



**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

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# News Release

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## **Statement on CBS News Stories Aired November 13 and 14**

WASHINGTON – Every suicide in America is a tragedy. VA cares about each veteran and their physical and mental health. We have more than 10,000 mental health workers who have dedicated themselves to helping veterans cope with the issues and crises they face. We operate a veteran suicide hotline which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to help any veteran in need. That number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). VA has suicide prevention coordinators at each of our VA Medical Centers.

VA strongly encourages veterans who may be considering harming themselves in some way to seek treatment from VA or other health care providers in their communities. Our people are there to help during a crisis. VA's care and treatment works and is available for veterans with PTSD, depression and other mental health problems.

VA operates the largest mental health care system in the country, spending \$3 billion each year on its mental health programs, and has taken several measures to increase its mental health services in recent years. Those include new programs bringing mental health into primary care, intensified rehabilitation for those with serious mental illnesses, and expanded programs for homeless veterans and those with substance abuse problems.

VA is concerned that the data CBS presented in its broadcast was not reviewed by independent scientists as most legitimate academic studies are. Regardless of this questionable journalistic tactic, VA takes the problem of suicide very seriously and wants veterans to come to VA for help if they are under stress or in crisis.

VA is constantly reviewing scientific findings, both from our own research and that of others, to guide us in improving care for veterans. We are reviewing the limited information that CBS has made available to us and are accelerating our own research to ensure we are doing everything possible to improve the information available to the medical and research communities about suicides in veterans as a means of better understanding how to prevent these tragedies.

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