

**Social Media Toolkit for
Members of the General Assembly Military & Veterans Caucus on
Suicide Prevention and Awareness Efforts, the Governor’s Challenge to
Prevent Suicide Among Veterans, Service Members & their Families in
Virginia**

[Embargoed until 9:30am, February 28, 2020]

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to provide the *Governor’s Challenge Team to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, & their Families* (SVMF) or “Governor’s Challenge Team” partner agencies and members of the General Assembly Military & Veterans Caucus (GAMVC) a reserve of pre-drafted social media posts.

This social media “package” is intended to assist the Governor’s Challenge Team and General Assembly members communicate to their constituents of the state resources available to members of the veteran and military communities they represent and to inform their social media followers on what the Commonwealth is doing to address the public health issue of veteran suicide.

The messages were developed in collaboration between the Department of Veterans Services, the Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services, and the Virginia Department of Military Affairs.

Instructions: Enclosed in this document are nine separate pre-drafted social media posts. Participants may copy and paste the exact text and image into their social media platforms. We ask that participating members and agencies **refrain** from editing or tailoring the posts, as to ensure the messages remain consistent. Subject matter experts in the agencies reviewed the messages to ensure that they were trauma-informed and communicated the intended effect in the military and veterans communities.

Beginning on February 28, 2020 at 9:30am, participating agencies and members may begin using these messages at their discretion. There will not be a coordinated timeline of release for each message. However, we generally recommend that participating members avoid oversaturating their social media platforms with too many messages in a short period.

Additional Information:

Background on the Governor’s Challenge Team to Prevent Suicide Among Veterans, Service Members & their Families (Governor’s Challenge Team)

In January 2019, Governor Northam committed Virginia to be one of the first seven states to implement the Governor’s Suicide Prevention Challenge. The Challenge is a call to action for state and local communities to implement the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) 2018-2028 National Strategy for the Prevention of Veteran Suicide and is guided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The aim of the National Strategy is to prevent suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) using a comprehensive public health approach. The Virginia Governor’s Challenge is co-led by the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, Carlos Hopkins, and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Dr. Daniel Carey, and has developed a strategic framework, which is currently being implemented state-wide.

The Virginia Governor’s Challenge team includes representatives from: Department of Veterans Affairs – DC, Mountain Home, Salem, Martinsburg, Richmond, Hampton VA Medical Centers, Department of Defense, State Agencies –Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), Virginia National Guard, Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services, Virginia State Police, and Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association, National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority.

Virginia Governor’s Challenge Themes: the “3Cs – Care, Connect, and Communicate”

- **Care:** The provision of accessible and culturally competent behavioral health services;
 - **Connect:** Bringing SVMF-specific and community services together; forming systemic partnerships;
 - **Communicate:** Educating the SMVF population on resources and behavioral health providers on military culture and suicide prevention best practices.
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POST #1: “VETERAN SUICIDE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE.”

[Facebook/LinkedIn]:

Video to include: Everyone has a role in Suicide Prevention (~2 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5woA7SLj4uo>

Suicide is a critical public health issue for the entire population, and veterans are at an especially high risk . Nearly 47,000 people die by suicide each year in the U.S. and suicide is the 10th leading cause of death overall. Below are some additional statistics regarding this public health issue:

1 - In the U.S., rates of suicide are highest among younger Veterans (18-29). Despite comparatively lower rates, the largest number of deaths by suicide is among middle age and older Veterans (50+).

2- 3,250 Military Service Members and Veterans in Virginia died by suicide from 2003-2017 (10,974 civilian/non veterans died by suicide during the same period), with 231 deaths in 2017 (representing approximately 21% of total suicides).

3- There were 259 violent deaths among Military Service Members and Veterans in Virginia in 2017, 89% (231) died by suicide.

Suicide is complicated and tragic; there are usually multiple contributing factors. Help is available for you and your loved ones!

If you are experiencing a crisis or supporting a loved one who is, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-8255 (military and veterans press 1) or text 741741.

Hashtags: #YouMatter #BeThere #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF

POST #2: “GOVERNOR’S CHALLENGE TO PREVENT SUICIDE, OVERVIEW.”

[Facebook/LinkedIn]: Awareness of suicide among Veterans, Service members, and their families is one of the Governor of Virginia’s top priorities.

In January 2019, Governor Northam announced Virginia as one of seven states who are developing new ways to engage Service members and Veterans who may be at risk. The Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and the Families is the Commonwealth’s coordinated effort to identify, develop, and implement best practices for use by individuals who are experiencing difficult situations in their lives all the way to healthcare providers and professionals and public policy leaders. Please review the image below to learn about the Veterans Crisis Line and other immediately available resources for Service Members and Veterans.

In addition to committing Virginia as one of the seven states that are developing innovative ways to implement the national suicide prevention strategy, Governor Northam introduced a budget that included vital resources to assist state agencies and infrastructure with addressing the needs of veterans.

These additional resources include experts in addressing veterans’ behavioral health, program funding for professional mental health and medical experts on military cultural competency training, and increased capacity within the community services boards for veterans.

Link to Include: <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2019/january/headline-837916-en.html>

Hashtags: #YouMatter #BeThere #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF

POST #3: VISR PILOT PROGRAM PARTNERS AND PURPOSE

[Facebook/LinkedIn]: “Did you hear the good news? 40 community agencies in the Commonwealth signed on to the Virginia Identify, Screen, and Refer (VISR) Pilot. The VISR Pilot seeks to enhance resource connectivity for military and veteran families before a crisis and the delivery of life saving services in a crisis. # VISR # GovSPChallenge.

We are proud to share that 40 agencies signed on to the Virginia Identify, Screen, and Refer Pilot. The VISR Pilot is an official activity of the Governor’s Suicide Prevention Challenge. It will bolster military culture, suicide prevention, and safety planning in community settings statewide! We are so thankful to our dedicated Hospital, Health District, Social Services, Community Services Board, Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic, and Virginia Department of Veterans Services partners. (link to VDH, DSS, DBHDS, VACSB, The Up Center (Cohen clinic) with post?)

Agencies in the Virginia Identify, Screen, and Refer Pilot are working hard to improve community services for military and veteran families. An important first step for any community agency is to train staff in military culture. Our Virginia Department of Veterans Services provides free military culture training, please contact ___for more information. Click here <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/behavioral-health/military-service-members-veterans-and-their-families> for more training resource ideas. #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF

Image/Graphic/Story: Link to the press release with posts:
<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2019/december/headline-850263-en.html>

Hashtags: #YouMatter #BeThere #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF

POST #4: ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

[Facebook/LinkedIn]:

“Suicide is difficult to talk about, but there are simple ways you can support the veterans in your life. Your message could be exactly what a veteran in crisis needs to hear. What should you say?”

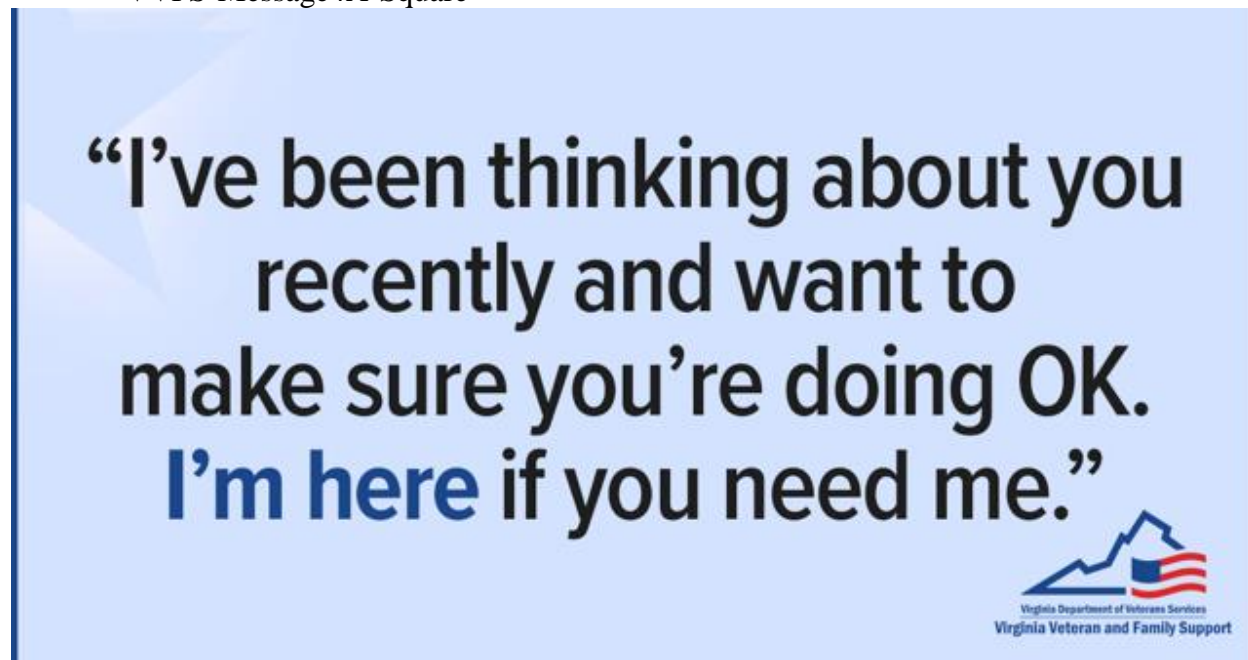
Let us help you find the right words. Visit veteranscrisisline.net/support/be-there.
Virginia Veteran and Family Support is a program of the Virginia Department of Veterans services. For more information, visit dvs.virginia.gov/virginia-veteran-and-family-support-2.”

[Twitter]:

“Suicide is difficult to talk about, but there are simple ways you can support the veterans in your life. Your message could be exactly what a veteran in crisis needs to hear. What should you say? Let us help you find the right words. Visit veteranscrisisline.net/support/be-there.”

Video to Include:Richmond Behavioral Health Authority and Liberation Veteran Video
<https://youtu.be/Bdhyub7IqdU>

Image/Graphic/Story: Typography Card: “I’ve been thinking about you recently and want to make sure you’re doing OK. I’m here if you need me.”
- VVFS-Message4A-Horizontal
- VVFS-Message4A-Square



Hashtags: #YouMatter #BeThere #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF #VirginiaVeterans

POST #5: CRISIS LINE

[Facebook/LinkedIn]: “When you call, text or connect online with the Veterans Crisis Line, a trained responder will help you through any personal crisis, even if it doesn’t involve thoughts of suicide. You decide how much you want to share — they are available to listen and to help.

If you or the veteran or service member you’re concerned about is in danger, the responder will work to make sure everyone is safe. The responder will help you get through the crisis and then help you connect with the services you need, either from your local VA medical center or elsewhere in your community.

If you decide to share your contact information, the Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the nearest VA medical center will contact you by the next business day. If there is a crisis but no imminent risk for injury or suicide, then the responder will listen, offer support, and help you make a plan to stay safe.

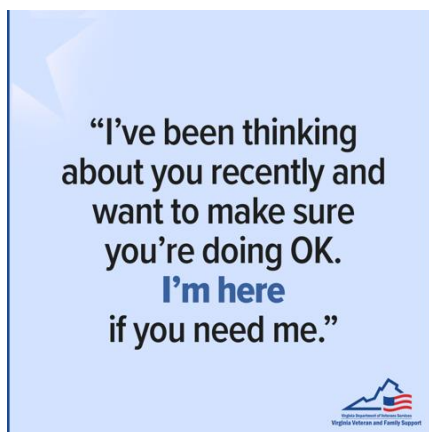
To connect: Call 800-273-8255 and Press 1 — or Text 838255 — or start your confidential chat online at veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat.”

[Twitter]: “When you connect with the Veterans Crisis Line, a trained responder will help you through any personal crisis, even if it doesn’t involve thoughts of suicide. Call 800-273-8255 and Press 1, Text 838255 — or start your confidential chat online here: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat>”

VIDEO to include: - “DVS -Preventing Suicide Video” https://youtu.be/KOw_WeJ9KLo

Image/Graphic/Story: Logo Card: With Veterans Crisis Line logo and information.

- VVFS-Message4B-Horizontal
- VVFS-Message4B-Square



Hashtags: #YouMatter #BeThere #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF #VirginiaVeterans

POST #6: BECOMING AN ADVOCATE

[Facebook/ LinkedIn]: “Each of us has the opportunity to be the one person who can make a difference — the person who asks the question that can save a life. You can play a vital role in suicide prevention. Find out the simple steps to S.A.V.E., and be prepared with this brief suicide prevention training: psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e.”

[Twitter]:” You can play a vital role in suicide prevention. Be prepared to make a difference. You could be the person to ask the question that can save a life. Find out the simple steps to S.A.V.E. with this brief @PsychArmor suicide prevention training:

Link to Include: psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e.”

Image/Graphic/Story: “How You Can Be Prepared to S.A.V.E.”

VVFS-Message5A-Horizontal

VVFS-Message5A-Square



Hashtags: #VeteranReady #YouMatter #BeThere #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF #PsychArmor

POST #7: REMOVING ACCESS TO POTENTIAL LETHAL MEANS

[**Facebook/ LinkedIn**]: “It’s important to properly store firearms and medications. If you’re concerned about someone’s safety and wellbeing, talk with them or their family about removing access to any potential lethal means. For resource and training options, visit lockandtalk.org.”

[**Twitter**]: “It’s important to properly store firearms and medications. If you’re concerned about someone’s safety and wellbeing, talk with them or their family about removing access to any potential lethal means. For resource and training options, visit lockandtalk.org.”

Image/Graphic/Story: Card: Lock Graphic

- VVFS-Message5D-Horizontal
- VVFS-Message5D-Square



Hashtags: #YouMatter #BeThere #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF

POST #8: ACCESS TO COMMUNITY-BASED CARE

[**Facebook/ LinkedIn**]: “There are 20 million veterans in the United States. However, approximately 70 percent don’t receive Veterans Affairs health care, and fewer than 50 percent use any VA benefits or services at all. For this reason, access to community-based health care is critical to meeting the many needs of veterans. Please help connect veterans and their family members in need of community resources to Virginia Veteran and Family Support, a program of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, at: dvs.virginia.gov/virginia-veteran-and-family-support-2”

[**Twitter**]: “There are 20 million veterans in the U.S. However, approximately 70 percent of them don’t receive Veterans Affairs health care. Please help connect veterans and their family members in need of community resources to the Virginia Veteran and Family Support: dvs.virginia.gov/virginia-veteran-and-family-support-2”

VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/wNjum55M1uc>

Image/Graphic/Story: Typography Card: The Care Is There: Access to Community-Based Health Care:

- VVFS-Message6A-Horizontal
- VVFS-Message6A-Square



Hashtags: #YouMatter #BeThere #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF

POST #9: HOW TO ACCESS PUBLIC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

[**Facebook/ LinkedIn**]: “In addition to the resources provided by Veterans Affairs and Military Treatment, veterans and their families can access public behavioral health services in their local community — including same-day access and emergency services. To start, contact the local Community Services Board to find out how they can serve you. For a list of statewide CSBs, visit: dbhds.virginia.gov/community-services-boards-csbs.”

[**Twitter**]: “In addition to resources from by VA and Military Treatment, veterans and their families can access public behavioral health services in Virginia communities — including same-day access and emergency services. Find your local Community Services Board at: dbhds.virginia.gov/community-services-boards-csbs.”

Image/Graphic/Story: Photo with Logo

- VVFS-Message6B-Horizontal

- “DVS -Preventing Suicide Video” https://youtu.be/KOw_WeJ9KLo



Hashtags:

#YouMatter #BeThere #VaGovSPChallengeSVMF
