

Missouri is home to more than 400,000 Veterans and more than 35,500 military members. You yourself may be a service member, veteran, or family member. It can almost be guaranteed that you have had some kind of interaction with this group of individuals. In recognition of May being Mental Health Month, we would like to provide you with resources and training opportunities to help you learn more about mental health for this population.

Missouri Lt. Governor Mike Kehoe, Missouri Veterans Commission, Missouri Department of Mental Health, Missouri National Guard, Missouri Department of Economic Development, and the Office of the Military Advocate have created the "You Are Worth the Battle" Campaign (YAWTB). The campaign is designed as a way to educate and train Missourians on how to identify and help service members, Veterans, and their families (SMVF) during a mental health crisis. YAWTB provides resources, training opportunities, and practical steps to take before, during, and after a suicidal crisis. By educating the public, SMVF stand a better chance of getting the help they need. You are Worth the Battle aims to help give every member of the community resources and practical advice on how to handle someone in crisis and what to do if you need help.

The U.S. Department of Defense has recently reported that suicide rates among active-duty military members in 2021 have been at the highest level since the Great Depression. There were 176 confirmed or pending suicide deaths for active-duty military in 2021, and 174 the year prior. According to the 2021 National Veteran Suicide Prevention annual report, veterans accounted for 6,261 of 45,861 U.S. adult suicide deaths in 2019. There were also 202 military family members' deaths in 2019 linked to suicide.

To find mental health resources aimed at active duty, veterans, and their family members, please visit the [Missouri Benefits and Resource Portal](#). The Portal is a service guide meant to help SMVF find local resources for everything from mental health to employment and more. If you are a veteran or know a veteran in crisis, please call the Veteran Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1 or text 838255.

You can also visit dmh.mo.gov/veterans/ to find behavioral health providers who specifically work with Missouri's SMVF population. As a state team member, you are eligible to take advantage of the Strive Employee Life & Family (SELF) program which provides up to 6 free mental health visits a year. Talk with your Human Resources Department to learn more or call 800-808-2261.

[PsychArmor](#), which is a national nonprofit organization that provides education and training to improve health and life outcomes of military-connected individuals, teamed up with the U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) to provide free suicide prevention training. "Helping Others Hold On" will give tools and tips to recognize, understand, and combat suicidal feelings in Veterans. Visit learn.psycharmor.org/courses/helping-others-hold-on to take the training today. PsychArmor offers several free classes concerning topics critical to the military community, including hiring Veterans, Veteran spouses, suicide prevention, and education. These courses count towards your continuing education and can be entered in the ESS portal under training.

Simple steps like knowing how to start a mental health conversation and how to identify common signs of a mental health crisis can help save a life.

The State of Missouri is committed to doing its part in ending suicide among SMVF. We know that one suicide is one too many. A mental health crisis can happen at any time to anyone. Join us on our mission to help educate and train our communities on suicide prevention techniques. Remember, You Are Worth the Battle.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Kirchoff". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Paul Kirchoff