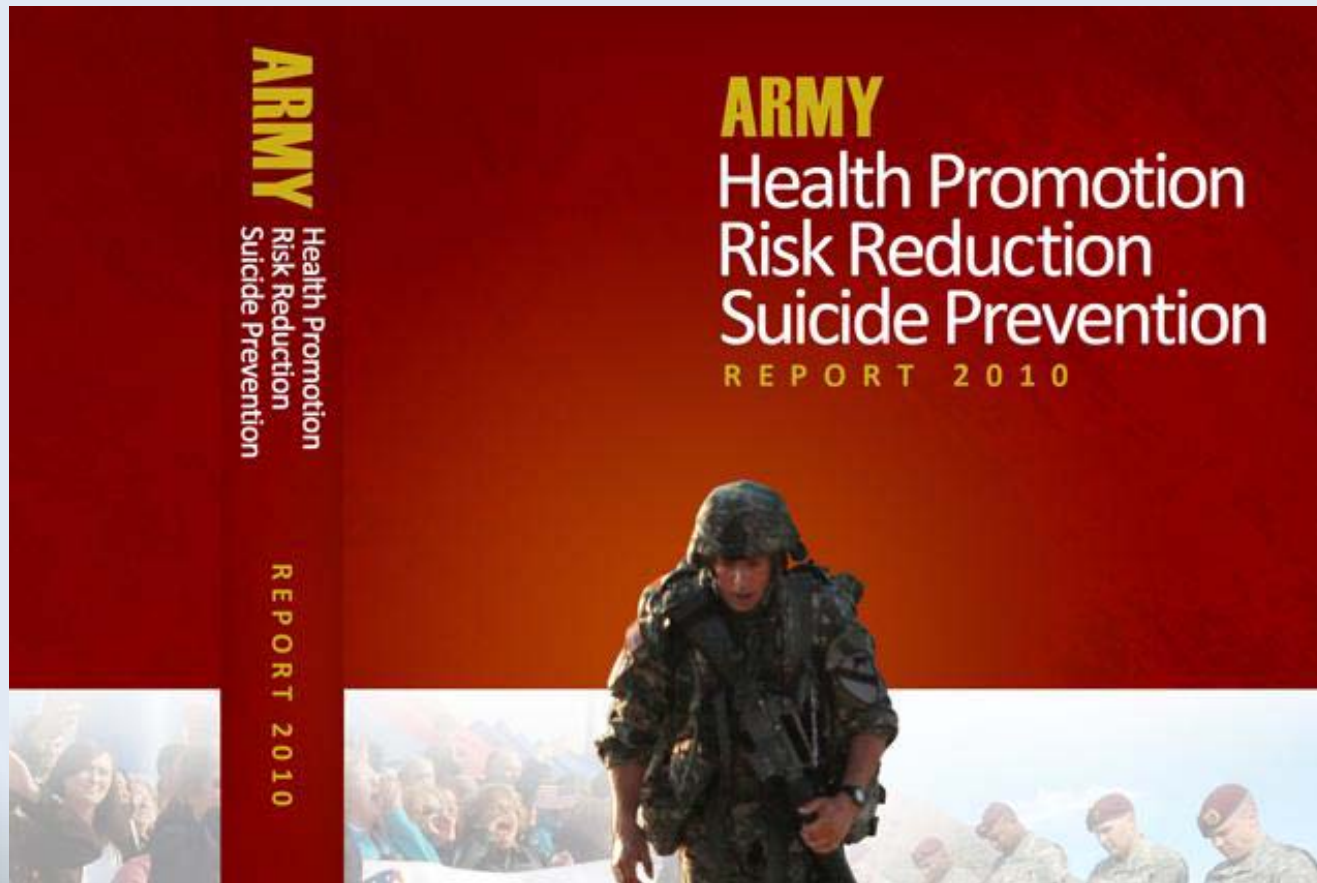
Final Report of the
Department of Defense
Task Force on the
Prevention of Suicide by
Members of the Armed Forces

August 2010



<http://www.health.mil/dhb/downloads/Suicide%20Prevention%20Task%20Force%20final%20report%2008-23-10.pdf>

<http://www.army.mil/news/2010/07/28/42934-army-health-promotion-risk-reduction-and-suicide-prevention-report/index.html>



Introduction to Military Culture

- Are there any military personnel/veterans present today?
- Does anyone present today have family or friends in the military?
- Is anyone present today involved in health care?
- What is the latest media report you've heard talking about military suicide?





Military Ranks

are more than just who salutes whom.
Military rank is a badge of leadership.
Responsibility for personnel, equipment, and
mission grows with each increase in rank.



United States Army
Values

Loyalty
Duty
Respect
Selfless-Service
Honor
Integrity
Personal Courage

HONOR
INTEGRITY, RESPONSIBILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY

COURAGE
DO THE RIGHT THING, IN THE RIGHT WAY,
FOR THE RIGHT REASONS

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
COMMITMENT
DEVOTION TO THE CORPS AND
MY FELLOW MARINES

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Core Values

Integrity First
Service Before Self
Excellence in all We Do

**Honor
Courage
Commitment**

HOMEPORT
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Honor, Respect, & Devotion to Duty

MISSION OPSEC VS. SECRETIVENESS

In Combat:

- You talk about the mission only with those who need to know; you can only talk about combat experiences with unit members.

At home:

- You may avoid sharing any of your deployment experiences with your family, spouse and friends.

TRANSITIONING THE COMBAT SKILL:

- OPSEC: the "need to know" now includes friends and family.

Battlemind Check (self and buddy):

- Haven't shared your deployment experiences with those closest to you?
- Get angry when someone asks about your deployment experiences?

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY VS. GUILT

In Combat:

- Your responsibility is to survive and do your best to keep your buddies alive.

At home:

- You may feel you have failed your buddies if they were killed or seriously injured.
- You may be bothered by memories of those wounded or killed.

TRANSITIONING THE COMBAT SKILL:

- Responsibility in combat involves making life and death decisions in the heat of battle; at home, it is learning from these decisions without second guessing.

Battlemind Check (self and buddy):

- Certain memories of the deployment keep bothering you?
- Still feeling guilt about things that happened in combat?

NON-DEFENSIVE (COMBAT) VS. AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

In Combat:

- Driving unpredictably, fast, using rapid lane changes, straddling the middle line and keeping other vehicles at a distance is designed to avoid IEDs and VBIEDs.

At home:

- Aggressive driving leads to speeding tickets, accidents and fatalities.

TRANSITIONING THE COMBAT SKILL:

- Combat driving is necessary to avoid danger in the combat zone, but is dangerous at home, even though it may "feel right".

Battlemind Check (self and buddy):

- Chasing adrenaline highs by driving fast?
- Involved in driving accidents?
- Easily angered while driving?

DISCIPLINE & ORDERING VS. CONFLICT

In Combat:

- Survival depends on discipline and obeying orders.

At home:

- Inflexible interactions (ordering and demanding behaviors) with your spouse, children and friends often lead to conflict.

TRANSITIONING THE COMBAT SKILL:

- Giving and following orders involves a clear chain of command which does not exist within families and friends.

Battlemind Check (self and buddy):

- Relationships are not going well?
- Ongoing conflicts over decisions?

THE ALCOHOL TRANSITION

In Combat:

- Alcohol use was limited.

At home:

- Alcohol is now plentiful.

THE TRANSITION:

- Many Soldiers use alcohol as a way to cope with deployment experiences, but this is not healthy. Learn to relax without it.

Battlemind Check (self and buddy):

- Using alcohol to calm down or help you sleep?
- Others telling you that you are drinking too much?

MYTHS & FACTS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Myth 1: Only weak Soldiers have mental health problems.

Fact: Everyone is affected by combat.

Myth 2: If a Soldier has a problem, he/she will get help.

Fact: Most Soldiers do not get help because of stigma.

Myth 3: A fellow Soldier's mental health problems are none of my business.

Fact: Soldiers most often turn to other Soldiers when they need help. Leaders are responsible for helping Soldiers.

Myth 4: The Army doesn't support Soldiers with mental health problems.

Fact: There are multiple ways to get help.

Myth 5: No one can help me if I have a mental health problem.

Fact: Professional treatment helps, the earlier the better.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Unit: Buddies, Leadership, Chaplain

Post: Troop Medical Clinic, Behavioral Health Service

Off-Post: Civilian Doctor or Mental Health Professional, VA

Army/Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647

www.armyonesource.com

Battlemind Training was developed by the WRAIR Land Combat Study Team

POC: LTC Carl A. Castro, carl.castro@us.army.mil (301) 319-9174

The opinions and views expressed here are those of the Land Combat Study Team, and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense.
Updated 15 Feb 06.

Battlemind Training II



Continuing the Transition Home



Training Timeframe: 3-6 months after deployment
(Reconstitution)



Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR)
U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command



The Transitioning Warrior

From “War zone” to “Home zone”

- **Battlemind** is the Servicemember’s inner strength to face fear and adversity in combat with courage.
- Combat skills and battle mindset sustained your survival in the *war-zone*...
- But Battlemind may be “hazardous” to your social & behavioral health in the *home zone*...

Combat Skills You All Possess

- Battlemind skills helped you survive in combat, but may cause you problems if not adapted when you get home.
 - B** Buddies (cohesion) **vs.** Withdrawal
 - A** Accountability **vs.** Controlling
 - T** Targeted Aggression **vs.** Inappropriate Aggression
 - T** Tactical Awareness **vs.** Hypervigilance
 - L** Lethally Armed **vs.** “Locked and Loaded” at Home
 - E** Emotional Control **vs.** Anger/Detachment
 - M** Mission Operational Security (OPSEC) **vs.** Secretiveness
 - I** Individual Responsibility **vs.** Guilt
 - N** Non-Defensive (combat) Driving **vs.** Aggressive Driving
 - D** Discipline and Ordering **vs.** Conflict
- **Battlemind Checks** allow Servicemembers and their Buddies to identify if and when help is needed.

Vignette # 1

Driving

www.Battlemind.org



How Do We Mitigate the Effects of Combat with the ultimate goal of reducing suicide in the Military?

- Recognize Problems Early
- Education/ Training
- Research
- Effective Interventions
 - Medical
 - Social
 - Mental Health
 - Spiritual
 - Cultural

Education

VISN 19 MIRECC Educational Services - MIRECC Centers - Windows Internet Explorer provided by ECHCS OI&T

http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/VISN_19_Education.asp

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VISN 19 MIRECC Educational Services

[Surviving Suicide](#) [TBI & Suicide](#) [Risk Assessment & Prevention](#)

PSYCHOLOGY ETHICS IN THE VA: A Starting Point

Developed by the VAPTC - Clinical and Executive Committees

This presentation attempts to answer the question regarding ethics – what is right or what should be done in uncertain situations when values conflict.

[View the PowerPoint slide show.](#)

SAVE THE DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2011

The VISN 19 MIRECC invites you to The 4th Annual Traumatic Brain Injury & Suicide Prevention Conference: **Traumatic Brain Injury, Aggression and Self-Directed Violence.**

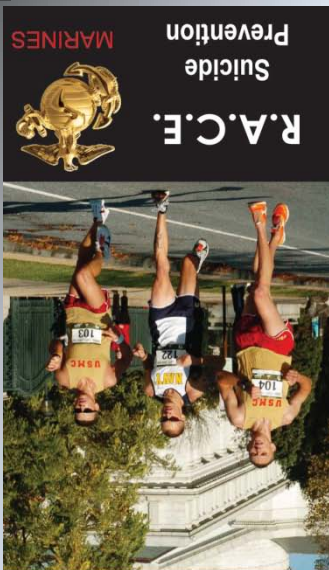
[More information](#)

The VA Ace Card

Done

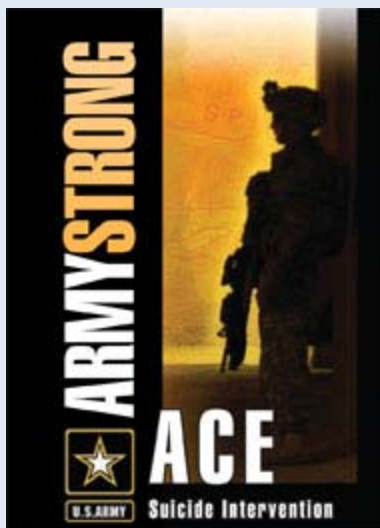
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Ace Cards



**NEVER
LEAVE A
MARINE
BEHIND**

www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent
 PCN:50100435000
 Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited



A 

Ask your buddy

- Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm
- Ask the question directly, e.g., Are you thinking of killing yourself?

C 

Care for your buddy

- Remove any means that could be used for self-injury
- Calmly control the situation; do not use force
- Actively listen to produce relief

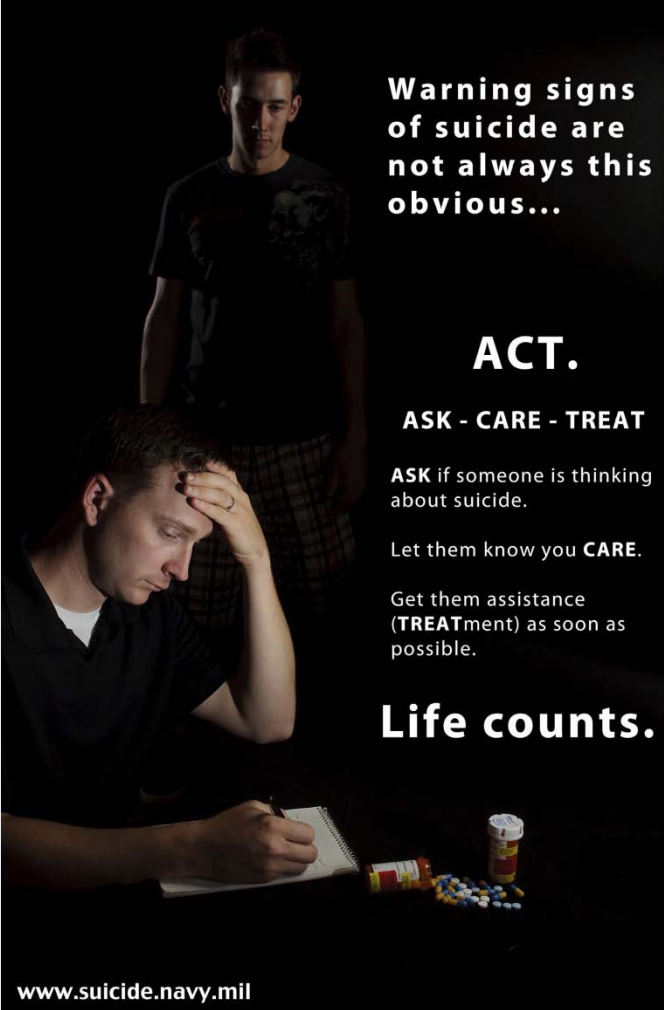
E 

Escort your buddy

- Never leave your buddy alone
- Escort to the chain of command, a Chaplain, a behavioral health professional, or a primary care provider

USACHPPM <http://trngpm-www.appgaa.army.mil/>

TA - 005 - 0005 



Warning signs of suicide are not always this obvious...

ACT.

ASK - CARE - TREAT

ASK if someone is thinking about suicide.

Let them know you **CARE**.

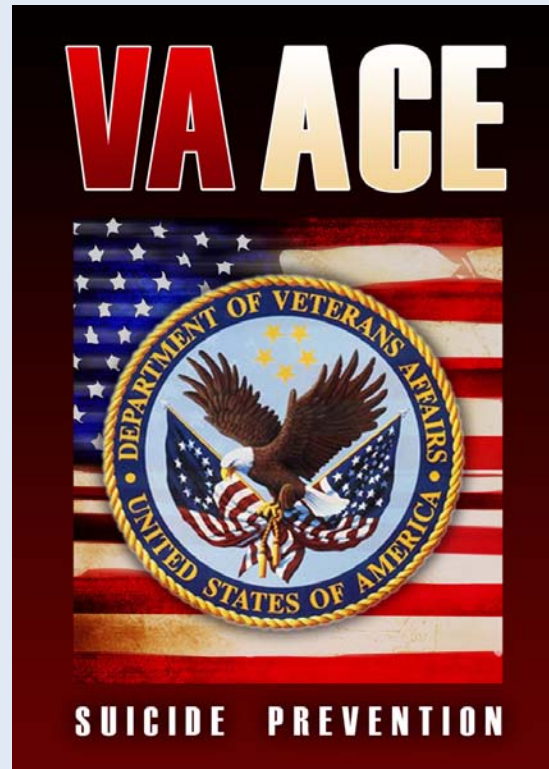
Get them assistance (**TREATment**) as soon as possible.

Life counts.

www.suicide.navy.mil

VA ACE CARDS

- These are wallet-sized, easily-accessible, and portable tools on which the steps for being an active and valuable participant in suicide prevention are summarized
- The accompanying brochure discusses warning signs of suicide, and provides safety guidelines for each step



Front view



Back view

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VISN 19 MIRECC Upcoming Presentations
Downloads for Upcoming and Archived Presentations

[Jump to Archived Presentations](#)



Upcoming Presentations

VISN 19 MIRECC Upcoming Presentations

Date	Title	Presenter(s)	Event	Downloads
5/5/11	Suicide Risk Assessment: A Medicolegal Perspective	Hal S. Wortzel, MD	Boulder Mental Health Center Boulder, CO	PowerPoint PDF
5/5/11	Suicide Risk Assessment: Tips & Tools	Bridget Bulman, Psy.D.	Boulder Mental Health Center Boulder, CO	PowerPoint PDF
5/5/11	Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicidality: Assessment & Prevention	Gina M. Signoracci, PhD	Boulder Mental Health Center Boulder, CO	PowerPoint PDF
5/5/11	Substance Use Disorders and Suicide	Jennifer Olson-Madden, PhD	Boulder Mental Health Center	PowerPoint

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MIRECC of the VA Rocky Mountain Network (VISN 19)

Self-Directed Violence Classification System (SDVCS) and Clinical Toolkit Released

Free Orders and Delivery

Order Online: Clipboard w/ SDVCS Toolkit and Table



Mission:

The mission of the VISN 19 MIRECC is to study suicide with the goal of reducing suicidality in the veteran population. To carry out this mission members of the VISN 19 MIRECC will:

- Focus on cognitive and neurobiological underpinnings that may contribute to suicidality.
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Key Personnel

Lisa Brenner, Ph.D., ABPP
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 Director of Education & Psychology Fellowship Director
 303.399.8020 ext. 2571



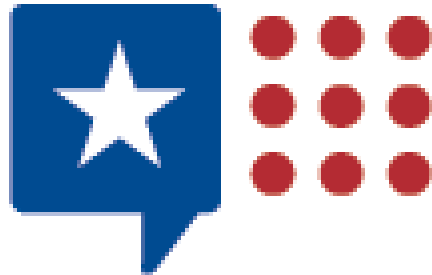


*It
takes
the
courage
and
strength
of a warrior
to ask
for help....*

**If you're in an emotional crisis
call 1-800-273-TALK "Press 1 for Veterans"**

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Veterans Crisis Line



1-800-273-8255

Research

VISN 19 Current Research - MIRECC Centers - Windows Internet Explorer provided by ECHCS OI&T

http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/VISN_19_Current_Research.asp

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VISN 19 Current Research

**Latest Manuscript:
Implementation of a Suicide Nomenclature within Two VA Healthcare Settings**

Those who work in the field of Veteran's care, as well as educators, researchers, and professionals providing direct mental health services agree that learning more about and preventing suicide represents a highly critical goal. Yet, up to now, researchers and mental health professionals lacked a shared language for defining suicidal behavior. This study discusses implementation of the Center for Disease Controls' Self-Directed Violence Classification System (SDVCS) and an accompanying Clinical Tool (CT) at two VA healthcare facilities (in Denver and Grand Junction, CO). Results of this study show that implementing a more unified language is possible, while at the same time highlights some of the challenges and barriers to adoption of this system. This study provides important information regarding implementation of the SDVCS throughout the VA system.

Brenner, L.A., Breshears, R.E., Betthausler, L.M., Bellon, K.K., Holman, E., Harwood, J.E.F.,...Nagamoto, H.T. (in press). Implementation of a suicide nomenclature within two VA healthcare settings. *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings*.

[Blister Packaging Medication to Increase Treatment Adherence and Clinical Response: Impact on Suicide](#)
Medication overdoses account for substantial numbers of suicide-related behaviors. Non-adherence is a significant issue for those with psychiatric illness.

[Creatine Augmentation in Veterans with SSRI-Resistant Major Depression](#)
Based on the results of prior clinical trials, the research team is conducting a study to learn if the nutritional supplement CREATINE is an effective adjunctive (i.e. add-on) treatment for SSRI-resistant Major Depression.

Local intranet 100%

Search

Search

- Consortium Core Areas**
- [Administrative Core](#)
Directors: Thomas Joiner and Peter Gutierrez
 - [Information Management and Scientific Communications Core](#)
Director: Greg Riccardi
 - [Military/Civilian Research Monitoring Core](#)
Director: Pamela Staves
 - [Database/Statistical Management Core](#)
Director: Jon Maner

Welcome to the Military Suicide Research Consortium, a collaboration of the Florida State University and the VISN 19 MIREC at the Denver Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

New Research Consortium to Study Military Suicide

Fort Detrick, Md., October 24, 2010

The Military Operational Medicine Research Program announced today that it has established a \$17 million Military Suicide Research Consortium. The consortium is part of an ongoing strategy to integrate and synchronize DoD and civilian efforts in implementing a multidisciplinary research approach to suicide prevention.

"The innovative, multidisciplinary approach of the MSRC facilitates rapid translation and dissemination of cutting-edge suicide research findings," said Col. Carl Castro, MOMRP director. "This capability will enhance the military's ability to quickly identify those at risk for suicide and will result in more effective evidence-based prevention and treatment strategies." [...more](#)

[Click here for a Searchable Bibliography of Suicide Research](#)

Selected references

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Privacy AddThis

CALL
1-800-273-TALK(8255)
En Español: 1-800-628-9454

News Update NIMH
[Army STARRS Preliminary Data Reveal Some Potential Predictive Factors for Suicide](#)

Review

- Suicidality is a complex dynamic process
- At this time there is no one strategy or intervention to predict/prevent behaviors
- Military Culture is an important variable
- Education materials/programs are readily available
- Research is ongoing

We invite you to contact us and/or visit our websites

- www.mirecc.va.gov/MIRECC/visn19/index.asp
- www.msrmc.fsu.edu

Thank you

Pamela.Staves@va.gov



Use Your Smartphone to Visit the VISN 19 MIRECC Website

Requirements:

1. Smartphone with a camera
2. QR scanning software (available for free download just look at your phones marketplace)



www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19

