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Information and Support After a Suicide Attempt:

A Department of Veterans Affairs

Resource Guide

for Family Members of Veterans Who are Coping with Suicidality

VISN 19 Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center

Office of Mental Health Services, VA Central Office



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Introduction

Purpose of this Guide

This brief guide is designed to provide Veterans, their families, and VA care providers with resources that can serve as sources of information and support. The resources are available in various formats (e.g., websites, pamphlets) and are aimed at meeting the needs of family members of all ages.

Structure of Guide

The resources are divided into domains which are reflective of potential needs of support persons. The domains are:

- **Self Care** - Resources aimed at helping family members cope with a Veteran suicide attempt;
- **Care for Others** - Resources aimed at helping adult support persons assist others who are coping with a family member/Veteran suicide attempt (e.g., children);
- **Prevention Post-Attempt** - Resources aimed at helping family members assist Veterans post-attempt.

Each resource includes a description, its associated domain(s), a location where the resource can be found, a source or author, and any associated cost.

A final section for acquiring additional knowledge/support entitled **Additional Resources** is also included.

If viewing this in MS Word you can follow a link by holding down the Control Key (Ctrl) and clicking the link.

This Resource Guide was created by the VISN 19 Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers (MIRECC), at the request of and in collaboration with the Office of Mental Health Services, VA Central Office. This resource guide is not intended to be exhaustive, and is not an endorsement of any commercial product. The guide is designed to provide information on many established resources.

A Living Document

It is expected that available resources will be developed and modified. As such, continued efforts will be aimed at updating this resource guide. Please contact Joe Huggins, MSW, MSCIS, 303.399.8020 ext. 3096, joe.huggins@va.gov, with additional potential resources. Updated versions of this Guide will be available on the VISN 19 MIRECC website, http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/VISN_19_Education.asp#products.



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Books/Pamphlets

1. After an Attempt: The Emotional Impact of a Suicide Attempt on Families

The booklet, created by the Feeling Blue Suicide Prevention Council, includes information regarding: Important dos and don'ts; Dealing with a traumatic event; What to say to the attempter; Ways the family can communicate their feelings; and How an attempt affects spouses, siblings, and parents. The booklet is available at no cost.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others and Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: http://feelingblue.org/docs/AFTER_AN_ATTEMPT_BOOKLET_rev.pdf

Authors: Heidi Bryan, BA, Certified QPR Trainer with Assistance from: Katie Brophy, M.S., Amy Cunningham, M.S., Robert Schwarz, Psy.D., and the American Association of Suicidology

2. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: After an Attempt - A Guide for Taking Care of Your Family Member after Treatment in the Emergency Room

This brochure was developed by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI; <http://www.nami.org>) in partnership with the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC; <http://www.sprc.org>), and addresses issues occurring over time (from emergency room to return home). Tips for how to take care of yourself while helping a family member, as well as locating and accessing important supplemental care for your family (for example, mental health services, alcohol or drug abuse treatment, etc.) are highlighted also. Available free online by digital download or may be ordered in print.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others and Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA08-4357>

En Español: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SVP08-0160S>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services CMHS-SVP-0159, Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2006.

3. After an Attempt: A Guide for Taking Care of Yourself After Your Treatment in the Emergency Department

Also developed by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), this brochure discusses the challenges and sources of support while moving ahead after ER treatment for a suicide attempt. It covers topics such as coping with suicidal thoughts, developing a support system, and creating a safety plan. The brochure concludes with a listing of helpful organizations, groups, hotlines, etc. Available for digital download or order for print.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA08-4355>

En Español: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SVP06-0158SP>

Source: NAMI - National Alliance on Mental Illness



Branch-Specific Military Suicide Prevention Websites

1. Army Behavioral Health - Suicide Prevention

The U.S. Medical Department Army Behavioral Health website features a listing of news, toolkits, brochures, multimedia and other materials all aimed at suicide prevention and positive mental health.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others

Location: <http://www.behavioralhealth.army.mil/sprevention/index.html>

Source: U.S. Army Medical Department

2. U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff – Suicide Prevention

The Army makes full use of the internet by presenting several video programs. “Shoulder to Shoulder” shares real-life stories of soldiers. “The Home Front” is an interactive video series in which you select the situation/characters with the most meaning to you.

“What’s New” highlights latest statistics, prevention strategies, new products, and access to suicide prevention resources, as well as general assistance for dealing with daily life/stress. “Postvention” focuses on assisting survivors who have had a previous suicide attempt or family members dealing with the loss of a loved one.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/>

Source: U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff

3. U.S. Army Public Health Command: Suicide Prevention

The United States Army Public Health Command hosts this page with suicide prevention resources such as videos (including the Good Charlotte music video, with dialogue from suicide survivors) tip cards, prevention posters, etc. The site also links to other sources of information, with research, events, resource kits, and additional multimedia presentations such as “A Different Kind of Courage,” discussing combat and deployment stress.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others

Location:

<http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/bh/Pages/SuicidePreventionEducation.aspx>

[X](#)

Source: U.S. Army Public Health Command

4. Army Reserve – Suicide Prevention is Everyone’s Business

This Army Reserve site features the video “Shoulder to Shoulder: I will Never Quit On Life”. It speaks to soldiers and commanders about a holistic approach to strengthening positive lifestyles and reducing stigma of reaching out for help. There are also sections for locating national and local assistance and helpful tabs along the side with information on related topics.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.usar.army.mil/arweb/soldiers/suicideprev/Pages/default.aspx>

Source: Army Reserve



5. U.S. Air Force – Suicide Prevention Caring for America’s Airmen

On these pages are “Commentary” and “Features,” sharing personal thoughts and stories about practical ways to help prevent suicide among fellow Air Force members, as well as video and a “News” section that highlights critical topics such as post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and others.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others

Location: <http://www.af.mil/suicideprevention.asp>

Source: U.S. Air Force

6. Air Force Suicide Prevention Program

These pages are aimed at Air Force members, including supervisors, focusing on a community effort towards the prevention of suicide. The “Resources” section is very detailed, with listings for helping agencies, hotlines, other websites, and sources of information. There is also a page with suicide prevention videos such as “Creed for a Comrade.”

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others

Location: <http://afspp.afms.mil/>

Source: U.S. Air Force

7. Air National Guard – Wingman Project

This project empowers everyone with the information and tools to be someone’s wingman, and to “...eliminate Warfighter and family member suicide through human outreach, media and training.” After you select your state or territory, there are sections for Family & Friends, Warfighters, and an area devoted to “Tools and Resources.”

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.wingmanproject.org/>

En Español: <http://www.wingmanproject.org/?locale=es>

Source: Air National Guard

8. Navy and Marine Corps Health Center – Minding Your Mental Health

The Navy and Marine Corps online Public Health Center provides an overview, as well as more in-depth information, about a variety of mental health topics. A section devoted to suicidal thoughts

(http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/Healthy_Living/Psychological_Health/Mental_Health/mmh_suicidal.aspx) discusses signs of depression and other mental health challenges, and tips on what to do if you, a friend, or family member is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Domain: Prevention Post-Attempt

Location:

http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/Healthy_Living/Psychological_Health/Mental_Health/mmh_mentalhealth.aspx

Authors: Don R. Powell, Ph.D., and the American Institute for Preventive Medicine

Source: Navy & Marine Corps Public Health Center



9. Navy Personnel Command – Suicide Prevention

The site focuses on recognizing warning signs, myths, and truths about suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts, and how you can help if you believe someone close to you is at risk for depression, suicidal thoughts, or self-harm behavior. There are also posters available for free download at the Naval Logistics Library.

Domain: Care for Others

Location:

http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/suicide_prevention/Pages/default.aspx

Source: Naval Personnel Command

10. Marine Corps Community Services – Military Life: Suicide Prevention Home

“Never Leave a Marine Behind” is the theme for this suicide prevention program, and for these web pages and resources here. The site organizes resources for command and leader, health professionals, and Marine & Family, which supplies a listing of family programs available such as “Lifestyle Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills,” and sources of assistance for Marines experiencing stress, depression, or suicidal thoughts.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent/index.cfm>

Source: Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS)

11. U.S. Coast Guard – Suicide Prevention Program

The U.S. Coast Guard Office of Work-Life Programs hosts this program, open to all active duty and reserves, some civilian employees, and families. The site links visitors to local and national resources (such as medical clinics, the Coast Guard Employee Assistance Program, etc.), as well as internet resources like the “I Will Never Quit on Life” video.

Domain: Self Care, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: http://www.uscg.mil/worklife/suicide_prevention.asp

Source: U.S. Coast Guard's Work-Life Program: Office of Work-Life



General Military & Veterans

1. Military OneSource

This online resource, provided by the Department of Defense, is organized in three sections for: military members, military families, and guard reserves. Once you select one of these three and your branch, you are taken to pages with resources geared specifically for your needs and situation. Services include a toll-free hotline, as well as a “Tools” page with resources for “Family and Recreation,” Career and Education,” and “Health and Relationships.” An “Online Community” tab links you to discussion boards, newsletters, Webinars, podcasts, and moderated chats.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.militaryonesource.com/>

Source : U.S. Department of Defense

2. Military Health System: Suicide Prevention

Military Health System (MHS) is “a unique partnership of medical educators, medical researchers, and health care providers and their support personnel worldwide.” Their Suicide Prevention page provides links to multiple programs available to service members, both by branch and generally, to other sources of information, a blog, and links to their services via social networking.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: http://www.health.mil/Themes/Suicide_Prevention.aspx

Source: U.S. Department of Defense

3. Department of Defense/Department of Veterans Affairs Suicide Outreach Resources for Suicide Prevention (SPARRC)

Regardless of service branch or active duty status, this site serves to link you with the information you need via the form that is most useful to you. You may select resources based upon your branch or service history, choose to contact the Outreach Center via phone, find service local service providers to visit in person, or chat online with a Health Resource Consultant. The site also features self assessments, an e-library, and videos.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.suicideoutreach.org/>

Source: Department of Defense/Department of Veterans Affairs

4. TRICARE Military Healthcare Program: Suicide Prevention

TRICARE serves more than nine million active duty, National Guard, and Reserves members, retirees, and families of military servicemen and women, providing healthcare plans, access to services, and other benefits. This page is dedicated to suicide prevention, with information on warning signs, and helpful information on important related topics such as substance abuse, post-traumatic disorder, and depression. It includes links to other sites geared towards service members.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt



Location:

<http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/ProfileFilter.do?&puri=%2Fhome%2FMentalHealthAndBehavior%2FConditions%2FSuicidePrevention>

Source: TRICARE: Military health care program

5. Department of Veterans Affairs – Mental Health Suicide Prevention

The Department of Veterans Affairs sponsors these pages on “Know the Signs,” “Resources” (specifically geared towards service members and families), and “Brochures and Information Sheets,” available at no cost for download.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others

Location:

http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/MENTALHEALTH/suicide_prevention/index.asp

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

6. Vet Center Supporting Combat Veterans

Vet Centers provide readjustment counseling and outreach services to Veterans who served in a combat zone, as well as services for family members. To find a vet center, visit these pages and use the clickable map, or call 800-905-4675 (Eastern) or 866-496-8838 (Pacific). Information may also be accessed via social networking sites such as Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/VeteransHealth>), Twitter, etc.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

7. Medal of Honor: Speak Out! Save Lives.

This series of videos highlights more than 30 of our nation’s living Medal of Honor Recipients. They speak about surviving combat then winning the battle of post-traumatic stress and other wounds, physical and emotional, after returning home. This public service campaign talks about the courage it takes to seek and receive care.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.medalofhonorspeakout.org/>

Source: TriWest Healthcare Alliance

8. Defense Centers of Excellence Suicide Prevention

This comprehensive site provides both general and specific information, with printable fact sheets, a blog, newsletter, and access to a hotline, videos, podcasts, service-specific resources, family resources, and tabs with further information about topics such as traumatic brain injury. The Defense Centers of Excellence also has a Facebook page:

http://www.facebook.com/DCoEpage?sk=app_6009294086

Domain: Self Care, Care of Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/ForFamilies/SuicidePrevention.aspx>

Source: Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury



9. SAMHSA Military Families

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration gathers information on programs, data, publications, and multimedia that are particularly relevant to military service members and their families, including treatment of depression and suicide prevention. SAMHSA also sponsors several projects, such as the “Military Family Resources Area and Knowledge Bank” (<http://mfkb.nctsn.org/cwis/index.php>) and “Military Families Podcast Series and Webinars”

(<http://learn.nctsn.org/course/view.php?id=39>).

Location: <http://www.samhsa.gov/militaryfamilies/>

10. TAPS: Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) was founded in the wake of a military tragedy – the death of eight soldiers aboard an Army National Guard aircraft in 1992 – and now offers services for any person, regardless of relationship, who has lost a military loved one. Services encompass financial and legal, an Iraqi Women’s Program, peer support, an online community, casework assistance, and a crisis intervention line (available toll-free, 24/7, at 800-959-8277).

Domain: Self Care, Care of Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.taps.org/>



Especially for Children/Youth/Families

1. How to Talk to a Child about a Suicide Attempt in Your Family: Guides Targeting Age Groups 4-8, 9-13, and 14-18

This information sheet is intended to serve as a guide for adults to use when talking with a 4-8, 9-13, or 14-18 year-old child about a suicide attempt in the family. It is not intended to replace the advice of a mental health professional. In fact, it may be best to use this along with professional support if you or your child is struggling with how to talk about this difficult topic. It is important to consider the child's level of development and ability to understand events when deciding how to talk with them about this issue.

Domain: Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/VISN_19_Education.asp#talkToKids

Source: VISN 19 MIRECC

2. Suicide Loss Survivors

The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) is a membership organization for those involved in suicide prevention and intervention, or who have been touched by suicide. As a leader in scientific efforts towards suicide prevention through research, education, and training, AAS hosts these pages specifically targeted for suicide loss survivors.

Resources encompass articles, a support group directory, personal stories, and the SOS handbook, written by a suicide survivor.

Domain : Self Care, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location : <http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/suicide-loss-survivors>

Source : American Association of Suicidology

3. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) offers multi-dimensional support via its website, educational resources, and information on specific suicide prevention projects, local chapters, and other vital information. Visitors may find local and online support groups for individuals and family members of individuals who have attempted to harm themselves or who have committed suicide. The "Surviving Suicide Loss" tab found on the side links to many sources of support, including groups, a survivor outreach program, ways to remember loved ones, and other resources on how to cope.

Domain: Self Care

Location: <http://www.afsp.org/>

Source : American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

4. The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

The Dougy Center provides resources geared by age groups – for kids, teens, young adults, and adults who have experienced a death, including by suicide. Resources include information, activities, support groups, and support on specific topics such as kids and funerals, handling the holidays, etc. There is also assistance available in Spanish.

Domain: Self Care, Care of Others, Prevention Post-Attempt



Location: <http://www.dougy.org/>

Source: The Dougy Center

5. Sibling Survivors

This site supplies information about sibling survivors, offers a place for survivors to share stories and interact, and provides a Resources section. Michelle Linn-Gust serves on the Board of Directors, and is the Current President-Elect for the American Association of Suicidology. She is also a well-known writer, and host of several sites, including Sibling Survivors and Bereaved by Suicide (<http://bereavedbysuicide.com/>).

Domain: Self Care

Location: <http://siblingsurvivors.com/>

Source: Michelle Linn-Gust

6. SAVE: Coping with Loss

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education hosts this section for those coping with loss due to suicide, and includes sections such as “What to Tell Children,” and “Grief After Suicide.” There are also areas for personal stories, a blog for caregivers, and information on support groups. On the main page (<http://www.save.org>), visitors may access more general information about suicide and suicide prevention strategies.

Domain: Self Care

Location:

http://www.save.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_id=EB883CA2-7E90-9BD4-C5E35440BC7761EE

Source: Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

7. Half of Us

This site is for college students, though other young adults may also find it useful. Developed by mtvU and The Jed Foundation, popular icons tell their own stories of recovery from depression and suicide.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.halfofus.com/disorder/Suicide.aspx>

Source: mtvU and The Jed Foundation

8. The Lifeline Gallery: Stories of Hope and Recovery

The Lifeline Gallery: Stories of Hope and Recovery is a project founded by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Link2Health Solutions, Inc. The Lifeline Gallery is an on-line community that allows survivors to tell their story. The site allows users to create an ‘avatar’, an on-line character that can help assist the survivor in telling their story.

Domain: Self Care, Care for Others, Prevention Post-Attempt

Location: <http://www.lifeline-gallery.org/>

Source: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Link2Health Solutions, Inc.



Crisis Lines & Online Chats

1. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis. Call for yourself or someone you care about. Your call is free and confidential.

Location: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Source: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

2. Veterans Crisis Line

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has founded this crisis line to ensure Veterans have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. Service members serving overseas now also have access to the crisis line by including the appropriate DSN number (no "1" before DSN or the 800 necessary).

Location: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press "1"

Source: Office of Mental Health Services, VA Central Office, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

3. Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) Crisis Intervention

TAPS supplies 24-hour assistance to anyone who has gone through or is experiencing the loss of a military loved one, regardless of the relationship to the individual or the circumstances of death. The toll-free crisis intervention line for those dealing with grief and other issues is 800-959-TAPS (8277).

Location: <http://www.taps.org/services.aspx?id=1036>

Source: Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

4. Veterans Chat

Veterans may chat confidentially with mental health clinicians. The intention of the chat line is not to provide treatment or care, but "...information on services, guidance and assistance, and helpful online resources" via the chat line. The service is available 24 hours a day through the Veterans Health Administration.

Location:

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/ChatTermsOfService.aspx?accountID=1&siteID=1&queueID>

Source: Veterans Health Administration



Additional Resources

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Suicide Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) hosts this page on Suicide Prevention, which offers a broad and reliable source of information, featuring fact sheets, definitions, suicide prevention programs and strategies, statistics, podcasts, and resources for specific topics such as youth suicide, alcohol and suicide. They also have a toll-free information line, available 24 hours a day, at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

Location: <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/suicide/>

2. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest grassroots organization for people with mental illness and their families. Founded in 1979, NAMI has affiliates in every state, with more than 1,200 programs across the country. Use the "Support & Programs" tab to access NAMI services and programs, including the Multicultural Action Center, which seeks to eliminate disparity in access to care and facilitate cultural competence in mental health treatment.

Location: <http://www.nami.org>

3. National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide (NOPCAS)

NOPCAS was formed to stop the tragic epidemic of suicide in minority communities. The organization is developing innovative strategies to address this urgent national problem.

Location: <http://www.nopcas.com/>

4. The Samaritans

Samaritans works worldwide, with centers in multiple countries, to provide confidential emotional support to any person who is suicidal or despairing, and to increase public awareness of issues around suicide and depression. Assistance is available 24 hours a day, in multiple languages, both locally and online. There are also resources for friends and family members, and related issues.

Location: <http://www.befrienders.org/>

5. Stop a Suicide Today!

This site challenges you – and also provides the tools to help you - stop a friend, co-worker, family member, and others from attempting to take his or her own life. A Harvard psychiatrist (Dr. Douglas Jacobs) created this site, with information on Signs of Suicide, facts, information on suicide and mental illness, and how to Help a Friend, as well as resources for suicide survivors.

Location: <http://www.stopasuicide.org/>

6. Terry Bradshaw's Winning Drive Against Depression

Highlighted on many US Army sites as a resource for Veterans, the story that Terry Bradshaw tells is inspirational and educational.



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Location: http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/spotlighthealth/2004-01-30-bradshaw_x.htm

Authors: John Morgan, Spotlight Health, with medical adviser Stephen A. Shoop, M.D. - USA Today

7. Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicide: Information and Resources for Clinicians

This online brochure provides information about the link between traumatic brain injury and suicide.

Location: http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/VISN_19_Education.asp#tbiAndSuicide

Source: VISN 19 MIRECC