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Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Confidential help for Veterans and service members.

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, text to **838255**, or chat online at **VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**.

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Veterans Crisis Line & Local Law Enforcement

Partnering to Save Lives

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

The Veterans Crisis Line and Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is an important and valued partner of the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL). Dozens of times a day, VCL responders call upon law enforcement to request welfare checks for at-risk Veterans. Approximately 19 percent of law enforcement officers have prior military experience, predisposing them to respond to Veterans in crisis with compassion and insight. VCL trusts our nation's officers to respond promptly, professionally, and sensitively to Veterans and their unique needs.

Target Population and Services Available

VCL provides mental health crisis support for service members, Veterans, and their families 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, and 365 days per year. As a free and confidential resource, VCL uses online chat, text, and phone capacities to connect Veterans and their family members to caring, qualified, and trained responders. Callers do not have to be enrolled in or receiving services from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) to use this service. If a Veteran agrees, a referral can be made to a local, facility-based Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) who will respond and provide outreach as is needed.

How VCL Can Support Law Enforcement

VCL can provide additional and immediate assistance to law enforcement officers who work with Veterans in crisis or bereaved family members in the aftermath of a service member or Veteran suicide. If a law enforcement officer encounters a Veteran who is not yet ready to call VCL, the officer is still encouraged to provide the Veteran with the VCL number for future use. VCL responders are also available to law enforcement officers for consultation on active situations and to provide additional resources and local solutions.

Diverting Emergency Calls

The majority of VCL calls do not result in law enforcement involvement. VCL staff work diligently with callers to deescalate crises, develop safety plans, and link callers to local services. VCL staff also help callers to use personal resources and support systems to avoid ambulance rides and hospital visits when possible. However, police welfare checks are required when there are high lethality risks. Once law enforcement is contacted, VCL follows up to obtain a disposition to ensure that police contact has been made with at-risk individuals.

Requests for Welfare Checks from VCL's Online Chat

Although VCL is a part of the federal government, many internet service providers will only release individual subscriber information and street addresses to law enforcement. This is especially important when a welfare check is initiated for individuals using VCL's chat services. In these emergency situations, local law enforcement must directly contact the internet service providers to obtain contacting information.

Supportive Options and VCL Resources for Veterans

- Phone, chat, and text support
- Suicide assessment/crisis intervention
- Culturally and linguistically competent care
- Linkage to local VA SPCs for outreach
- Direct connect to National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
- Referrals to mental health and local support resources
- Substance use disorder and recovery options
- Consultation on service member and Veteran suicidal ideation