

BACKGROUND

Every day in the United States, an average of 17 veterans die from suicide.¹ To protect our nation's veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) implemented lethal means safety trainings, an evidence-based strategy proven to save lives.²

Lethal means safety is an intentional, voluntary practice to limit access to objects (including medications, firearms, and sharp instruments) that can be used to inflict self-directed violence.³ The data on lethal means safety are clear: individuals who reduce their access to lethal means during times of heightened risk are reducing their risk of dying by suicide.⁴

Given the clear evidence on the effectiveness of lethal means safety, VA has implemented mandatory trainings for clinical health care professionals in VHA facilities, causing training completion rates to skyrocket to more than 80 percent. But for other VA employees, and for all community care providers and family caregivers, the training is optional and voluntary completion rates are strikingly low.

Ensuring that every employee who regularly interacts with veterans has taken the VA's lethal means safety training will prepare employees to have conversations that could save a veteran's life. As VA researchers write: "For a veteran in crisis, lethal means safety during a critical period can make all the difference."⁵

SUMMARY

The **Lethal Means Safety Training Act** would:

- Require the VA to work with key stakeholders to ensure that the VA's lethal means safety training course is culturally appropriate and aligned with evidence-based best practices in suicide prevention.
- Expand the requirements for lethal means safety training completion to:
 - All Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration employees who regularly interact with veterans in their work;
 - Compensation and pension examiners and employees of Veterans Centers and vocational rehabilitation facilities;
 - Community care providers; and
 - Family caregivers.

ENDORSEMENTS

The **Lethal Means Safety Training Act** is supported by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy; American Association of Suicidology; American Foundation for Suicide Prevention; Association of VA Psychologist Leaders; Brady; Coalition to Stop Gun Violence; Everytown for Gun Safety; Giffords; Minority Veterans of America; Modern Military Association of America; New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center; Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA); The Elizabeth Dole Foundation; Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute; and Walk the Talk America.

ORIGINAL COSPONSORS

The **Lethal Means Safety Training Act** is cosponsored by HVAC Subcommittee Chairs Julia Brownley (CA-26), Mike Levin (CA-49), Frank Mrvan (IN-01), Chris Pappas (NH-01). The Senate bill is led by Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), who serves on SVAC.

CONTACT

For more information, contact Jack DiMatteo in Rep. Underwood's office at Jack.DiMatteo@mail.house.gov.

¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: [National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report \(2020\)](#)

² U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: [Lethal Means Safety & Suicide Prevention](#)

³ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: [Lethal Means Safety & Suicide Prevention](#)

⁴ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: [Lethal Means Safety Evidence](#)

⁵ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: [Lethal Means Safety – Why and How to Have the Conversation](#)