



Pennsylvania
**Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs**



Pennsylvania
**Commission on Crime
and Delinquency**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 21, 2026

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Nick Williams, nicholaswi@pa.gov (DMVA)

Ali Sindlinger, asindlinge@pa.gov (PCCD)

Shapiro-Davis Administration Hosts Veteran Suicide Prevention Roundtable During National Suicide Prevention Month

This event is part of DMVA's statewide suicide prevention initiative to support Pennsylvania's service members, veterans, and their families, funded by \$143,947 investment through PCCD's Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program.

U.S. veterans experience a higher risk for suicide compared to the general population. [Pennsylvania recorded 268 veteran deaths by suicide in 2023, a 16% increase from 2021.](#)

Wormleysburg, PA – Today, the **Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA)** and the **Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)** hosted a suicide prevention roundtable at the American Legion State Headquarters to discuss the ongoing suicide epidemic among veterans and highlight critical support available to help Pennsylvania's over 650,000 veterans, active service members, and their families.

Both women and men who served in the military face a higher risk of dying by suicide; specifically suicide by firearm where [female veterans have a 144 percent higher chance, and men have an almost 70 percent greater chance.](#) Veteran firearm suicide rates have increased 65% since 2001.

"Pennsylvania veterans and service members can face unique challenges stemming from their military tenure; it is imperative that we let them know we are here to help in many ways," **said Maj. Gen. John Pippy, Pennsylvania's adjutant general and head of the DMVA.** "Veteran self-harm is one of the most pressing social issues we face, and events like this raise awareness and promote a sense of community. DMVA is dedicated, standing ready to assist Pennsylvania's veterans with getting the help they need."

Last December, DMVA was one of six recipients under PCCD's federal Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) Firearm Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention initiative, [receiving over \\$140,000 in grant funding](#) for their ***Plan. Pause. Protect. Campaign.***

"Preventing suicide among our veterans, active service members, and their loved ones is a shared responsibility, and this funding underscores the Shapiro-Davis Administration's commitment to statewide collaboration to make our communities safer," said **Kirsten Kenyon, PCCD Executive Director**. "Through this partnership with DMVA, we are investing in comprehensive, evidence-based strategies that provide critical resources to service members, veterans and their families, while reinforcing Pennsylvania's broader mission to reduce gun violence and prevent suicide across every corner of our Commonwealth."

This investment is helping DMVA partner with other agencies to host mental health and suicide prevention events throughout the Commonwealth, with a focus on educating the public about lethal means safety. This includes safety planning and 'reasons for living' workshops. Additionally, the grant has allowed DMVA to expand on federal and state prevention efforts and distribute firearm cable locks and safe storage devices to Pennsylvania veterans.

"The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (PA DHS) is proud to partner with PCCD and DMVA to help prevent suicide and to provide resources specifically for veterans and their families who may be in crisis or who need behavioral health services," said **Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Deputy Secretary Jen Smith**. "Since 2019, PA DHS has worked closely with our fellow Commonwealth agencies through the Suicide Prevention Task Force, which developed a [Suicide Prevention Plan for Pennsylvania](#) that outlines shared goals, provides resources for those seeking help with a mental or behavioral health crisis, and highlights Pennsylvania's alignment with the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. We know that by working together, we can reduce stigma around feelings of self-harm and suicide and seeking help for mental health issues, and we can better support all Pennsylvanians, including those who have served our country."

DMVA hosted its first ***Plan. Pause. Protect. Campaign*** event on August 15 in Greene County. More than 15 partner groups supported and attended the event, which included multiple speakers, workshops and demonstrations. The second event will take place in Chester County in mid-October.

PCCD's investments in DMVA's initiative and other firearm suicide prevention efforts build on the agency's commitment reducing gun violence and improving responses to mental and behavioral health needs. These include supporting co-responder programs, Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT), and Pennsylvania's statewide [CIT Training and Technical Assistance Center](#). Additionally, PCCD's [Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#)

has convened stakeholders and developed recommendations to address firearm suicide as a key part of its goal to reduce gun injuries and deaths across the state.

Firearms are the most lethal means of suicide, with a 90 percent fatality rate compared to other methods. Over 60 percent of gun deaths throughout the Commonwealth were suicides in 2023. Additionally, 19 percent of those deaths were veterans.

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 by dialing **988 and then pressing 1**, send a text message to **838255**, or [chat online](#). Additionally,

Another resource available to veterans facing challenging times is DMVA's PA [VETConnect](#), an outreach program that enables the DMVA to concentrate services from within communities where our veterans live. This initiative allows the DMVA to utilize community-based providers to fill gaps in services for homelessness, employment, mental health, addiction and more.

Pennsylvania is taking part in the Veterans Administration (VA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's *Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among our Service Members, Veterans and their Families*. In Pennsylvania, this initiative is led by DMVA, in partnership with sister agencies and departments, several educational institutions and a broad group of not-for-profit and faith-based organizations to develop and implement statewide and regional suicide prevention best practices. The team actively focuses on reducing veteran suicide every day, all year long.

Visit the [DMVA website](#) to learn more about veteran suicide prevention awareness efforts, or follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter/X](#).

#