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(202) 461-7600
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White House, VA launch REACH — a call to action to engage the nation in preventing suicide

WASHINGTON – The White House and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today launched the REACH national public health campaign aimed at empowering all Americans to play a critical role in preventing suicide.

The goal of REACH, which was established by the [President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide \(PREVENTS\)](#), is to change the conversation around suicide by urging people to recognize their own risk and protective factors — as well as the risk and protective factors of their loved ones.

“REACH will empower our nation’s Veterans to seek and receive help and it will encourage them to reach out to their brothers and sisters in need who may be vulnerable,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The power of this campaign will change how we talk about mental health and suicide in our nation. It will ensure that those in need, especially the men and women who have served our great nation, will receive the care and support they deserve.”

“The REACH campaign will inspire and educate all Americans — encouraging them to share their own struggles and to reach out to those who are hurting. It will engage our Veterans to help lead the way as we change how we think about, talk about and address suicide,” said PREVENTS Executive Director Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen. “I urge everyone to go to [wearewithinreach.net](#) and take the PREVENTS Pledge to REACH and be part of the solution. Together, we will prevent suicide.”

The website also includes information on factors that may protect against suicide, such as belonging to a faith-based community, healthy family relationships, having a purpose in life and strong problem-solving skills. REACH encourages everyone to intentionally strengthen their protective factors — to care for their emotional health and well-being just as they do their physical well-being.

Although suicide is preventable, the nation is facing an epidemic in deaths, with 132 Americans dying by suicide each day. In 2017 there were 47,173 suicide deaths and an estimated 1.4 million suicide attempts. For Veterans, the overall suicide rate is 1.5 times higher and the female Veteran suicide rate is 2.2 times higher than the general population after adjusting for age and/or gender.

To that end, the REACH campaign website, [we are within reach](#), provides information to help people recognize risk factors for suicide, including financial stress, chronic illness or pain, isolation and mental illness, in themselves and in their loved ones. It also links to resources that can provide assistance in avoiding the hopelessness that can lead to suicide.

Campaign messages and imagery using the hashtag #REACHNow will be evident on a wide range of digital platforms immediately after the launch. The website will include a video public service announcement supported by a partnership with the PenFed Foundation and SoldierStrong and created by Tree Media. Media covering this issue can download [VA's Safe Messaging Best Practices](#) fact sheet for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.

If you or someone you know are experiencing thoughts of suicide or are in crisis, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for confidential support 24 hours a day at 800-273-8255. Veterans and service members, including National Guard and Reserve, who need immediate help should call the 1-800 number and press 1 to reach the Veterans Crisis Line, chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat or text 838255.

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