



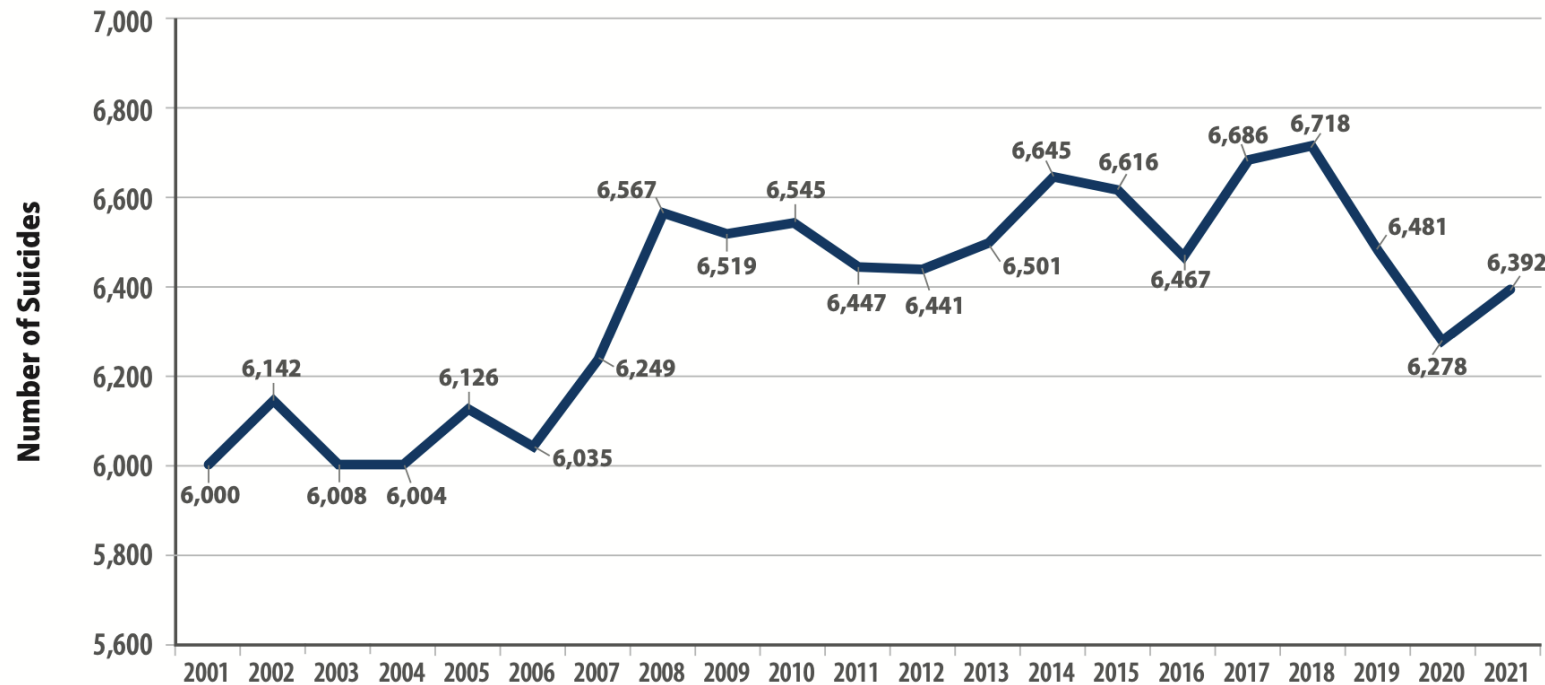
Department of California

Volunteer Suicide Intervention Training

”In 2021, there were on average, 127.2 suicides per day among U.S. adults, including **17.5 per day among Veterans**”

Figure 2 details variation in the number of Veteran suicides, by year from 2001 to 2021.

Figure 2: Veteran Suicide Deaths, 2001–2021



Volunteers as Gatekeepers

A gatekeeper is usually the first person who can recognize a crisis, and the warning signs, that someone may be contemplating suicide.

You are the eyes & ears of your post!
You will likely be the first person a Veteran will engage with,
upon entering your post.

Gatekeepers can be anyone, but VFW Volunteers are uniquely positioned to recognize Veterans at risk of suicide.



Efforts to reduce suicide

- **Prevention** - Broad-based efforts to reduce suicide, typically by letting people know that help exists and can be accessed
- **Assessment** - Evaluating risk for someone who presents for mental health care
- **Intervention** - Addressing specific risk when it is known to exist



Risk Factors

There are many risk factors that may lead someone to thinking about suicide.
All of them lead to core feelings of

- **ACUTE HOPELESSNESS**
- **LACK OF CONTROL**



Risk Factors

- Community violence
- Historical trauma
- Discrimination
- Violence victimization and/or perpetration
- Stigma associated with help-seeking and mental illness
- Easy access to lethal means of suicide among people at risk
- Unsafe media portrayals of suicide



Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking about wanting to die
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Acting anxious, agitated, or recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs



Invitations

Verbal, Physical, Behavioral or Emotional signs of distress that invite help

FOLLOW YOUR GUT!!!

- Giving things away
- Extreme behavior changes
- Decreased hygiene habits
- Weight changes
- Increased complaining
- Withdrawal
- “Nothing matters anymore.”
- “Now I understand why ... did it.”
- Hopelessness
- Stressful life events
- Feelings of extreme loss



What to Do

- Do not leave the person alone
- Remove any lethal means (firearms, alcohol, drugs, or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt)
- Call the Veteran Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by dialing 988, press 1
- Call 911 – situationally, let the individual know
- If able, take the person to an emergency room, or seek help from a medical or mental health professional



SAFETY FIRST!

Be Direct

Suicide prevention literature supports using the word “suicide” DIRECTLY and CLEARLY when speaking with someone at risk of suicide.

“Are you thinking about suicide?”



What to Say?

- Just be yourself.
- We can all relate to the individual emotions that person is feeling, sad, angry, etc., empathize
- Try to engage in conversation that will encourage the individual to talk about the people, places, or things that are meaningful to them.
These are the Protective Factors you can work with.
- Remember, they came into the VFW in a crisis, they are likely seeking some kind of comfort or connection.



What to Say?

- Ask if they have a plan. If yes:
 1. How? When? Where?
 2. Are you willing and can it be disabled safely?
- Ask if there are they drugs, alcohol or medication involved?
- “What have you learned in the past that might help keep you safe right now?”



Protective Factors

- Effective coping and problem-solving skills
- Reasons for living (for example, family, friends, pets, etc.)
- Strong sense of cultural identity
- Support from partners, friends, and family
- Feeling connected to others
- Feeling connected to community and other social institutions
- Availability of consistent and high quality physical and behavioral healthcare
- Reduced access to lethal means of suicide among people at risk
- Cultural, religious, or moral objections to suicide



Be Mindful

- As soon as possible, ensure all proper personnel are contacted.
- **Do not** gossip or discuss the events with anyone other than the proper authorities or chain of command.
- Secure any individual possessions for safekeeping.



Who to Contact

- Local police or 911
- Your post Commander.
- Your post or District Chaplain.
- **Do not** assume you should call their partner!!



Who to Contact

Have a community resource list handy

Local Police

Temecula PD: [\(951\) 696-3000](tel:(951)696-3000)

Murrieta PD: [\(951\) 304-2677](tel:(951)304-2677)

Local Fire: City of Temecula Fire Station 73 - (951) 699-0351

- Local Hospital: Temecula Valley Hospital – (951) 331-2200
- Riverside County 24/7 Mental Health Urgent Care

Perris: 951-349-4195

Riverside: 951-509-2499

Crisis Lines:

Veteran's Crisis Line: 988

National Suicide Prevention Line: 800-273-TALK
800-273-8255



If the person

- Has intent
- Has a plan
- Has the means

CALL 911!!!



No One Does More For Veterans!

QUESTIONS?

