A PLAN CAN SUPPORT VETERANS AND THEIR LOVED ONES
Veterans who are thinking about harming themselves or who have attempted suicide should create and keep a safety plan. It is important for the Veteran’s family members and loved ones to have a copy of the safety plan so they know what to do and where to get help in a crisis.

MAKE A PLAN TO DEAL WITH CRISIS
A safety plan is a written list of coping strategies and sources of support that Veterans can use before or during a suicidal crisis. The plan should be brief, easy to read, and in the Veteran’s own words. A safety plan should also be easily accessible to the Veteran and selected family members and friends at all times.

HOW TO DEVELOP A SAFETY PLAN
Safety planning is a collaborative process. Veterans who are at risk for suicide should work with a loved one, trusted adviser, clinician, VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator, or other mental health professional to create a plan that is right for them.

Safety plans should include the following elements:
- Descriptions of specific experiences, stressors, or other factors that trigger the Veteran’s thoughts of suicide
- Strategies the Veteran uses to deal with stressful situations, for example: “When I get home after a bad day at work, I go for a long walk to cool down.”
- A list of the Veteran’s contacts for social support — those who should have a copy of the plan
- Contact information for emergency professional help and care providers
- Ways to limit access to lethal means, such as weapons and ammunition or large quantities of medication
SAFETY PLAN TEMPLATE

This safety plan is designed for use before or during a suicidal crisis. This form should be filled out in the Veteran’s own words, preferably with the help of a loved one, a trusted adviser, or a mental health professional. If this is your plan, please keep it with you at all times so you have support whenever you need it, and share a copy with family members or friends you trust.

STEP 1: RECOGNIZING WARNING SIGNS

These are my warning signs that things are starting to feel out of control.

Sometimes these warning signs are connected to my thoughts of suicide:

Thoughts: _____________________________________________________________

Feelings: _____________________________________________________________

Behaviors: _____________________________________________________________

Symptoms: _____________________________________________________________

STEP 2: USING INTERNAL COPING STRATEGIES

When I notice these warning signs, these are things that I can do on my own to help make sure I do not act on my suicidal thoughts or urges.

These are things that help calm me or distract me from my thoughts:

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________

It is also important for me to consider:

“Is there anything that might stand in the way of using these coping strategies when I am in crisis?”

STEP 3: PEOPLE AND SOCIAL SETTINGS THAT PROVIDE DISTRACTION

When my initial coping strategies do not fully resolve the situation, I will reach out to others.

To create a personalized list, answer the following:

• Who helps me take my mind off my problems, at least for a little while?

• Who helps me feel better when I socialize with them?

• Are there places I can go (e.g., a coffee shop) that help me take my mind off my problems?

List several people and social settings, in case the first option is unavailable.

1. Name: ___________________________________________ Phone Number: __________________________

2. Name: ___________________________________________ Phone Number: __________________________

3. Place: ___________________________________________ Phone Number: __________________________

4. Place: ___________________________________________
**STEP 4: PEOPLE WHOM I CAN ASK FOR HELP IF DISTRACTION ALONE DOESN’T FULLY WORK**

When I need to talk about how I’m feeling, I will contact the people in my life who care about me, are supportive, and want to help.

Those people are:

1. Name: ___________________________ Phone Number: ____________________
2. Name: ___________________________ Phone Number: ____________________
3. Name: ___________________________ Phone Number: ____________________

**STEP 5: PROFESSIONALS OR AGENCIES I CAN CONTACT DURING A CRISIS**

When I need to talk to a mental health professional or other provider, I will call one:

1. Therapist/Clinician Name: ___________________________ Phone Number: ____________________
2. Primary Care Provider: ___________________________ Phone Number: ____________________
3. VA Suicide Prevention Resource Coordinator Name: ___________________________
   VA Suicide Prevention Resource Coordinator Phone: ___________________________
4. Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255, press 1
5. Local Urgent Care Services: ___________________________
   Urgent Care Services Address: ___________________________
   Urgent Care Services Phone Number: ___________________________

**STEP 6: MAKING THE ENVIRONMENT SAFE**

To help keep myself safe, I will remove or safely store things I could use to hurt myself.

This is my plan to remove or safely store the following items: [complete all that apply]

- Firearms: ___________________________
- Medications: ___________________________
- Household toxins/poisons: ___________________________
- Sharp or other dangerous objects: ___________________________

Who can help keep these items safe and securely stored? ___________________________


Should a crisis escalate to a point where I need immediate assistance, I will call the

**Veterans Crisis Line • 1-800-273-8255 Press 1 • or dial 911**

Confidential crisis chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255