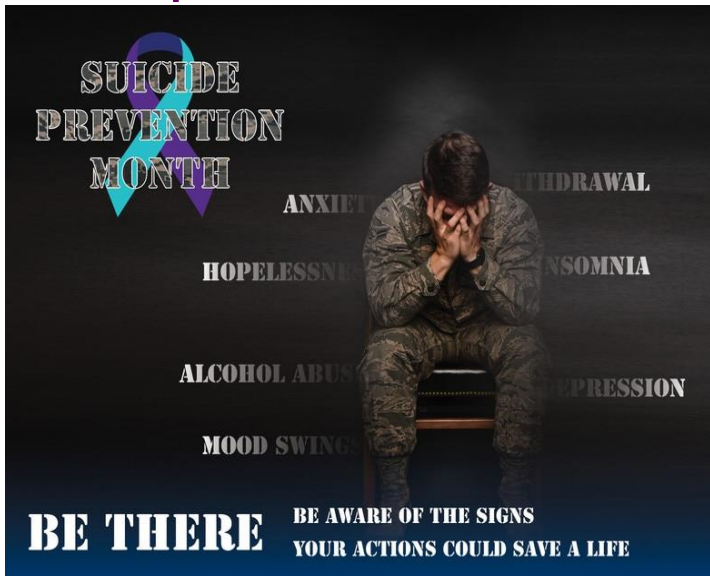


VETERANS AND FAMILY SUPPORT

September is Suicide Prevention Month



Veterans Crisis Line

What is it?

- ❖ Assistance for veterans, service members, National Guard & reserve members, as well as those who support them.
- ❖ Available 24/7
- ❖ Someone who cares is always there ready to listen and help.
- ❖ Call, Texts, Chats are FREE & CONFIDENTIAL
- ❖ Additional resources are available

CALL Dial 988 then Press 1

CHAT VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat

TEXT 838255

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then **PRESS 1**



It's OK
to **not be OK.**
to **ask for help.**
to **call.**

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then **PRESS 1**

The blue teardrop is the VFW Auxiliary symbol to have an open dialogue about the mental health of our veterans, active-duty service members and their supporters.

If you visited my booth at the School of Instruction, you had the opportunity to pick up teardrop stickers and sheets.

You and/or your auxiliary can purchase the teardrop pin from the VFW Store. They are \$3.25 each. The product code # is 01724. You can purchase them online www.vfwstore.org, via mail or by calling 1-833-VFW-VET (1-833-839-8387).



Know the **WARNING** signs:

- Expressing feelings of hopelessness (no way out)
- Appearing sad or depressed most of the time
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness or mood changes
- Feelings like there is no reason to live
- Rage and/or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Loss of interest in hobbies, work or school
- Giving away prized possessions
- Neglecting personal welfare and appearance

How to help. . .

- ❖ Start a conversation
- ❖ LISTEN, express concern
- ❖ Create a safety plan
- ❖ Provide resources to help
- ❖ Put up awareness materials in your Post or community



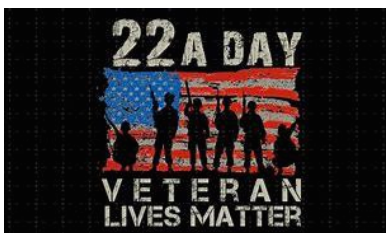
Contest

Get your sails up and get ready to compete:

1. Use the teardrop in most creative way to promote suicide awareness at your Post and in your communities.
2. Use the 22 A Day statistic in the most unique way to bring awareness to the military suicide 22/day campaign at their Post and within their communities.

By participating in these two contests, you will RECEIVE:

- BRAGGING rights at the Christmas Conference
- Honorable mention in the January promotion/mailer (including what you did to earn the winning status or S.W.A.P. – Sharing Wonderful Auxiliary Projects)
- 500 bonus points towards the Department Convention program awards
- A personal gift from me to celebrate your victory



Here are some additional ways in which you can report in this program:

- Make donations to Military Assistance Programs
- Send cards, make phone calls to check on post members (copy me on your Chaplain's reports)
- Cook meals give to veterans and/or their families
- Promote Mental Health awareness and Veterans Crisis hotline numbers.

These are things in which you and/or your auxiliary already does.

Ready, Set, Sail those reports to me via email, text or snail mail.

Make sure that your reports are fully completed.

- IF you need more space than the report form has – please attach another sheet of paper with the additional information.



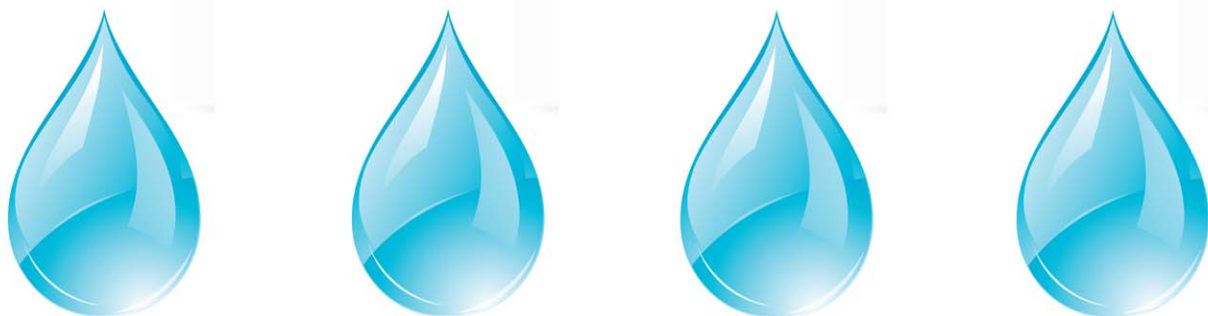
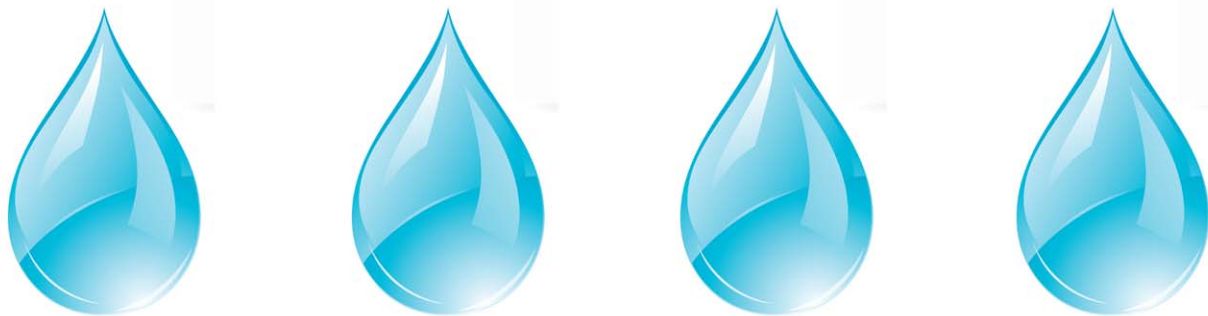
Department V&FS Chairman: VaNette Jones,

Email: BeAVeteransPal@comcast.net

Phone: (667) 221-2199

Mailing Address: PO Box 558, Fruitland, MD 21826

Veteran & Military Suicide Awareness Teardrop Sticker



Instructions: Print this document on 8.5 x 11 sticker paper and cut out the teardrops to use them as stickers. (Try Avery 8165 for inkjet printers. When someone asks you about your sticker, tell them that the VFW Auxiliary is concerned about the rates of suicides among veterans and military personnel; we want everyone to be aware of the unique stresses that face them.

Share the Veterans Crisis Line with them: 1.800.273.8255, Press 1 or www.veteranscrisisline.net.

How to Talk With a Veteran in Crisis

If a Veteran you care about is going through a difficult time or having thoughts of suicide, you're probably worried and confused. You want to help but may be scared you could make things worse—the only wrong thing to do is to do nothing. Now is the time to act. You can begin by learning the signs of crisis and how to start a conversation with the Veteran.

REMEMBER: Everyone has a role to play in suicide prevention. Small actions, like starting a conversation, can make a big difference.



Signs of crisis

Every Veteran is different, and many may not show any obvious signs of intent to kill themselves. But some actions and behaviors can be a sign they need help.

Crisis signs

These signs require immediate attention. If a Veteran you know needs medical attention, **call 911** now. For immediate help in dealing with a mental health or suicide crisis, call the Veterans Crisis Line: **Dial 988 then Press 1.**

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

REMEMBER: If you believe a Veteran is at high risk of suicide and has already taken pills or harmed themselves in some way, **call 911**. And keep yourself safe—**never** negotiate with someone who has a firearm. **Get to safety and call 911, noting the Veteran is armed.**

Warning signs

These signs may indicate that a Veteran needs help. Contact the Veterans Crisis Line now—**Dial 988 then Press 1**—if a Veteran you know is exhibiting any of these:

- Appearing sad or depressed most of the time
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling as if there is no reason to live
- Feeling excessive guilt, shame, or sense of failure
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug misuse
- Losing interest in hobbies, work, or school
- Neglecting personal welfare and appearance
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Showing violent behavior, like punching a hole in the wall or getting into fights
- Giving away prized possessions
- Getting affairs in order, tying up loose ends, or writing a will



How to start the conversation

For a Veteran in crisis—whose emotional struggles and health challenges may lead to thoughts of suicide—conversations and connections can mean the difference between keeping them safe and a tragic outcome.

If you and/or the Veteran are not in immediate danger, start a conversation by asking questions like:

- *“It sounds like you’re feeling so incredibly (insert appropriate feeling here—trapped, overwhelmed, betrayed, etc.). Sometimes when people feel this way, they think about suicide. Is this something you’re thinking about?”*
- *“When did you first start feeling like killing yourself?”*
- *“Did something happen that made you begin to feel like taking your life?”*

When responding to answers from a Veteran, remember simple, encouraging feedback goes a long way in showing support and encouraging help-seeking:

- *“I’m here for you. How do you hurt and how can I help?”*
- *“Can we talk for a while and see if we can find a way to keep you safe right now?”*
- *“I might not be able to understand exactly what you’re going through or how you feel, but I care about you and want to help.”*

You don’t have to be an expert to talk to a Veteran facing challenges. You just need to show genuine care and concern.



Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Make supportive and encouraging comments, don’t ask invasive personal questions.
 - Don’t inject judgment or emotion in the conversation. Stay calm.
 - Listen more than you speak—don’t dominate the conversation.
 - Remind them you are there for them.
 - Let them decide how much to share.
 - It’s okay to ask directly: “Are you thinking about killing yourself?” or “Are you having thoughts of suicide?”
- If the Veteran answers yes, follow the steps below:

1. Inform them they can **Dial 988 then Press 1** to reach the Veterans Crisis Line or ask if they’d like to do this with you.
2. If the Veteran has already initiated a plan to kill themselves or injured others or has an immediate plan to do so, **call 911**.
3. Try to find out where the Veteran is located and whether anyone else is nearby.
4. For immediate emergency or medical assistance, **call 911**.

Asking if someone is having thoughts of suicide will not give them the idea or increase their risk. It may seem daunting, but it could save their life. Although many people may not show clear signs of intent to kill themselves, they’ll likely answer direct questions about their intentions when asked.

REMEMBER: Even if the Veteran doesn’t ask for support, they may need it. Make sure they know the Veterans Crisis Line is available **24/7** to help during a crisis.

Learn more with these resources:

Veterans Crisis Line: A free, anonymous, confidential resource available to Veterans in crisis, as well as their family members and friends. **Dial 988 then Press 1**, chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat), or text **838255**.

VA Mental Health: VA’s repository of mental health resources, information, and data materials.

Make the Connection: VA’s premier mental health literacy and anti-stigma website highlights Veterans’ real, inspiring stories of recovery and connects Veterans and their supporters with local resources.

24/7, confidential crisis support for Veterans and their loved ones



If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, reach caring, trained responders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

When you call the Veterans Crisis Line, here is what you can expect:

- A qualified responder will answer your call, ready to listen and help.
- The responder will ask a few questions, such as whether you or the Veteran you're concerned about may be in immediate danger or at risk for suicide.
- The conversation is free and confidential, and you decide how much information to share.
- Support doesn't end with your conversation. Our responders can connect you with the resources you need.

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect.

You're not alone— the Veterans Crisis Line is here for you.



Dial 988 then Press 1



Chat online at
VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat



Text 838255



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Scan the QR code to download
Veterans Crisis Line resources.



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