AMERICAN LEGION

Buddy Check

“The Buddy Check”

What is it?
Why do we do it?
When do we do it?
Where do we do it?
How do we do it?

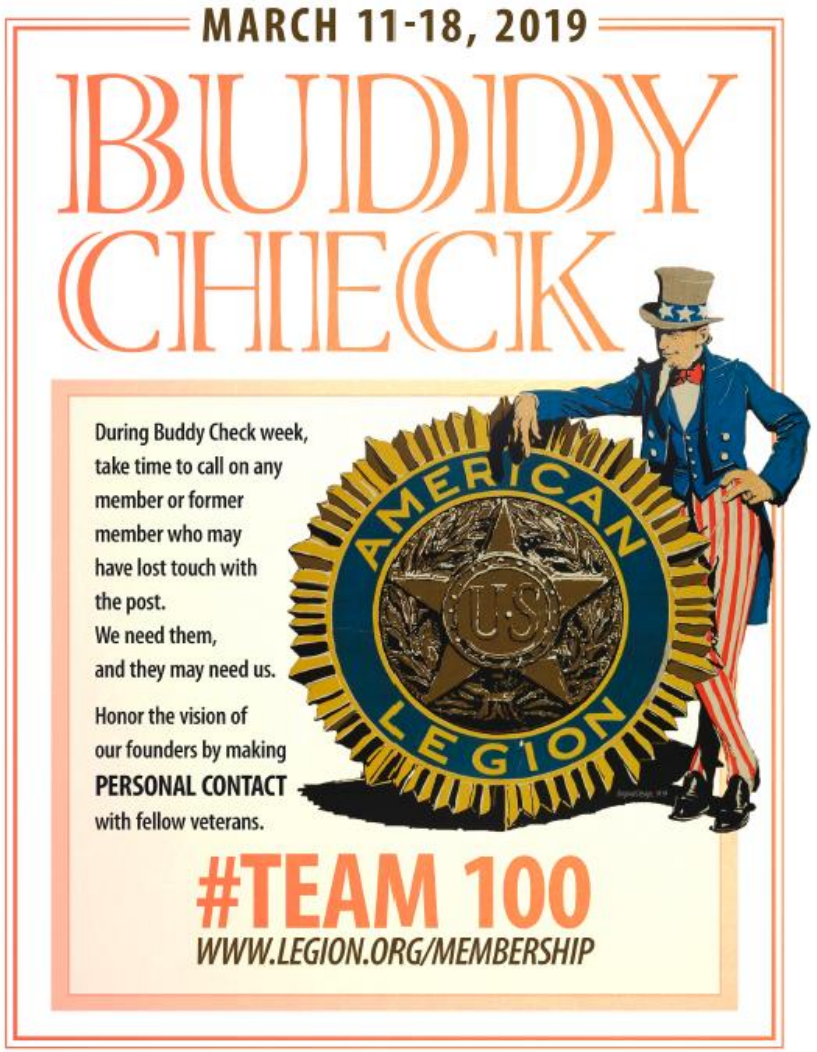
What is it?

- It’s “Leadership 101”: a demonstration of our good nature to always care for our nation’s heroes and their communities

- It is a CPR reportable event made formal by resolution to reach out to our fellow veterans and see how they are doing!

The Why?

- We have all transitioned, we are trained for the worst, we are trained for war, but what is left out is no one trains us to go home.
- We have all experienced the “silence”, and we know you can’t do it alone.
- We have the power to help our brothers and sisters, see that everything is temporary, and they are not alone.



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
May 8-9, 2019
Indianapolis, Indiana

Resolution No. 18: Buddy Check
Origin: Internal Affairs Commission
Submitted by: Internal Affairs Commission

WHEREAS, At its core, The American Legion is an organization by, for, and about veterans of our United States; and

WHEREAS, Serving those who serve is an honor and distinction not unique to The American Legion, but one Legionnaires should endeavor to serve as an example for all Americans; and

WHEREAS, Our most sacred responsibility is to care for our fellow men and women who served this nation with honor; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires are naturally inclined, through demonstrated commitment to serve something greater than self, to extend hearts and hands to others; and

WHEREAS, Our duty is to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness; and

WHEREAS, Only with servant leadership and direct contact can we uncover needs and priorities of our warriors and avert any crisis; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires shall conduct veteran outreach as part of their daily routine; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires at all levels join together at least twice per year to contact all members both active and expired with a health and welfare check to be known as "Buddy Check"; and

WHEREAS, "Buddy Check" is not a membership drive or attempt to solicit participation in, or donations for, American Legion programs, it is solely a health and welfare check or offer of assistance; and

WHEREAS, This resolution has the concurrence of the Media & Communications Commission and the Marketing Commission; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in Regular Meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 8-9, 2019, That the process of "Buddy Check" be made formal and executed Legion-wide concurrent with the weeks of The American Legion birthday and of Veterans Day; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the "Buddy Check" be promoted through national and department marketing, media and social media campaigns; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the "Buddy Check" weeks be the primary operational focus of every member, post, department and the National Headquarters; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That results of each "Buddy Check" week be established as a reportable item on the annual Consolidated Post Report.

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Why do we do it?

- Because our nation expects us to
- Because it’s the right thing to do
- To compliment efforts by the DoD and VA

Whereas…

WHEREAS, At its core, The American Legion is an organization by, for, and about veterans of our United States; and

WHEREAS, Serving those who serve is an honor and distinction not unique to The American Legion, but one Legionnaires should endeavor to serve as an example for all Americans; and

- We are the foremost authority in the challenges of veteran re-integration into society
- We set the bar high through years of veteran advocacy that gave rise to the G.I. Bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and many other legislative and social accomplishments
- The United States Government and, by extension, the American People expect The American Legion to take care of our veterans

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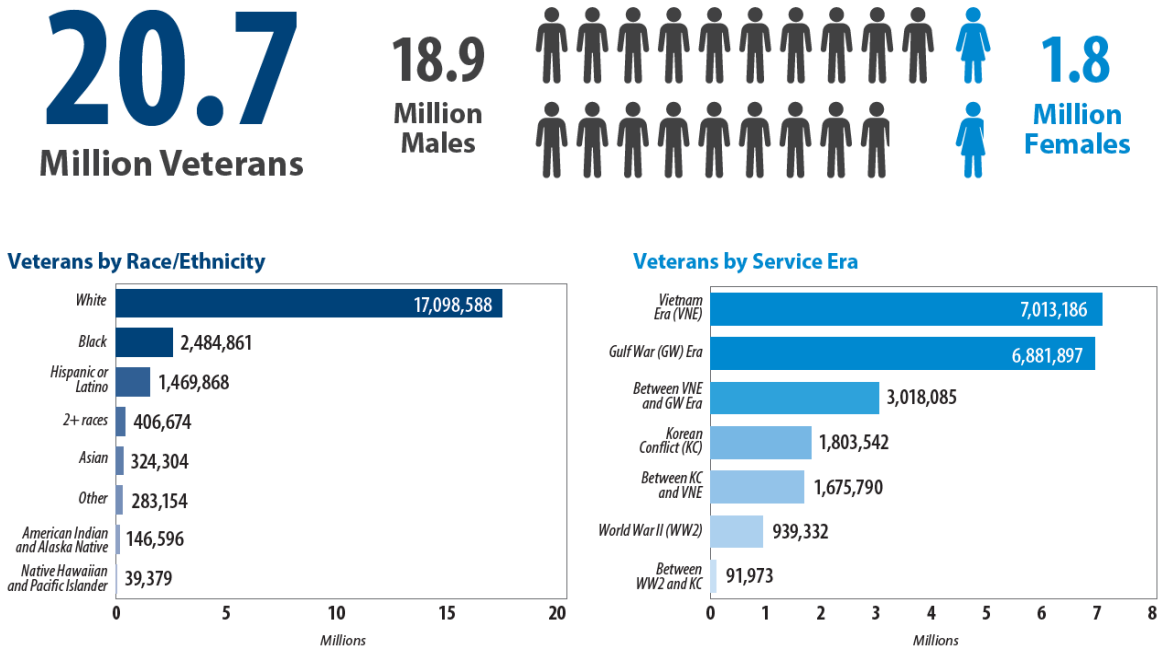
The 11 Principles of Armed Forces Leadership

1. Know yourself and seek self-improvement
2. Be technically and tactically proficient
3. Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates
4. Make sound and timely decisions
5. Set an example
6. Know your people and look out for their welfare
7. Keep your people informed
8. Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions
9. Ensure assigned tasks are understood, supervised and accomplished
10. Train your people as a team
11. Employ your team in accordance with its capabilities

Whereas…

WHEREAS, Our most sacred responsibility is to care for our fellow men and women who served this nation with honor; and

Figure 1: *The U.S. Veteran Population*



Whereas…

WHEREAS, Legionnaires are naturally inclined, through demonstrated commitment to serve something greater than self, to extend hearts and hands to others; and

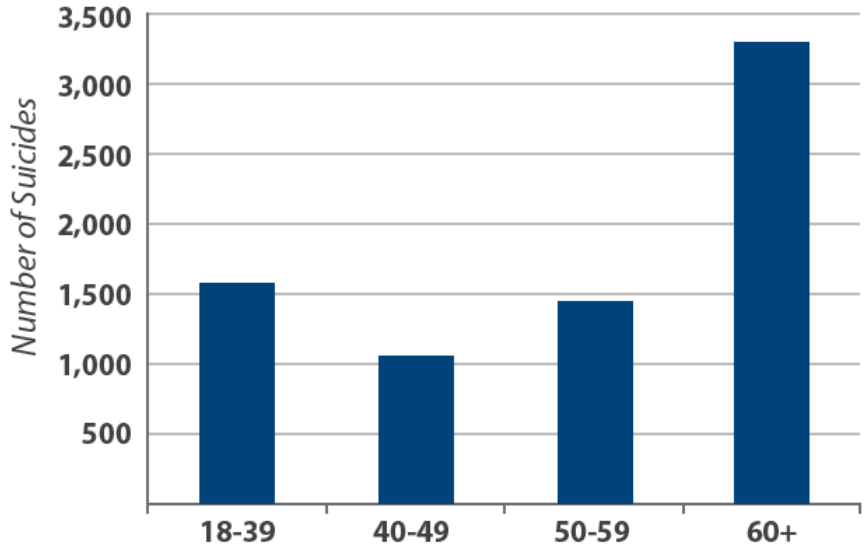
WHEREAS, Our duty is to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness; and

WHEREAS, Only with servant leadership and direct contact can we uncover needs and priorities of our warriors and avert any crisis; and

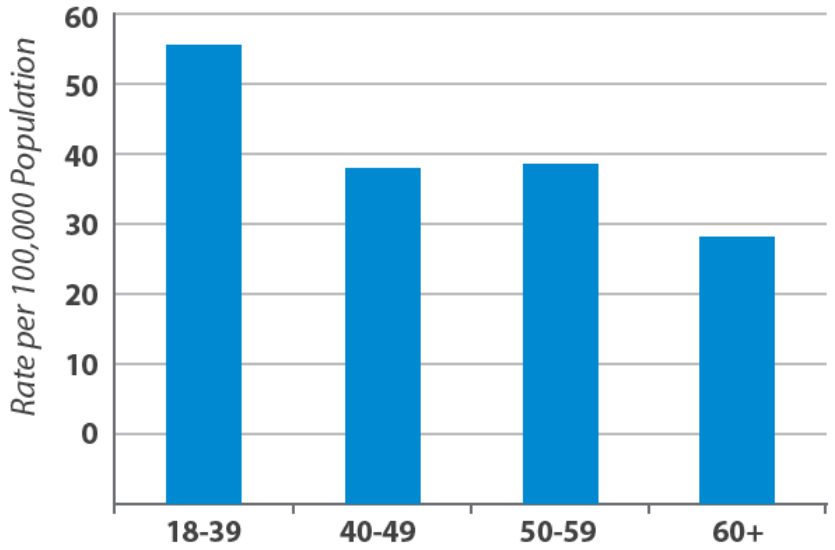
- We genuinely care about others, or we would have never worn the uniform
- Our oath to the Nation and to each other never expires
- Veterans are proud, but fellow veterans can see vulnerabilities and needs of others
- Veterans in crisis need a Legion behind them
- We have an obligation to support efforts by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to reduce veteran suicide, homelessness, addiction, etc.

The distinction between rates and counts of deaths is illustrated in Figure 3 below. While *rates* are lower among the older Veteran population, the bulk of the *count* of suicide deaths occurs in this age group due to the large size of the population. The younger Veteran population, which includes more recently transitioned Veterans, is smaller. This population has a smaller *count* of suicide deaths, but a higher *rate* of suicide.

Figure 3: *Veteran Suicide Deaths: Count vs. Rate*



Older Veteran population accounts for the bulk of suicide deaths. This is because of the population's size.



Younger Veteran population includes more recently transitioned Veterans and has a higher rate of suicide.

Whereas…

WHEREAS, Legionnaires shall conduct veteran outreach as part of their daily routine; and
WHEREAS, Legionnaires at all levels join together at least twice per year to contact all members both active and expired with a health and welfare check to be known as "Buddy Check"; and

- A Legionnaire's daily and continuous mission is to take care of other veterans
- By formalizing an informal process, we can quantify and qualify our efforts and improve processes in the future
- Active and expired members have, at one point, made a commitment to The American Legion. Therefore, we made a commitment to them to look out for their health and welfare, and to assist within our means

Whereas…

WHEREAS, "Buddy Check" is not a membership drive or attempt to solicit participation in, or donations for, American Legion programs, it is solely a health and welfare check or offer of assistance; and

- The Buddy Check is not about renewing members, collecting dues, or asking for participation in events

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What should it look like?

- A buddy Check is just like it sounds, we are checking in.
- Membership should NEVER be discussed
- Include them in upcoming events, let them know they are genuinely wanted.
- Make a plan, you never know how a buddy check will go. Make a plan to get help, know your resources, text 911, keep them talking, and above all do not hang up the phone.

Buddy Check Scenario

- Your Post recently lost a member due to suicide, with that instance the commander has assigned 20 people to each member on the Executive board to check in with the membership. Everything is going great you have found out some people have moved, you learned about someone's new hip, but your last call is what makes you stop. While you are talking to Ralph a Vietnam Veteran, you found out Ralph was just diagnosed with prostate cancer. Ralph lost his wife 5 years earlier and is struggling with the future. Ralph is indicating he is going to end his life, and there is not anything anyone can do his mind is made up.

- What do you do?

Prevention

Leadership Consider sending membership to QPR, ASSIST, of Crisis Prevention Interventionalist training.

Have a plan, never go into a buddy check, without knowing your resources.

You will panic, it is okay, breath someone's life is on the line.

Lastly, Save yourself, we all can go a little dark and twisty. Right now, take your phone out of your pocket, pick three people. Those are your three people, when you are feeling the weight, you call one of those three people. Put those people in folder marked SOS, this can save your own life.

Whereas…

WHEREAS, This resolution has the concurrence of the Media & Communications Commission and the Marketing Commission; now, therefore, be it

- This team effort has the support of all TAL Leadership

Resolved…

RESOLVED, By The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in Regular Meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 8-9, 2019, That the process of "Buddy Check" be made formal and executed Legion-wide concurrent with the weeks of The American Legion birthday and of Veterans Day; and, be it further

- A formal process should illicit a deeper commitment and focus from participants
- A twice-a-year formal process allows for robust marketing, collaboration, unity-of-effort, etc.
- On, or around, The American Legion birthday and Veterans Day allows for annual planning, and the allocation of necessary resources to the event, during peak times of social support for our veteran population

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Resolved…

RESOLVED, That the "Buddy Check" be promoted through national and department marketing, media and social media campaigns; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the "Buddy Check" weeks be the primary operational focus of every member, post, department and the National Headquarters; and, be it finally

- A primary operational focus gives the Buddy Check credibility through Legion-wide support

Resolved…

RESOLVED, That results of each "Buddy Check" week be established as a reportable item on the annual Consolidated Post Report.

- The updated CPR asks for results of the Buddy Check to be documented so that further collaboration with the Department of Defense, The Department of Veterans Affairs, and others to address veteran needs can occur

- Reporting may initiate future legislative initiatives that benefit our veteran population

When do we do it?

- By resolution, at least twice a year around The American Legion Birthday (March) and Veterans Day (November)
- As a regular part of our daily routine
- When you think it is needed

Where do we do it?

- In our communities
- Wherever we interact with veterans
- From your Departments/Districts/Posts and the comfort of your home as you see fit

Prevention Events

- One of the greatest assets the American Legion has is we have all been there.
- Encourage events like Coffee Talks, this gives an invitation for all
- An event does not have to be large to have an impact, things like preparing the flags for flag day, can be turned into an activity.
- Talk to each other and don’t be afraid to ask those tough questions.
- Keep this thought in your mind “ I would rather listen to you talk for 9 hours, than sit through your 1-hour eulogy”.

How do we do it?

- By asking the questions, extending the hands, and opening the hearts
- Using the “Buddy Check” Toolkit provided by National or your Departments
- Through phone, person-to-person interaction, social media, media, or any other way to reach out and let veterans know “we care”

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QUESTIONS?