

Michigan Association of  
District Court Probation Officers  
50th Annual Conference

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**Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency**

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**SCREENING AND IDENTIFICATION OF MI VETERANS:**

*ASK THE QUESTION & BECOME A VETERAN CONNECTOR INITIATIVE*

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF DISTRICT COURT PROBATION OFFICERS

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Priority Group Two, MI Governor's Challenge

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### Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency serves as the central coordinating agency connecting those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and their families with the benefits they deserve.




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### MI Veterans - Demographics



**Michigan's veteran population is one of the largest in the United States, ranking 11<sup>th</sup> in 2019 with over 550,000 veterans**

Source: U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs

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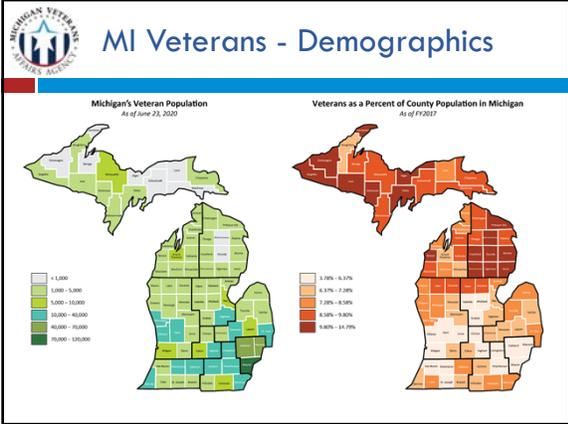
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**Michigan Governor's Challenge**

The Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency (MVAA) is leading this initiative in collaboration with the Veteran Health Administration, SAMHSA and many other key partners to prevent suicide among Service Members, Veterans and Families (SMVF).

**Top priorities include:**

- Health providers and other community partners will identify SMVF and will make referrals to appropriate care.
- Increase access to existing VA and other resources, community partnerships and peer systems.
- Develop a culturally competent multi-prong approach to lethal means safety, education and resources.

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**Suicide: A national crisis**

- ❑ Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States.
- ❑ More than 47,000 people die by suicide a year.
- ❑ One person dies from suicide every 11 minutes.

\* Photo courtesy of Golden Gate Bridge "Don't jump" campaign.  
\* Statistics from [www.crisis-line.org](http://www.crisis-line.org).

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## Veteran suicide statistics

- ❑ An estimated 20 veterans die by suicide everyday.
- ❑ Male veterans are twice as likely as civilians to die by suicide.
- ❑ The rate of suicide was 2.2 times higher in women veterans as compared to civilian females.
- ❑ The **more connected** veterans are to services (federal, state and local), the lower their risk for suicide.

\* Statistic from the [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) and [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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## Proactive approaches

- ❑ Proactive approaches to suicide prevention includes an element of screening for military-connectivity.
- ❑ Earlier identification of service members, veterans and their families allows for referrals to be made proactively prior to a crisis.

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### Proactive approaches (continued)

- ❑ The **more connected** veterans are to services (federal, state and local) the lower their risk for suicide.
- ❑ Ask “Have you or a member of your household served in the military?”

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### Why is this important?

- ❑ Veterans, Service Members, and their family members do not always self-identify.
- ❑ Asking “have you serve” is the preferred method as it enables those who don’t feel comfortable or don’t identify as a Veteran to be recognized.
- ❑ You are likely to see Veterans and even Service Members everywhere.

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### Why should you be aware?

- ❑ Military service could be a significant connection point for you and the people you interact with.
- ❑ Service connections could offer insight into other people’s experiences and needs.
- ❑ Service, deployment, military experiences, and combat experiences can all have a profound impact on an individual’s life and family.

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## So...

- What Can I Ask?
- How Do I Ask?
- What Do The Answers Mean?

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## Best practice recommendation-how and when of screening

- **How to Ask:** "Have you or a member of your household served in the military?"
- **When to Ask:** Each new case. Ideally the question would be incorporated into the intake process.
- **Where:** Courts are also encouraged to post free materials within their lobbies, banners on their websites and have business cards available in high trafficked areas.

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## Best practice recommendation (continued)-

- If they answer "Yes,":**
- Flag for veteran status within your intake/software program.
  - Offer a referral for a free benefits consultation.
  - "Can we refer you for a benefits checkup?" (It's a free service.)

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## Referral process

The referral process to Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency is quick and user-friendly.

**Check  on MIVet**

- ❑ **Check on MIVet:**  
Probation officers, judges, attorneys or anyone can request a benefits consultation for military-connected patients by visiting [MichiganVeterans.com](http://MichiganVeterans.com) and clicking the **Check on MIVet** link at the top of the site.
- ❑ Provide patient our 24/7 call center number: **1-800-MICH-VET**. We have free business cards, post cards, resource toolkits, and other materials available.

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Example of materials/items developed as part of the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families.

All items and training are free and at no cost to those electing to implement the screening process and become a "Veteran Connector".

**Have you or a member of your household served in the military?**

There may be benefits and resources available to help you through your current situation.

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency can connect you to resources and information that can help you and your family. We have a 24/7 call center and website to help you.

Call 1-800-MICH-VET (1-800-642-4838) or visit [MichiganVeterans.com](http://MichiganVeterans.com)

Learn more or to connect you to benefits, including:

- Financial services assistance
- Health care services
- Housing assistance
- Legal services
- Life insurance
- Substance abuse treatment
- Survivor benefits

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## Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center

The MVAA has a 24/7 call center to help veterans and their families with benefit and resource connectivity, in all areas of life.



We are available 365 days of the year.

❑ **1-800-MICH-VET**  
(1-800-642-4838)

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 **Frequently Asked Questions**

- ❑ If I ask about military connectivity what happens if they say they are having feelings of self harm?
- ❑ How do I talk to a Service Member or Veteran?
- ❑ How does screening benefit the Service Member or Veteran?



\* Photo courtesy of <https://www.usmc.mil>

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 **Tips to share with families**

- ❑ Refer to an immediate evaluation (ER/Mobile Crisis).
- ❑ Refer to mental health treatment and ensure follow-up appointment is made.
- ❑ Increase contacts with veteran until crisis is resolved.



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**No one can un-fire a firearm.**



**For someone in crisis,**  
a locked firearm can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a life saved.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Watch an informational video and learn more at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net)



1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

More information upon request.

Call 1-800-MICH-VET to be connected to your local VA and obtain these free locks.

..... Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to 838255 .....

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 **Tips to share with families**  
(continued)

- Give the number to 24-hour hotline **(1-800-273-TALK)**.
- Develop a safety plan



• • • Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to 838255 • • •

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 **Veteran communication tips**

- Be straightforward; don't "sugarcoat" things. Veterans are used to dealing with straightforward talk and appreciate honesty.
- Be on time. In the service a veteran's life revolves around punctuality. There is usually a morning, noon and evening formation that is mandatory. Not being punctual is taken as a sign of disrespect.
- Take an interest. Ask the veteran what branch of service they were in, during what time period they served and what was their job. Most veterans are proud of their service; by showing an interest you show appreciation.

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 **Veteran communication tips**  
(continued):

- Unless you are a veteran never ever compare your job to that of a veteran. The quickest way to put up a wall is to equate what you do with the role the veteran played.
- Listen when you are not speaking. Paraphrase and reflect back what the veteran has said to make sure you understood correctly.
- Keep your voice volume at a moderate level.

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## Veteran Do's

- Do thank them for their service.
- Do ask about their service and what they did.
- Do actively listen.
- Do have an open mind.
- Do ask them about their life after the service.
- Do let them tell their story.

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## Veteran Don'ts

- Don't assume all veterans are violent.
- Don't ask if the veteran has killed anyone.
- Don't ask about friends dying.
- Don't talk politics.
- Don't assume all veterans have Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

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## SMVF screening benefits

### Eligible veterans, spouses and/or their caregivers may qualify for:

- Outpatient medical services
- Mental health services
- Substance use disorder treatment
- Homeless services
- Vocational rehab services
- Caregiver supports
- DHHS Veteran Navigator Program
- Financial and legal aid assistance
- Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) Treatment




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## Veteran resources & programs available at MVAA

### The CORE Initiative

Stood Up: July of 2020

The Community Outreach and Regional Engagement (CORE) Initiative has vastly expanded Michigan's veteran outreach capabilities by establishing dedicated teams of veterans' benefits experts throughout the state.

C.O.R.E. has 10 designated service areas within MI

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## MVAA Initiatives: C.O.R.E.

These partnerships are fundamental to ensuring that veterans are connected to available benefits and resources.

### Partnerships include:

- Veterans Community Action Teams
- MDHHS Veteran Navigators
- Michigan Veterans Coalition
- Michigan Association of County Veteran Counselors
- National Association of County Veteran Service Officers
- Veteran Readiness and Employment within the Benefits

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## MVAA Initiates: Buddy to Buddy Program

### Veteran patients are never alone.

The MVAA offers a personal, one-on-one veteran mentorship to veterans of all eras and discharge types.

If you have veterans who are lacking familial supports, are having difficulty with transitioning or could just use a friend, consider a referral to the **MVAA Buddy to Buddy Program**.



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 **Veteran Navigators**

MVAA can assist with connecting to Veteran Navigators.

- ❑ **Veteran Navigators** can assist with housing, support groups, employment, court issues, behavioral health issues (SUD or mental health), assistance with Medicaid eligibility, VHA registration issues, living supports, and much more.
- ❑ Michigan has a robust **Veteran Navigator Program** that services the entire state.




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 **Call to action:**  
**“Become a Veteran Connector”**

- ❑ The Governor’s Challenge Initiative is encouraging our MI Judicial System including probation officers, judges, attorneys, and courts to become a Veteran Connector.
- ❑ Everyone can help to better serve our veterans and their families by asking **“have you served?”**




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 **Next Steps:**  
**“Become a Veteran Connector”**

To request more information on the **Veteran Connector Program**; email our Health and Welfare Analyst at [mvastrategy@michigan.gov](mailto:mvastrategy@michigan.gov) or contact our call center at 1-800-MICH-VET and request a “Michigan Veteran Connector” Consultation.

**All materials and training are free and at no charge to the organization electing to implement the process.**

The program has flexibility allowing our “Veteran Connectors” to determine which ways best suit their needs. We offer free staff trainings, printed/electronic materials, gun locks, wallet cards and website banners.

And remember, **MVAA’s Health and Welfare Analyst** is available to help with training, obtain materials, or any other veteran issues that may arise.

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**Stay safe. Stay healthy. Stay connected.**  
Veteran resources and support are available to you.



**1-800-MICH-VET**  
(1-800-642-4838)  
[MichiganVeterans.com](http://MichiganVeterans.com)

Facebook: /MIVeterans  
Twitter: @MIVeteran  
LinkedIn: /MIVeteran

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