

NETWORK UPDATE

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September 2016

VA Midwest
Health Care Network
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VA Highlights Initiatives to Prevent Veteran Suicide

WASHINGTON – September is Suicide Prevention Month and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is asking for the entire nation’s help in reducing Veteran suicide. VA is calling on community leaders, supervisors, colleagues, friends, and family members to *BeThere* for Veterans and Service members starting with a simple act, which can play a pivotal role in preventing suicide.

“You don’t have to be a trained professional to support someone who may be going through a difficult time,” said Dr. Caitlin Thompson, Director of the VA Office of Suicide Prevention. “We want to let people know that things they do every day, like calling an old friend or checking in with a neighbor, are strong preventive factors for suicide because they help people feel less alone. That’s what this campaign is about - encouraging people to be there for each other.”

The campaign also highlights VA resources that are available to support Veterans and Servicemembers who are coping with mental health challenges or are at risk for suicide, and it encourages everyone to share these resources with someone in their life.

“We hope our Suicide Prevention Month efforts help educate people about the VA and community resources available nationwide,” said VA Under Secretary for Health David J. Shulkin, M.D. “We’re committed to working with experts and organizations across the country to identify ways we can help Veterans and Servicemembers get the care they deserve and to expand the network of mental health support.”

Veteran suicide data released by the VA Office of

Suicide Prevention in early August 2016 serves as a foundation for informing and evaluating suicide prevention efforts inside the VA health care system and for developing lifesaving collaborations with community-based health care partners.

If you’re a Veteran in crisis or know a Veteran who is, confidential support is only a phone call, click, or text away — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The Veterans Crisis Line, online chat, and text-messaging service are free to all Veterans, even if you are not registered with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or enrolled in VA health care. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1; chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat or text to 838255.

Hundreds of Veterans contact the Veterans Crisis Line every day to communicate with caring, qualified VA responders — some of whom are Veterans themselves. They understand what Veterans have been through and the challenges Veterans of all ages and service eras face.

For more information about VA’s suicide prevention efforts visit the Suicide Prevention Month website at VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere.



“Ride sharing” allowed for beneficiary travel

In recent years, ride sharing organizations have begun operating across the United States. These companies connect paying passengers with drivers for hire through Web sites and mobile applications. Ride sharing may be an efficient and cost effective option of Veterans and caregivers with transportation needs.

VA’s beneficiary travel regulations, 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 70, govern how VA pays for travel expenses incurred by eligible Veterans as they travel to and from VA or VA-authorized health care. For eligible beneficiaries, VA pays the per mile rate for period of travel for use of a privately owned vehicle, or the actual cost for use of the most economical common carrier (e.g., bus, train, taxi, airplane).

Ride sharing services, such as Uber and Lyft qualify as eligible common carrier vehicles. Costs associated with these trips may be reimbursed for eligible beneficiaries under VHA Handbook 1601B.05 “Beneficiary Travel.” The actual cost for a common carrier may not exceed the per mile rate allowed for a privately-owned vehicle, unless travel by a privately owned vehicle is not reasonably accessible or travel by a common carrier is determined to be medically necessary.

Veterans should talk to the Beneficiary Travel section of their local provider if they have questions.

Upcoming Events

September 7 – Veterans Town Hall in O’Neill, NE

September 7 – Veterans Town Hall in Wahpeton, ND

September 21 – Veterans Town Hall in Ottumwa, IA

September 26 – Veterans Town Hall in Mankato, MN

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\$14.3 million housing project begins

Construction is underway on a 100-unit apartment building, located across the street from the medical center. The \$14.3 million project – called Veterans East – is expected to be completed by of summer 2017.

The effort is being developed by the nonprofit Community Housing Development Corp and is the latest in a series of collaborations among local, state and federal government agencies and nonprofits to address Veteran homelessness.

In Minnesota, homelessness among Veterans has been cut by 57% in the past six years. But there are still more than 200 homeless Veterans in Minnesota.

In the Veterans East project, eligible Veterans – those who have experienced chronic homelessness – will pay 30 percent of their income toward rent.

