



# Lethal Means Safety (LMS) Training

## Talking Points

### PLEASE NOTE:

These talking points are meant to be used by VA leaders to encourage community partners and clinicians who care for Veterans to take Lethal Means Safety (LMS) trainings.

### Top-Line Messages

- Veteran suicide prevention is VA's highest clinical priority, but we can't do it alone. Suicide is preventable and everyone has a role to play.
- Most of us have a Veteran in our lives. As a community health care provider, you play a critical role in the mission of caring for Veterans.
- VA offers trainings for VA providers and those within VA's Community Care Network to learn the importance of Lethal Means Safety (LMS), and skills and tactics to better engage in effective LMS discussions with those at risk for suicide. Now, these trainings are available and encouraged for all community health care providers.
- Lethal means are objects that can be used to inflict self-harm (such as medications and firearms). Discussions about creating time and space between an individual and a firearm or dangerous medications during a crisis can save lives. Resources for developing action plans are available to Veterans, their families and their support networks (including community providers, Veteran peers and other support groups).
- These trainings empower providers to have discussions with Veterans at risk for suicide about secure storage of firearms and other lethal means.

### Background

- Community health care providers inside and outside of VA's Community Care Network play a significant role in providing support to Veterans in crisis and at risk for suicide.
- It is important for community partners to understand military and Veteran culture and integrate suicide prevention into their work. Most suicidal crises are brief, with less than one hour from decision to action. Building time and space between the impulse to act and one's access to lethal means can prevent suicides. The

# Lethal Means Safety (LMS) Training

## Talking Points

more providers in the community who are trained to provide this counseling to Veterans under their care, the more lives that can be potentially saved.

- Professionals who provide health care to Veterans have the opportunity to ask about availability and storage of firearms and medications. Providers can encourage home safety and work with Veterans and their support networks to reduce access to lethal means when a Veteran is in crisis.
- The suicide rate among Veterans in 2020 was 57% higher than non-Veteran adults in the U.S., according to the [2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#).
- 71% of Veteran suicides involve a firearm (21% higher than non-Veteran US adults). Approximately 95% of firearm involved suicide attempts are fatal, compared to approximately 5% fatality rates among all other methods of suicide combined.
- Between 2001 and 2020, rates of Veteran firearm use in suicide attempts have increased by 11% among women Veterans (compared to a 16% decrease among non-Veteran US women) and 5% among Veteran men (compared to a 5% decrease among non-Veteran US men).
- Reducing access to means of suicide that are highly lethal and commonly used is a proven strategy for decreasing suicide rates.

## Training Details

- VHA has two options for free self-paced LMS trainings:
  - [One-hour training](#) accessible on VHA's training platform, which provides one hour of free Continuing Education Units (CEUs)/Continuing Medical Education Units (CMUs)
  - [25-minute training](#) through PsychArmor on "Firearms & Suicide in the Military-Connected Community: 5 Things Medical Professionals Need to Know," which will provide a certificate of completion (no CEUs available)
- Both trainings provide valuable resources to help clinicians talk to Veterans at risk for suicide.
- These trainings:
  - Teach providers about secure firearm storage and its role in suicide prevention.
  - Review how to screen Veterans for suicide risk.

# Lethal Means Safety (LMS) Training

## Talking Points

- Teach providers to identify situations where LMS discussions may be necessary.
- Provide tools and tactics to aid providers talking to Veteran patients about LMS, including ways to build trust with Veterans so that they can have effective conversations about securing firearms.
- The trainings support suicide prevention strategies for Veterans that are specific to this population's needs.

## Closing

- Please share this training opportunity with your colleagues and community partners.
- The more providers who are equipped to have these crucial conversations about securing lethal means, the more Veterans' lives we can save.
- Everyone can be part of the solution by checking in with the Veterans in their life and encouraging them to reach out if they need help.