AMERICAN LEGION

BE THE ONE

"It's Personal"

A NATIONWIDE EFFORT TO
END VETERAN SUICIDE

OUR **MISSION**

AMERICAN LEGION

The largest veterans service organization – **1.6 MILLION** members worldwide.

Strengthening America in over **12,000** local communities with an unrivaled peer-to-peer network.

Known for solving the most important issues facing veterans **since 1919.**

OBJECTIVE

IF YOU COULD SAVE THE LIFE OF **ONE VETERAN** BY DOING **ONE** THING…

WHAT WOULD IT BE?

OVERVIEW

Our goal is to **change the narrative**.
Instead of talking about the staggering number of daily suicides,
let's encourage Americans to ACT.

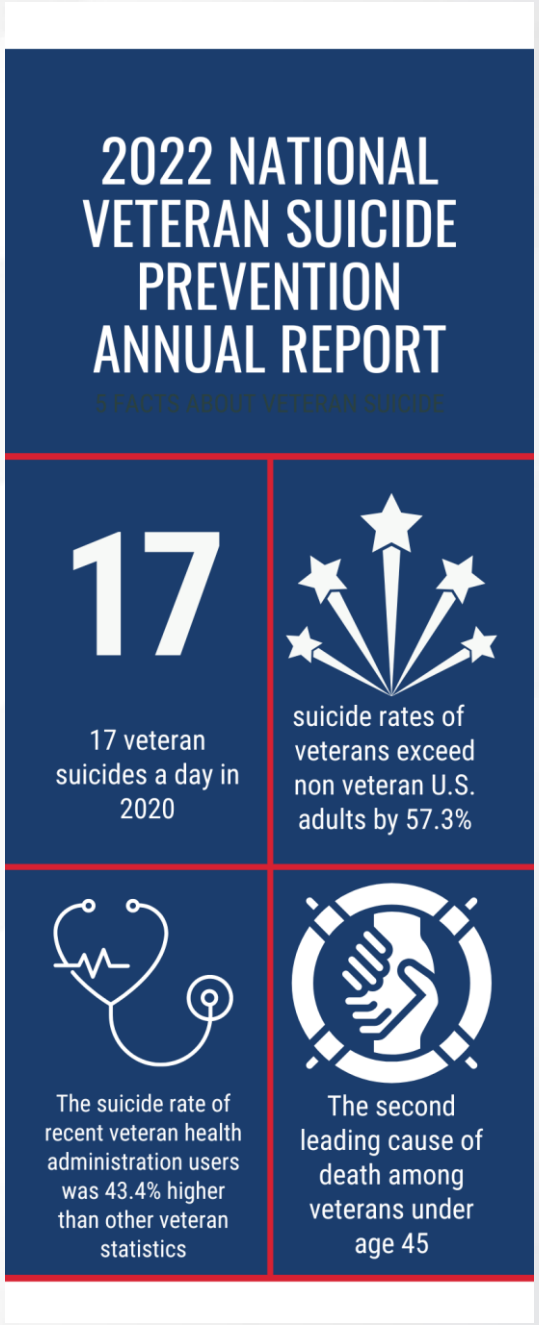
BE THE ONE

- **LISTEN** when a veteran needs to talk.
- **REACH OUT** when a veteran is struggling.
- **ASK FOR HELP** when you need it.

THE **HOW**

AN INTEGRATED EFFORT ACROSS ALL CHANNELS:

- Change the narrative of the veteran suicide crisis.
- Remind people that the road to ending veteran suicide starts by saving **ONE** veteran at a time.
- Inspire them to action.
- Raise important funds to support those doing good work in the space.



RISK FACTOR

- **Firearms–** Nearly 7 out of 10 veteran deaths by suicide are the result of firearm injuries (Dept. of VA 2016)
- **Age–** Approximately 65% of all veterans who die by suicide are 50 years or older and suicide is the second leading cause of death among veterans 45 years old and younger
- **Gender–** Overall men tend to attempt suicide more frequently than women but women veterans' risk for death by suicide more than doubles that of their civilian counterparts.
- **Sleep Deprivation**
- **Previous attempts**
- **History of trauma or abuse**
- **Recent tragedy or loss**
- **Family history of depression, mental illness, suicide and substance misuse**

"It's Personal"

Recognizing signs of PTSD is the first step to recovery

- **Common symptoms include:**
- Recurring memories or nightmares of certain events
- Sleeplessness
- Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy
- Feeling numb, angry, and/or irritable

- **Reactions to symptoms can be disruptive, too:**
- Frequently avoiding places or things that remind you of what happened
- Turning to drinking or using drugs to numb feelings
- Considering harming yourself or others
- Pulling away from other people and becoming isolated

EVENT **TRIGGERS**

- **LOSS OF JOB**
- **RELATIONSHIP STRAIN**
- **DIAGNOSIS OF TEMINAL ILLNESS**
- **DEATH OF SOMEONE CLOSE, ESPECIALLY ONE BY SUICIDE**
- **SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED LOSS OF FREEDOM**

LISTEN FOR SIGNS

- **Nonverbal signs**
  - Putting personal affairs in order outside normal times
  - Engaging in self-destructive behavior
  - Planning to ‘get away’ alone with no return plans
  - Stops normal socializing activities
  - Unexplained personality changes

- **What might be said?**
  - I’m tired
  - I’m exhausted
  - It would be better if I wasn’t here
  - Ready for the dirt nap
  - I’m going to kill myself
  - I’d rather be dead
  - No one would miss me

THE **TALK**

- **LISTEN**
  - Connect with resources
  - Stay with the veteran until they are connected to some help
  - Follow up
- **REACH OUT**
  - We are family, I am here with you.
  - What is something we can look forward to?
  - I may not be able to understand everything right now, but we can work through this.
- **ASK**
  - Are you thinking about killing yourself?
  - Are you considering suicide?

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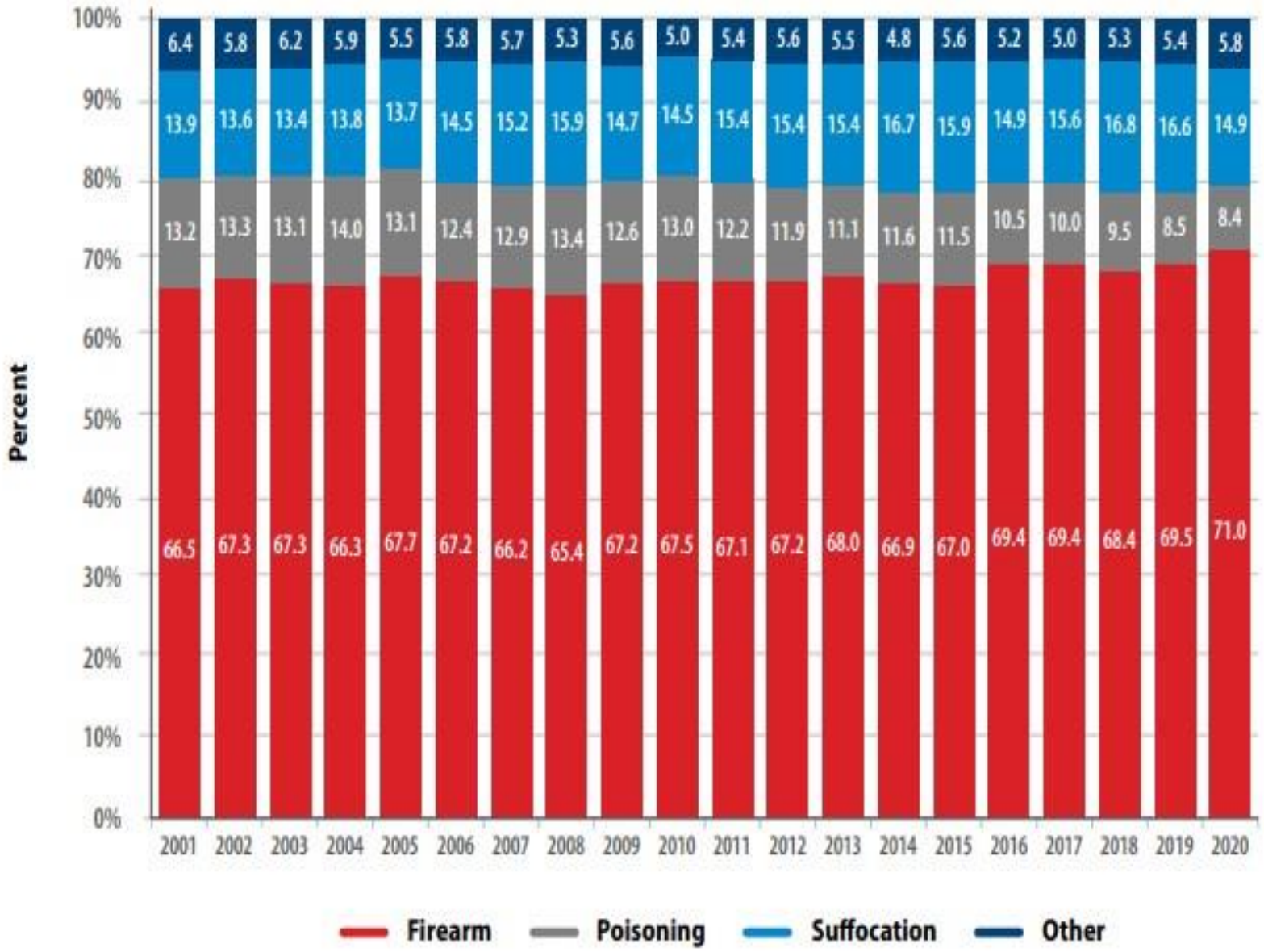
LETHAL MEANS

METHODS **INVOLVED**

Figure 11: Methods Involved, Percentage, Veteran Suicide Deaths, 2001–2020



THE SAFETY **PLAN**

- **Have a plan** to assist a veterans' support system by communicating personal warning signs, internal coping strategies, people who can help if distractions don't work, professional agencies and how to make the environment safe
- A well-designed plan is **brief** using **the veteran's own words and voice** while ensuring **easy access** or viewing
- Veterans showing **one or more** of the suicide signs and suicide attempt survivors' benefit greatly from having a **safety plan.**
- **ONE** conversation can make a difference. Veterans feel valued when they are heard but we have to accept the challenge because our demographic does not want to be feel burdensome.
- **Listen** in nonverbal ways by paying attention to behavior or mood changes and openly discuss concerns. Ask **if the veteran is considering killing themselves**.
- **In the safety plan** beyond the VA and The American Legion to ensure ALL veterans receive a check-in annually AND that veterans in transition are assigned a buddy.
- **Double down on gun safety –** Make gun safety equipment (lock boxes) more widely available to all.

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 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? _____

_____

*Adapted from Stanley & Brown's (2008) *Safety Plan Treatment Manual to Reduce Suicide Risk: Veteran Version*

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**

BUDDY
CHECK

THE NATIONAL AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY OUTREACH PROGRAM

Our most sacred responsibility is to look out for fellow veterans and Legionnaires

It
Takes The
Courage and Strength
Of a Warrior
To Ask for Help….

Veterans
Crisis Line

DIAL 988 then PRESS 1