



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF
VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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RICHMOND VA 23219

*Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants
Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United
States Army
Association of the United States
Navy
Disabled American
Veterans
Fifth Baptist Church Veterans
Ministry
HOPE for the Warriors
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans
of America
Legion of Valor of the
U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Officers Association
of America
Military Order of the
Purple Heart
Military Order of the
World Wars
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Navy SEAL Foundation
Northern Virginia Veterans
Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Organization of
America
Student Veterans of America
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vets on Track
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Wounded Warrior Project*

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JLC Initiative 2026-03
Veteran Suicide Death Information Access

OBJECTIVE: To ensure access to Vital Record death certificates, medical certifications, and Investigations by Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the Department of Veterans Services Suicide Prevention Program (the Program). This data will be used by the Program to review, analyze, and disseminate timely federal, state, and local data on the quantity, common causes, and methods of suicide utilized among military members, veterans, and their family members.

BACKGROUND: The Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (Governor's Challenge) has yielded success in coordinating the efforts of state, federal, and local government agencies, non-profits, and other partners to prevent suicide, with a dedicated state SMVF prevention coordinator in the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) established by legislation in 2022. The Program is now developing a Suicide Mortality Review (SMR) process in coordination with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs that will review and analyze veteran suicide data in an effort to determine patterns of causal factors as a potential for early identification to impact prevention, intervention and postvention services.

DISCUSSION: If suicide data, including lifestyle, family relationships, mental and physical health, prior access to mental health support, financial status and employment, and cause of death can be used to determine and identify those individuals most at risk, appropriate resources can be more accurately focused on early identification and prevention by providing essential support services to our veteran community.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly require that the Virginia Department of Veterans Services and the Virginia Department of Health work in partnership with local and state police, funeral directors and the Chief Medical Examiner's office to ensure timely data on veteran death is provided for detailed review and analysis by the SMR Committee. This also requires that the Program, through the Department of Veterans Services provide an annual update to the General Assembly, the Governor's Office as well as statewide outreach to promote suicide prevention and awareness.