

September 2023

September Veterans and Family Support Newsletter Article

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Thank God it is September. August was a whirlwind of travel and visiting with our brothers and sisters all over the state at the Learning Academies. I had the best time and learned so much. I hope that you did too.

September also brings us to Suicide Awareness month. We have all heard the statistic that 22 veterans a day die by their own hand. This is truly heartbreaking and unacceptable. We all should be aware every day, not just in the month of September.

I can hear in my head you ask, "but what can we do to help?" Being aware of the issue is a start. But further, do you know the signs? Do you know where to call to get someone help? What can you do to help raise awareness?

Recognize and being aware of the signs of suicidal thoughts in a person. Some are obvious and some are not so blatant. Some behaviors to look for include talking about wanting to die or having profound guilt or shame. Talking about being a burden. Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.

Changing behavior is another key that someone is in potential distress and could be suicidal. Behaviors such as increased substance abuse, making a plan or searching for ways to die. Withdrawing from friends and family. Engaging in risk taking behaviors.

If you know someone is displaying the previous signs, what do you do? ASK them, "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" Be calm and LISTEN to them. Don't judge and don't argue with them. Use supportive and encouraging comments. Be honest and expedite getting them help. Suggest that they call the **Veterans Crisis Line, 1-800-273-8255 or easier, text 988.**

Raising awareness is a key piece in helping decrease veteran suicide awareness. Wear the Auxiliary blue tear drop pin. It is a great tool to open a discussion when someone asks what it is or what does it represent. Creating an information board and putting it up in your Post or other public place is another easy idea. Host a Suicide Awareness training or luncheon. These are just some possible suggestions. Be creative and try something new or different.

I would love to know what you do to help raise awareness of veterans' suicide. Send me a report and include pictures. Don't forget that you can also fill out the National Veterans and Family Support Award form. It can be found in the National Program book, on MALTA or just ask me and I will be glad to help you with it.

As always, report, **report, REPORT**. I am here to help in whatever way you need. Call me at 541-279-7135. Please leave me a voice message if I do not answer. I still work full time. For a faster reply, text me at the above phone number. You can also email me at tsteller@gmail.com. Lastly, you can always send me a good old-fashioned letter. My address is 9408 SW Meadow Rd. Terrebonne, OR 97760.

Until next time, take care and member, school is starting. Watch out for children going to and from school and drive safely.

Loyally,

Terri Steller

Dept. of Oregon Veterans and Family Support Chairman