



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

It Takes A Team...

Vermont has many efforts to prevent suicide and continues to expand programs and initiatives to reach more people. The Vermont Department of Mental Health has been and continues to collaborate with various state agencies such as the Department of Health (VDH) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), community organizations, and various partners statewide to ensure suicide prevention initiatives are implemented effectively. Each organization brings a unique perspective to preventing suicide. As you read on, you will notice it is a team effort to make healing and recovery possible.

Taking A Moment To Pause



Now that you've accessed this newsletter, you can either read on, participate in a self-care activity, or revisit this another time. Go at your own pace, without hesitation. For those looking to pause and participate in an activity various ideas can be found [here](#). What is important about self-care is that today's activity might look differently than the previous one, and that's okay. This is for you.

Let's Catch Up

988 is the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline offering 24/7 access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing mental health-related distress, thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. People can call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org for themselves or if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support. Since July 2022, 988 has served as a universal entry point so that no matter where you live in the United States, you can reach a trained crisis counselor who can help. Following the July launch, 80-90% of all calls from Vermonters are answered in Vermont.



Governor's Challenge

Vermont has entered into a formal commitment to address suicide prevention for veterans, service members and their families through a national initiative called the Governor's Challenge. A team of state leaders, service members, VA leaders, family members and other human and healthcare service partners have joined together to implement the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide in Vermont](#).

In 2021, Vermont lost 142 individuals to suicide. Of those lost, 20% were identified as having served in the U.S. Armed Forces. This data illustrates an increased risk of suicide for those who have served and the crucial need to provide more timely supports that are responsive to their needs.



The Governor's Challenge team is working to identify their top priorities, the best strategies for their community's needs, and the efforts they will use to evaluate Vermont's outcomes.

Center for Disease Control Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Grant



With grants such as the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Comprehensive Suicide Prevention grant, VDH has been able complete various initiatives. One initiative is a public health campaign and website called facing-suicidevt.com. Visitors to the website will find ways to get help, give help, listen to compelling real stories from Vermonters, and find resources listed by topic. The grant has been instrumental to creating [new data products](#) as well. DMH co-manages this grant strengthening the partnership and efforts with VDH.

Garrett Lee Smith Grant

Another grant is the Garrett Lee Smith from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMSHA). This grant's objective is to reduce suicide deaths and attempts among Vermont youth ages 10-24. With programs across multiple settings, such as schools youth programs (afterschool), child welfare and juvenile justice, mental health and healthcare it is wide ranging while focusing on promoting mental health and wellness. In addition, this grant will improve supports available to families.



Events To Be On The Lookout For

CHL Symposium

The Center for Health and Learning (CHL) will be hosting the annual Vermont Suicide Prevention Symposium virtually on September 27th. CHL describes this learning opportunity; "The annual event brings together national, regional, and local Vermont stakeholders to facilitate collaborations and strengthen suicide prevention and awareness. This year, plans include a track for hospital staff involved with suicide prevention, as hospital emergency departments are often at the center of these efforts. CHL also will work with partners across the state to ensure our efforts capture both local & grassroots efforts all the way to national best-practices to guide the work that is evolving quickly here in Vermont."



VA Symposium

The Department of Veteran Affairs in White River Junction will be hosting a symposium titled, [Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business](#) on September 8, 2023 geared towards community providers. They describe the event; "This half-day CEU event will familiarize attendees with services offered within VA, share research and evidence-based suicide prevention practices, and offer learning from a Veteran's perspective. The goal of VAWRJHCS is to continue integrating with the community, to connect and share with agencies and providers, and to be considered as a valuable resource in Vermont healthcare."

