

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
September 2026
By 2nd Vice – Stephanie McMullen

September is Suicide Prevention Month



As part of The American Legion Be the One mission to end veteran suicide, we have joined forces with the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs to develop training for those who want to learn more about interacting and responding with veterans who may be in crisis.

VA S.A.V.E. Training: Empowering Everyone to Help Veterans in Crisis

VA S.A.V.E. Training is a free, brief course—available online or in-person—that equips anyone to support Veterans experiencing crisis or suicidal thoughts. The S.A.V.E. acronym guides you through four essential steps:

- **S – Spot the Signs:** Learn to recognize warning signs such as hopelessness, anxiety, mood swings, withdrawal, or increased substance use. Immediate action is needed if a Veteran expresses suicidal intent or engages in self-destructive behavior.
- **A – Ask the Question:** Don't shy away from asking directly, "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" This critical question opens the door to honest conversation and support.
- **V – Validate the Experience:** Listen without judgment, acknowledge the Veteran's feelings, and offer encouragement. Talking openly about suicide helps reduce stigma and shows genuine care.

- **E – Encourage Next Steps:** Never keep suicidal behavior a secret or leave the Veteran alone. Encourage seeking immediate help from medical professionals or call 911 if necessary.

Support Tips: Remain calm, listen more than you speak, maintain eye contact, use open body language, and offer supportive, hopeful comments. There are no quick solutions, but help is available.

Resources:

- VA Mental Health Services: <http://MentalHealth.VA.gov>
- Online Resource Locator: <http://veteranscrisisline.net/LocalResources/>
- Caregiver Support Program: <http://Caregiver.VA.gov>
- Take the training: <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/va-s-a-v-e>

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to participate. If you or someone you know is in crisis, reach out to the Veterans Crisis Line:

- **Call:** 988, then Press 1
- **Text:** 838255
- **Chat:** <http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat>

Members of The American Legion Family are encouraged to take part in this training and share the training with their communities. Check back to this page or subscribe to [The American Legion Online Update newsletter\(Opens in a new window\)](#) to receive information about new training opportunities as they become available.

OR copy-paste the following in URL line

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