



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 15, 2011

VA Launches New PSA on Suicide Prevention for Veterans *Confidential Crisis Line Provides 24/7 Access to Help*

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reaching out to Veterans in crisis and their families in a new public service announcement to raise awareness about suicide prevention resources, such as the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

“As more Veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan, the critical need for mental health care is rising,” said Sonja V. Batten, assistant deputy chief patient care services officer for mental health. “VA is increasing its efforts to reach out to Veterans in need and their families, to inform them about available services and programs.”

The new television spot encourages Veterans in crisis to call the crisis hotline number at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and then push 1 on their telephone keypad to reach a trained VA mental health professional who can assist the Veteran 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“Suicide is preventable,” said Batten. “Every Veteran suicide is tragic and regardless of the numbers or rates, one Veteran suicide is too many. We feel the responsibility to continue to spread the word throughout the nation that suicide prevention is everyone’s business.”

So far, more than 379,000 people have called the hotline, and more than 200,000 of these callers have identified themselves as Veterans, family members or friends of Veterans. The hotline has led to more than 13,000 rescues of actively suicidal Veterans.

The hotline also operates an online Veterans Chat program, which provides Veterans, their families and friends with the ability to communicate anonymously online in real-time with a trained VA mental health professional. Veterans Chat can be accessed through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline’s web page at

<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx>.

- More -

Hotline PSA 2/2/2/2

Through the hotline and Veterans Chat, VA can connect Veterans and their families with important services, including suicide prevention coordinators, as well as general inpatient and outpatient psychiatric services at VA medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics.

The hotline, which is part of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, was started in 2007 as a partnership between VA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The PSA can be viewed at

<http://www.youtube.com/user/VeteransHealthAdmin#p/u/1/PPL7CAHixQE>.

#