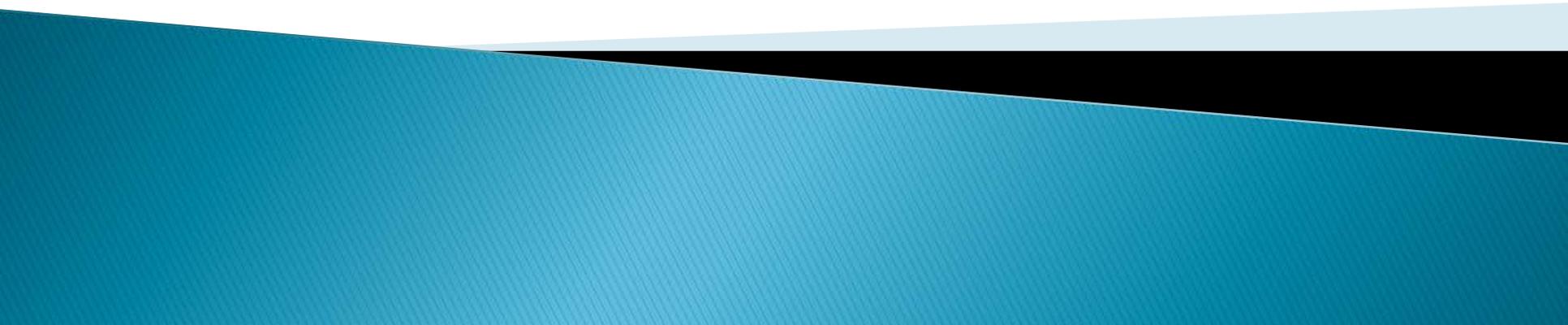


# **Suicide Prevention for Operation Enduring and Iraq Freedom Veterans**

Linda Casale, RN-BC, PMHN



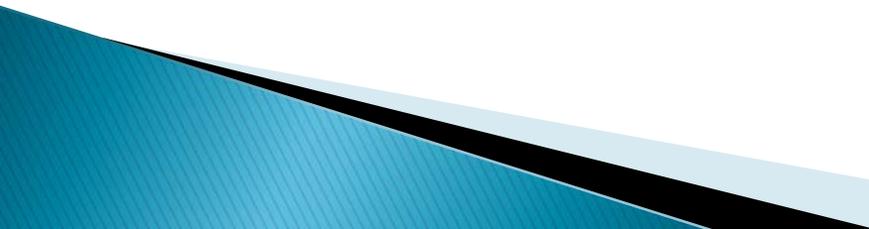
▶ **Session Disclaimer Statement:**

- ▶ *I do not have any affiliation with the research, work, or products that I will be speaking about.*

# **Definition of Suicide attempt:**

- ▶ A behavior that an individual has undertaken with intent to lead to his or her own death (DSM-5 Classification, 2013).

# **Suicide attempt impacting medical consequences:**

- ▶ Lack of knowledge about the lethality of the method chosen
  - ▶ Past planning or chance intervention by others after the behavior
  - ▶ High lethality attempts that require medical hospitalization beyond a visit to an emergency room
- 

**In 2007, the Veterans Administration  
(VA) established the Mental Health  
Initiative as a mechanism for  
funding clinical services for mental  
health enhancements**



# This implementation lead to:

- ▶ The approval of the Uniform Mental Health Services
  - ▶ Clinics that specifically meet the requirements that must be available to all Veterans with mental health conditions
- 

# **Requirements of suicide prevention programs:**

- ▶ Access to high quality mental health services
  - ▶ Public awareness and education promoting engagement for those who need assistance
  - ▶ Specific services addressing the needs of those at high risk by the addition of a centrally located Veterans call center
- 

# Suicide Screening includes the following:

- ▶ Screening all Veterans for mental health conditions at least annually
  - ▶ Two centers for research, education, and clinical innovation
  - ▶ Extensive evaluation of the activities within the office of suicide prevention and the mental health programs
- 

# Military culture contributing to suicidal behaviors :

- ▶ Aggressive nature of the Army
- ▶ Military lifestyle demands
- ▶ Knowledge of firearms
- ▶ Lack of social support
- ▶ Documented life events which include:
  - a desire to change military position
  - anger at the commanding officer
  - conflict in romantic relationships

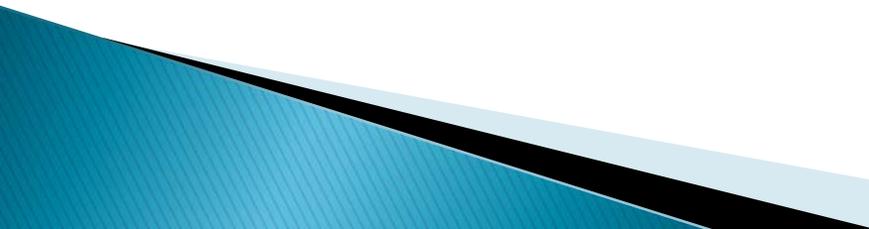
# Transitioning to civilian life risk factors:

- ▶ Homelessness
  - ▶ Social exclusion
  - ▶ Alcohol misuse
  - ▶ Unemployment
  - ▶ Poor mental health
- 

# Suicide is a very complex individual behavior:

- ▶ The biological risk factors include:
  - low cerebrospinal fluid
  - hypothalamic – pituitary dysfunction
  - Low blood cholesterol levels

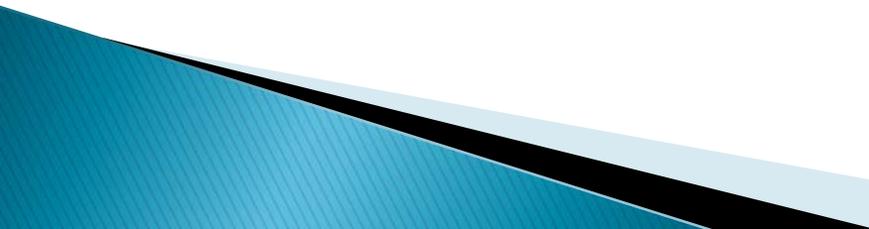
# Veterans at high risk for suicide include:

- ▶ Depressive Disorder
  - ▶ Bipolar Disorder
  - ▶ Alcohol
  - ▶ Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
  - ▶ Substance use Disorder
- 

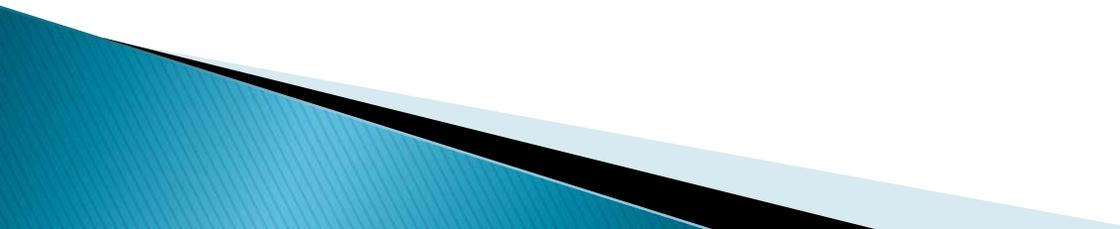
# Psychological factors increasing suicide include:

- ▶ Feelings of not belonging
  - ▶ Perceived burdensomeness
  - ▶ The acquired pain associated with suicide
  - ▶ Ability to endure increased pain
- 

# Programs of the 2007 Initiative included :

- ▶ Facilitating the recovery model services
  - ▶ Expanding the treatment for substance abuse and mental disorders
  - ▶ Increasing the availability of services to returning Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
  - ▶ Integrating primary health care services
- 

# **Six Performance areas of** **Monitoring:**

- ▶ Population coverage access
  - ▶ Quality of inpatient care
  - ▶ Quality of outpatient care
  - ▶ Economic performance
  - ▶ Consumer satisfaction
  - ▶ Functional outcomes
- 

# The following areas reflected improvement:

- ▶ Population coverage/access
  - ▶ Outpatient care
  - ▶ Economic performance
  - ▶ Global functioning
- 

# Conclusion:

- ▶ The results reflect improvement in the delivery of Veterans Administration mental health services and should encourage future policy efforts to sustain these gains.

# References:

- ▶ Sher & Yehuda, R. (2011). Preventing suicide among returning combat veterans: a moral imperative. Retrieved from CINAHL.
- ▶ Ganz, D., & Sher, L. (2013). Educating medical professionals about suicide prevention among military veterans. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine & Health*, 25, 187-191. <http://dx.doi.org/CINNAHL>

- Katz, I. (2012). Lessons learned from mental health enhancement and suicide prevention activities in the veterans' health administration. Retrieved from CINAHL
- Ganz, D., & Sher, L. (2013). Educating medical professionals about suicide prevention among military veterans. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine & Health*, 25, 187-191. <http://dx.doi.org/CINNAHL>

- ▶ Greenberg, G. A., & Rosenheck, R. A. (2009, December). An evaluation of an initiative to improve veterans, health administration mental health services: broad impacts of the vha's mental health strategic plan. *Military Medicine*, 174(12), 1263-1269.  
<http://dx.doi.org/Medline>









