

VETERANS AND FAMILY SUPPORT

AUGUST 2023

The 3 Program Goals of Veterans & Family Support are:

- Veterans & Military Support Programs
- National Veterans Services
- **Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Awareness**

This Year's Focus:

Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Awareness

National Suicide Prevention Week will be Sept 10-16, 2023.

Recognizing the signs of suicide

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking about death, dying or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, weapons, etc.

Take Immediate actions and call 911 if you notice any of these crisis signs

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

Contact the Veterans Crisis Line if you experience any of these warning signs.

ALWAYS HAVE AVAILABLE the **VETERANS CRISIS LINE** phone number:

988 press 1

The **Veterans Crisis Line** connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat or text. (chat online at veteranscrisisline.net or send text message to 838255) This service is available 24/7/365. Support for the deaf and hard of hearing is also available.

Statistics indicate that 22 Veterans commit suicide each day. That is over 8000 Veterans each year. The **loss of life to one Veteran** due to this horrible action is **one too many**.

The Veterans & Military Suicide Awareness Blue Teardrop Sticker is the VFW Auxiliary's symbol that gives this issue the attention it so desperately needs. The Teardrop template can be found online for a download.

Mental Health Awareness

1 in 5 Americans lives with a mental health condition

Raise awareness and reduce the stigma surrounding behavioral health

- May "Official Month of Awareness"
- July "National Minority Mental Health Awareness" month
 - Brings awareness to the unique struggles that racial & ethnic minority communities face.

Mental Wellness Support & Resources:

- **VFW Mental Wellness Campaign** vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness
- **The Campaign to Change Direction** changedirection.org
- **Give An Hour** giveanhour.org
- **Patients Like Me** patientslikeme.com/join/vfw
- **One Mind** onemind.org
- **The Elizabeth Dole Foundation** elizabethdolefoundation.org
- **Help Heal Veterans (Therapeutic Craft Kits)** healvets.org
- **Veterans Voice Writing Project** veteransvoices.org

As we go through the year, I will highlight other months of significance related to these issues. So we begin, "Banding Together for Veterans" and step forward to "Bee the Change."

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