



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

An Agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## **SAMHSA** **News Release**

For Release  
12:01AM Monday, July 28, 2008

Contact SAMHSA Press Office, 240-276-2130  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

### **Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-TALK) Provides Vital Help to More Than 55,000 Callers in Its First Year**

*First-of-a-kind hotline launched by two government agencies proves successful in providing specialized help to thousands of veterans in crisis.*

The Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), has provided immediate, often life-saving, help to tens of thousands of veterans and their loved ones during the year since its inception. Over 22,000 calls have come directly from veterans, with the remainder coming from others seeking help for veterans who are family members or friends.

The hotline was launched last summer as a collaborative effort by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to meet the special needs of veterans who are in personal crisis.

The hotline has proven to be a particularly valuable resource not only for veterans at risk of suicide, but also for family members and friends who are trying to help them. Indeed, many of the calls into the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline over the past year have been from family members and friends who are concerned about the welfare of a veteran they love.

“The Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline has been very helpful in providing veterans in crisis and their loved ones with more immediate access to the specialized help they need,” said SAMHSA Administrator Terry Cline, Ph.D.

The Veterans Suicide Prevention hotline service provides national, around-the-clock access to crisis counseling and behavioral health services for all veterans and their families in emotional distress or suicidal crisis. Veterans seeking help, or family members or other loved ones concerned about a veteran in distress, can access immediate help by calling 1-800-273-TALK. They will hear a voice prompt saying, “If you are a U.S. military veteran or if you are calling about a veteran, please press ‘1’ now.”

By selecting this option, the caller is automatically connected to a VA-operated call center in Canandaigua, NY, staffed by specially trained professional crisis workers. Among the specialized services provided by the veterans hotline is the capability of

connecting the veteran to his or her local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator for priority follow-up and monitoring to assure that the veteran receives ongoing care at the local VA Medical Center.

In some cases, when the call volume exceeds the capacity of the Canandaigua center, calls are automatically routed to one of five back-up crisis centers within SAMHSA's National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This lifeline currently provides help to more than 42,000 calls each month through a network of more than 130 certified crisis centers. Depending on their needs, callers are linked to local emergency, mental health, or social services. All calls are free and confidential.

Further information about SAMHSA's National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and its Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline can be accessed at:

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.

*SAMHSA is a public health agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The agency is responsible for improving the accountability, capacity and effectiveness of the nation's substance abuse prevention, addictions treatment and mental health services delivery systems*

###