

Female Veterans at a Greater Risk for Suicide

The risk for suicide is growing among all sections of the population including young female veterans. Women veterans are 2 to 3 times more likely to die by suicide than non-veteran women. Female vets are more likely to be young and use firearms to complete suicides, compared to their civilian counterparts.

Recent studies by Dr. McFarland,

Ph.D. from Oregon University verified that women who have been in the military had a 3-fold increased risk for suicide compared with non-military women. In 2007, CBS news reported that the rate of suicide in the general female population is 12 vets for every 5 non-veterans.

Women now make up 10-15% of active service members. They suffer

from the same problems as male veterans when they return from combat such as: exposure to combat experiences; stress from multiple deployments; service related injuries; PTSD; military sexual trauma and guilt over leaving children behind. Upon returning, they find it difficult to re-enter a society where they can't really share their experiences with anyone. Employment opportunities are limited and the number of homeless female veterans is increasing. They are unlikely to ask for help because they don't want to be looked at as being weak.

The best way we can help veterans is to thank them for their service, see through their eyes how difficult their return from war can be and help them build bridges to reconnect.

If you suspect a veteran might need help, don't be afraid to reach out and ask them how they feel. Talking about suicide does NOT increase risk of suicide, it opens the door to getting them

Portage Path Behavioral Health's SUPPORT

Hotline

Call 330-434-9144 or
1-800-273-TALK
for 24-hour assistance.

The Summit County Suicide Prevention Coalition

preventsuicide@admboard.org

help. The VA has social workers in every outpatient clinic who deal specifically with this problem. The number for the Akron VA is (330) 724-7715. There is also the Lifeline, where anyone can call anonymously at (800) 273-TALK (if you are a veteran, press "1"). If you are interested in becoming a part of the Summit County Suicide Prevention Coalition, call (330) 762-3500 or email at preventsuicide@admboard.org.

