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Wolf Administration Raises Awareness of Suicide Prevention Among Pennsylvania Veterans

September is National Suicide Prevention Month

Harrisburg, PA – Members of the Wolf administration gathered today at the YWCA Greater Harrisburg to raise awareness about veteran suicide, a health crisis taking the lives of about 20 veterans a day nationwide. The event was held in recognition of September being National Suicide Prevention Month.

"Our veterans deserve our gratitude and our support for their service to our country," Governor Tom Wolf said. "It's important to show our thanks by providing critical resources to our at-risk veterans. My administration is committed to supporting our veterans in a variety of ways, including suicide prevention efforts."

Assembling to talk about how to reduce the number of veteran suicides were the Department of Aging (PDA), Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), and the YWCA Greater Harrisburg, as well as other veteran advocates.

"It is important that we all continue to have discussions about suicide and let our loved ones in crisis know that there is hope," said Dr. Daniel L. Jurman, DMin, executive director of the Governor's Office of Advocacy & Reform. "Pooling resources and raising awareness is a strong approach to sending the message that we all care and that help is available. Through a number of initiatives, Governor Wolf has kept suicide prevention and behavioral health and wellness in the forefront, and his administration will work vigorously to reduce the number of veteran suicides."

"Veterans are 1.5 times more likely to die by suicide than Americans who never served in the military, and the risk factor for female veterans is even higher at 2.2 times," said Maj. Gen. Mark Schindler, Pennsylvania's adjutant general and head of the DMVA. "Veterans are a proud and humble group of people and may be reluctant to ask for help. I want you to know we are here for you. We are thankful to Governor Wolf, our sister state agencies and community partners who advocate on behalf of veterans at risk."

“No matter your background, mental health and personal crises can touch any of us at any point. When you’re going through this, it can be easy to turn inward and not let others around you know what you’re experiencing, but your life and your health are too important to go through these feelings alone,” said DHS Executive Deputy Secretary Andrew Barnes. “We’re all living through a time that has changed our routines and way of life in order to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities more broadly. If you are experiencing difficult emotions or feelings of hopelessness, your feelings are valid. Just as you don’t want your loved ones to feel alone in this, you also are not alone and help is always available.”

“The YWCA is one of southcentral Pennsylvania’s largest direct service providers for veterans,” said Mary Quinn, CEO, YWCA Greater Harrisburg. “We believe in transforming lives and addressing the root causes of social issues facing veterans today. We support initiatives like this to address mental health and help everyone know they have value and resources are available.”

Governor Wolf has launched a number of initiatives focused on suicide prevention. Leading the way on veteran suicide prevention efforts has been the federal Veterans Administration - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans and their Families. Within Pennsylvania, this program is led by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Other multi-agency suicide prevention efforts rolled out by Governor Wolf include:

- The Suicide Prevention Task Force, aimed at developing the state’s suicide prevention plan, a long-term strategy to reduce suicide in Pennsylvania.
- Reach Out PA: Your Mental Health Matters, an anti-stigma campaign.
- The Governor’s Special Council on Gun Violence, led by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

If you are a veteran in crisis — or you are concerned about one — free, confidential support is available 24/7. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, send a text message to **838255**, or [chat online](#).

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