Aleda E. Lutz Shares Perspective on Michigan Suicide Data and Provides Information on VA Suicide Prevention Programs to Help Those in Need

The Aleda E. Lutz VA and their many Community Based Outpatient Clinics have staff ready to help Veterans in need when it comes to preventing suicide.

The VA has a comprehensive suicide prevention program which includes identifying at risk Veterans and providing them with an enhanced care package which includes weekly contact either in person or by phone during the initial 30 days of increased high risk. Veterans identified at high risk have a safety plan completed which is a crisis intervention plan to be used when in crisis.

The Suicide Prevention program receives consults from the Veterans Crisis Line for Veterans in our service area to assure appropriate follow-up care is facilitated. Our Suicide Prevention Coordinator is responsible for training all VA staff in Operation SAVE, the VA’s gatekeeper training for suicide prevention.

Additional support in the Suicide Prevention Program includes our VA having same day scheduling for appointments and emergency walk in services. The VA has also developed a Veteran Outreach Toolkit which the suicide prevention coordinator will share widely with community partners in educating and preventing Veteran suicide. Our Suicide Prevention Coordinator is involved in at least 5 community outreach events to provide community partners and Veterans with resources for suicide prevention.

Veteran suicides in Michigan accounted for 213 deaths in 2014, or 36.4 Veterans per 100,000 individuals, slightly lower than the national rate of 38.4. The suicide rate for Michigan was higher than the national average for the 18-34 age group at 122.2 per 100,000, compared with the national rate of 70.4.

The Veteran suicide rate was also high in Michigan for the age range of 35-54 at 52.3 compared with the 47.7 national rate. Every day, an average of 20 Veterans die by suicide. Of the 20, only 6 receive healthcare through the VA, and only 3 were enrolled in VA mental health, leaving 14 who have never enrolled for care at the VA.

Total suicides in Michigan in 2014 were 1,300 for a 35.5 per 100,000 suicide rate, double the national rate of 17 per 100,000. The Michigan Veteran suicide rate was also double the overall state suicide rate of 16.9.

We encourage our community, Veteran Service Organizations, and others to become involved with helping to prevent any suicide. However, if you identify a Veteran who is at risk, please contact the VA.
Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, or get them to the nearest VA or community facility to ensure their safety. Veterans in crisis will be treated at a VA regardless of their military discharge status and treatment plans will be determined for that individual.

One Veteran suicide, any suicide, is one too many.

The Aleda E. Lutz VAMC in Saginaw, Michigan operates an 81-bed skilled nursing and rehabilitation Community Living Center, with an additional 8-bed acute medicine and telemetry wing. It provides care to over 35,400 Veterans in a 35-county geographic area, from mid-Michigan to the Mackinac Bridge. Veterans also receive care at one of our nine VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics located throughout Michigan. More information about this VA can be found at www.saginaw.va.gov.

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