



## **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Suicide Prevention Fact Sheet**

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### **Introduction**

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a specific form of domestic violence defined as the physical, sexual, or psychological harm (including stalking behavior) by a current or former partner. It can occur on a continuum of frequency and severity, ranging from occasional emotional abuse to chronic, severe battering, or even death. It can occur in heterosexual or same-sex relationships and does not require sexual intimacy or cohabitation. (Preventing Intimate Partner Violence, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016).

The Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) and Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP) recognize that both intimate partner violence (IPV) and suicide are serious, closely linked public health concerns that disproportionately affect Veterans and their families. The relationship between these issues is complex. Not only do they share many of the same risk factors, it also appears that the presence of either can significantly increase risk for the other.

It is also recognized that having close relationships serve as one of the strongest protective factors against both IPV and suicide as well as reducing depression and anxiety while enhancing the individual's well-being and quality of life. Strengthening healthy relationships significantly benefits the individual, partners and family while reducing risk for suicide and intimate partner violence alike.

Within the Veteran population, situational and bi-directional forms of IPV may be an indication that personal or life stressors have overcome individuals' and couples' existing coping skills. Intervention can help couples build healthy communication and intimacy skills, especially when intervention occurs early. The VA has programs and interventions address not only the identified IPV behaviors, but also provide the Veteran with an opportunity to explore how trauma affected his or her ability to connect with others, to regulate emotion and to build trust again.

### **Common Risk Factors of both IPV & Suicide**

In the general population, several risk factors have been associated with elevated risk for both suicide and IPV:

- Poverty
- Employment Instability
- Housing Instability
- Food Insecurity
- Discrimination & Inequality
- History of Abuse

In addition to the issues above, Veterans may also be disproportionately affected by additional factors such as:

- Additional trauma experiences
- Substance Misuse
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Depression
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Moral Injury
- Trust, Guilt, Shame
- Feelings of Isolation



## What is the VA doing to help?

Our mission is to support the implementation of a comprehensive, integrated system of programs and services aimed at ending Suicide and Intimate Partner Violence. This is being accomplished by providing education, prevention, establishing collaborative relationships with community partners, implementing screening and early identification of those affected, and offering an array of intervention choices.

### Suicide Prevention

- VA is working to reduce suicide risk among **all** Veterans, whether or not they are enrolled in VA health care. Our goal is to equip communities in helping Servicemembers and Veterans get the care that is right for them, whenever and wherever they need it.
- Every VA has a Suicide Prevention Team that provides training, support and intervention within the VA system, while also building community partnerships to help community partners better understand the needs of Veterans and their families.
- VA has made great strides in Veteran suicide prevention, especially in crisis intervention. We will not relent in our efforts to connect Veterans who are experiencing an emotional or mental health crisis with lifesaving support.
- The Veterans and Military Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Chat), or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- [VA's online resource locator](#) helps Veterans easily find VA resources in their area, including Suicide Prevention Coordinators, crisis centers, VA medical centers, outpatient clinics, Veterans Benefits Administration offices, and Vet Centers. Go to - <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>

### Intimate Partner Violence

- The VHA Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) site Coordinators offer a wide range of integrated programs and services aimed at supporting VA providers in assessing and addressing IPV for Veterans, their partners and Caregivers, as well as VA staff impacted by IPV.
- Services offered include education, prevention, screening, and intervention, as well as collaborating with local community programs.
- The VHA IPVAP works with a variety of internal programs whose aim is to strengthen and promote healthy relationships. Programs include the Warrior to Soul Mate program, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Couples, Family Services and Veterans Readjustment Counseling centers.
- VHA IPVAP also provides an array of evidence-based, trauma-informed intervention options for Veterans who use or are at risk of using IPVAP, including the Strength at Home Program.
- Talking to your VA providers can make a difference. While IPVAP recognizes that both men and women experience IPV, studies indicate that women who talk to their healthcare providers about IPV are 4 times more likely to use an intervention and 2.6 times more likely to exit the abusive relationship.
- IPVAP supports practice of screening for both IPV & suicide risk as each can increase risk for the other.
- For more information, please visit the IPVAP Website at <https://www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV/Index.asp>
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline (**1-800-799-7233** or [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)) is available to callers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and provides services in more than 170 languages. Hotline advocates answer questions, assist with safety planning, provide information, and directly connect callers to domestic violence resources where they live. All calls to the hotline are confidential and anonymous.



## What can you do to help?

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, should report to the nearest emergency room or call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential crisis intervention and support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year at 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or send a text message to 838255

*For more information about IPV, IPVAP, and the resources available, please visit the IPV public-facing website at <https://www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV/Index.asp>.*

Or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233 or [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org) is available to callers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and provides services in more than 170 languages. Hotline advocates are available to answer questions, assist with safety planning, and provide information as well as directly connect callers to domestic violence resources available in their local areas. All calls are confidential and anonymous.

## Community Resources (non-VA) for Veterans and Military and their partners:

- **The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)** is the Nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (**1-800-656-4673** or [online.rainn.org](http://online.rainn.org)) in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country.
- **Futures without Violence** is a national organization that has been providing support, education, research and resources to individuals and organizations for over 30 years. They are a supporting stakeholder for the VA's Intimate Partner Violence Program. ([www.futureswithoutviolence.org](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org)).
- **The DoD #BeThere Peer Support Call and Outreach Center (844-357-7337)** provides 24/7 confidential and anonymous non-clinical peer-to-peer support to Service members and their families.
- **The DoD Safe Helpline (877-995-5247)** is the DoD's anonymous hotline for members of the military community affected by sexual assault. This helpline is run by RAINN.

## Podcast Speakers:



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