



VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Presented to House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management | 23 September 2021



PRESENTED BY

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THE MISSION CONTINUES

SERVING AND HONORING VETERANS IN OREGON SINCE 1945



OUR VISION

Veterans and their families thrive in Oregon



OUR MISSION

ODVA serves and honors veterans through our leadership, advocacy and strong partnerships



OUR VALUES

Respect, Integrity, Stewardship and Excellence



AGENCY PROGRAMS

SUMMARY OF SERVICES

HOME LOAN PROGRAM

» **HOME LOAN PROGRAM**

Provides home loans to qualified veterans

STATEWIDE VETERAN SERVICES

» **STATEWIDE VETERAN SERVICES**

Provides claims and appeals assistance, monitoring of post-secondary institutions through the State Approving Agency function, partnerships with counties and national veterans' service organizations to assist veterans, and grant programs that direct funding to veterans and governmental and non-profit organizations

AGING VETERAN SERVICES

» **AGING VETERAN SERVICES**

Provides expertise and outreach in aging veterans' benefits and services, veteran volunteer program, and conservatorship and representative payee services

OREGON VETERANS' HOMES

» **OREGON VETERANS' HOMES**

Provides oversight of the two Oregon Veterans' Homes (skilled-nursing and memory care facilities) in The Dalles and Lebanon





Veteran Suicide Data

1 in every 6
suicides in
Oregon is a
veteran

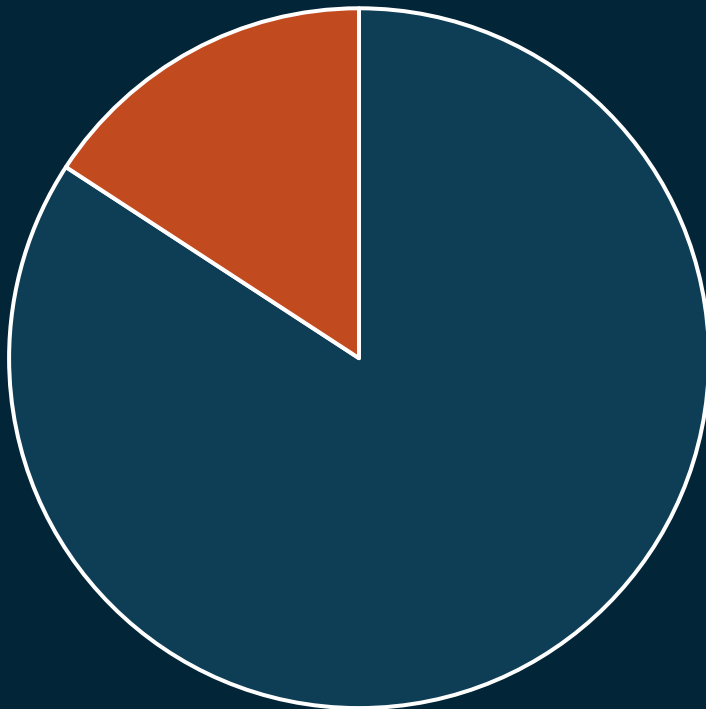
17 veterans
commit suicide
every day in the
US

Data from 2021 USDVA
Report



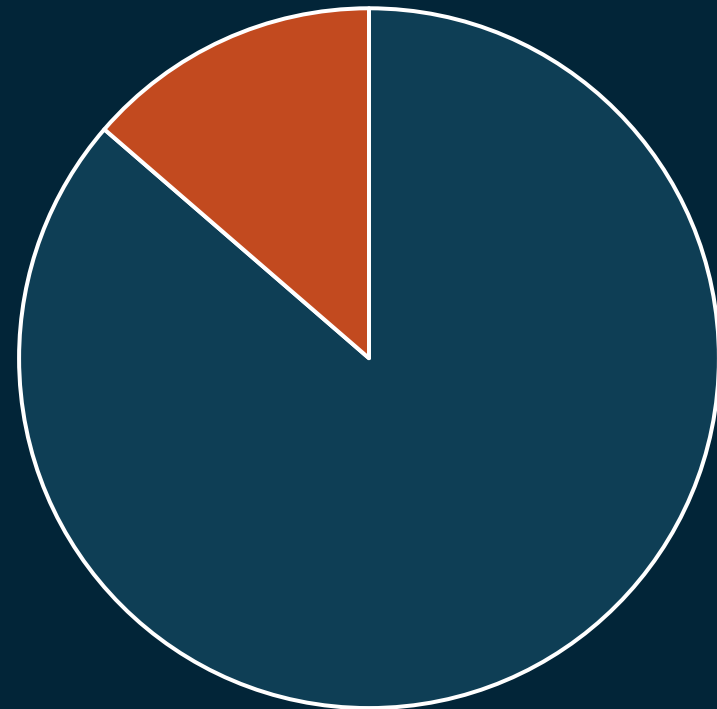
Comparing OR Suicides to National

Suicides in Oregon, 2019



□ General Population ■ Veterans

Suicides Nationwide, 2019



□ General Population ■ Veterans

Data from 2021 USDVA Report



Aging Veterans and Suicide

Over 50% of Oregon Veterans are 65 or older

- Younger veterans have the highest rate of suicide among veterans, but
 - Veterans 55 and older represent the largest number of suicides.
- Suicide rate for older veterans is higher than that of older persons in the general population.
- For veterans aged 55-74, rate of suicide is 26 per 100,000 (national rate is 17.4)





Veteran Suicide Risk Factors

- Challenges with transitioning back to civilian life, and personal relationships
- Loss of purpose and/or comradery they had while serving
- Effects of aging
- Homelessness
- Unaddressed chronic health conditions stemming from military service
- Underlying mental health conditions or substance use disorders
- Effects of PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma, and Traumatic Brain Injury



Federal VA Mental Health Services

- Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255, Press 1
- Vet Centers – 70% of staff are Veterans
- VA Hospitals: White City, Roseburg, Portland
- Community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs)
- VA Tele-health Program



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



ODVA Initiatives

- Charitable check-off allocations
- Collaborate with OHA to support behavioral health focused Veteran Service grants
- Funding support programs such as Rural Veteran Transportation Grant to help support veterans.
- Ongoing outreach and engagement efforts focusing on inclusion of veteran voice, COVID specific outreach, Afghanistan withdrawal specific outreach.



ODVA and the Oregon Charitable Checkoff Program

- Veterans' Suicide Prevention – Charitable Checkoff Program
 - Donations through Oregon Dept. of Motor Vehicles
 - As of 2020, \$341,971 received for veteran suicide awareness and prevention
- Since 2018, ODVA has awarded grants to counties and tribes for Veterans' suicide prevention programming.
- Also helped fund Lines for Life – Veteran Suicide Prevention annual conference.



ODVA Veteran Service Grants

- 2018 and 2020 ODVA Veteran Service grants address factors often contributing to Veteran suicide, thereby helping to prevent Veteran suicide.
 - Crossroads Communities (Lebanon, Oregon)
 - Camp Divide (Wallowa County)
 - Community Counseling Solutions (Eastern Oregon)
 - The Tanner Project (Marion County)



ODVA Transportation Grants

- **Oregon Rural Veteran Medical Transportation Grant (RVMTG)**
 - ODVA and ODOT partnership (Memo of Understanding)
 - ODOT draws on existing rural provider partnerships
 - Free rides to VA facilities and other health & behavioral health appointments
 - ODOT awards and administers grants



ODVA's Focused Outreach During COVID

- Aging Veteran Services (AVS) Volunteer Program had just begun to pick up when COVID-19 started.
 - Shifted focus to outreach to aging populations most at risk.
 - Created brochure with information about Veterans' benefits, and that volunteers are available to answer questions. Was included in Meals on Wheels home deliveries.
- AVS Conservator and Rep-Payee staff have reached out to our clients in a number of ways since the start of the pandemic



Communicating “You Are Not Alone”

- ODVA using multiple mediums (radio, social media, e-newsletters, newspapers) to get out the message: You are not alone.
- ODVA pushing the message to veterans to seek help, reach out to someone, buddy check, and access resources





Oregon Health Authority Initiatives

- Military Culture & Suicide Prevention Trainings
- Vet/Mil focused Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)
- Expansion of Veteran Behavioral Health Peer Support Specialists (VBHPSS)
- Financial support and technical assistance to Community Based Organizations, Tribal Veterans, and other small grant awards
- Adult Suicide Intervention Prevention Plan (ASIPP) vet/mil workgroup
- Vet/Mil specific ECHO
- Zero Suicide Grant
- Garrett Lee Smith Grant





Veterans' Crisis Line



QUESTIONS



**OREGON DEPARTMENT
of VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

Proudly serving veterans since 1945

Kelly Fitzpatrick, Director

www.oregon.gov/odva

800-692-9666