

## **2022 Annual Suicide Prevention Council Report**

### **Military & Veterans Committee**

- The Committee welcomed a new co-chair in 2022 after the VA Medical Center in Manchester, NH filled the position of Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator. The addition of the Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator to the committee is anticipated to result in greater collaboration among Veteran-focused groups in the state as well as an increase in committee membership in 2023.
- The Committee continues to be actively involved with the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans and their Families which is funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Veterans Administration (VA). This initiative continues to provide members of the Committee with a variety of technical assistance and free training related to best practices to reduce the rate of suicide in the military-connected community. The Service Members, Veterans and their Families (SMVF) Technical Assistance Center at Policy Research Associates, Inc., contracted by SAMHSA, provided a variety of technical assistance to the Committee in 2022 including facilitation services to help re-focus the efforts of the group and identify priority areas post-pandemic. In 2023, the Committee will be provided data and facilitation services to evaluate how diversity among the Veteran population is considered in statewide efforts to prevent suicide. Additionally, members of the Committee will be provided with funding to attend national conferences and workshops that will inform the work of the committee.
- Ask the Question--Funding was used in 2022 for a contract through NH DMAVS with Granite River Studios to produce an ATQ Video Series that was made publicly available to providers seeking information and guidance on how to identify SMVF in their practices in an effective and sustainable way. These videos will be used in the coming year to support promotion of Ask the Question.
- The Committee continues to support the efforts of the Lakes Region Veterans Coalition (LRVC), which is a group formed as a result of the committee efforts to bring federal resources into the state aimed at reducing the Veteran suicide rate in rural areas. Together With Veterans (TWV) is a community-based suicide prevention program for rural Veterans. TWV involves partnering with rural Veterans and their communities to implement community-based suicide prevention. TWV is funded by the Veterans Administration Office of Rural Health. The Governor's Challenge Team first brought TWV to New Hampshire in 2018-2019 and then re-launched the effort in the Lakes Region in 2020 for form the group that is now known as Lakes Region Veterans Coalition. In 2022, LRVC obtained a 501(c)(3) designation so it can sustain efforts after the third and final year of funding and support through TWV. 2022 was the 2<sup>nd</sup> of a 3-year program. The SPC Military & Veterans Committee continues to actively collaborate with and support the efforts of the LRVC. In 2022, LRVC forged a collaboration with Lakes Region Community College and provided two trainings to EMT students at the college. This will be an ongoing partnership so trainings for first responder students at

this college will continue in 2023. In 2023 they hope to establish a similar partnership with police and fire academies in New Hampshire.

- The promotion and provision of military cultural competency and suicide prevention trainings for community providers and employers continues to be a priority area for the committee. Between June - December 2022, 871.37 hours of training was made available to providers and businesses as a result of committee efforts. The Committee purchased 52 ASIST registrations that were provided to community providers interested in suicide prevention training. The Committee worked with PsychArmor and the VA to customize two online training portals for use in New Hampshire. One is for social service providers working with Veterans and the other is for employers and businesses employing Veterans and their family members. Both portals are free to use and contain a variety of high-quality training products related to serving or employing those with military experience. Members and member organizations of the committee supported a monthly Lunch & Learn webinar series coordinated by the NH Department of Military Affairs and Veterans Services by presenting information and topics for the webinars that related to the issues Veteran families face or the resources available to them. In November 2022, the committee supported the coordination and implementation of an Annual Symposium for NH Veteran-Friendly Businesses that featured workshops on supporting the mental wellness of Veterans at work and how to effectively recruit and retain Veterans and their family members.
- The committee provided input to DH DMAVS to help design a Welcome Home Letter that includes community resources for, and is sent to, Veterans who recently separated from the military and moved home to New Hampshire. Information about where they or their family can access resources related to mental health and wellness are included in the letter.
- Committee members continued to be actively involved in the development process of the state's closed loop referral system throughout 2022 to ensure that the system meets the needs of SVMF in New Hampshire as well as the needs of the Department of Military Affairs and Veterans Services (DMAVS) and the committee to access data demonstrating trends related to the needs of SMVF. As a result of this work, NH DMAVS contributed state funding to the project.
- The committee collaborated with the NH DMAVS to write a Request for Proposal in 2022 to allocate \$750,000 for services that increase access to mental health services and reduce social isolation for Veterans in New Hampshire. Two contracts for this RFP were granted in 2022—Easterseals NH and Partnership for Public Health—and the services will be funded through the end of the state's fiscal year (June 2023). As part of the state contracts, the agencies receiving funding will be required to have representation on the SPC Military & Veterans Committee so their work can be shared with members of the committee and additional collaborations can be forged.

- The Committee's efforts are described and meeting minutes are publicly available at: <https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/about-us/councils-and-committees/suicide-prevention-efforts>