

Legion raises awareness for suicide prevention month

The American Legion

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September is National Suicide Prevention Month and American Legion National Commander Denise Rohan is helping to raise awareness about the mental health resources that are available to support veterans and servicemembers in crisis.

Alarmed that an estimated 20 veterans a day take their lives, Rohan delivered a message of encouragement for veterans, or people who know of a veteran that might be contemplating suicide. In her message Rohan reminds veterans, servicemembers and their families to seek help by calling the VA's Crisis Hotline, which is available for veterans and their loved ones to connect with a VA responder 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Contact the VA's Crisis Hotline by:

- Calling toll-free at (800) 273-8255 and then press 1
- Texting the number 838255

- Chatting online at www.veteranscrisisline.net/chat

The VA also wants to spread the message about suicide prevention awareness on social media by using the hashtag #BeThere to help a veteran or servicemember who may be at risk. The VA has downloadable materials to spread the message about the crisis hotline [here](#) and #BeThere campaign [here](#).

During the Legion's Spring Meetings in May, the National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 28 which calls for the establishment of a suicide prevention program under the Legion's TBI/PTSD Committee. The program will examine recent trends of veteran suicide as it relates to TBI, PTSD and military sexual trauma and analyze best practices in veteran suicide prevention not currently used by the VA or Department of Defense "for the purpose of encouraging aforementioned government agencies to adopt them." The suicide prevention program also will conduct annual mental health surveys to accurately assess experiences that veterans have with traditional and non-traditional mental health resources.

To help with identifying symptoms of PTSD and where to seek help, download the Legion's brochure, "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: A guide to identification and getting help," for free [here](#).

Meanwhile, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), which provides emotional support to the children of military members who have died while serving their country regardless of the circumstances of the death, has helped create a public service announcement series for the month of September that supports VA's #BeThere campaign. The PSAs can be used for television, Web and radio, and graphics for social media are also available. Download the PSA [here](#).

For more information on providing veterans and their families with life-saving resources and programs during their time of transition and need, visit The American Legion's Veterans Health Care Web page at www.legion.org/veteranshealthcare.