

# The Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council – South Texas (VHMACST)



*The mission of the independent Council is to establish a true partnership between the Veterans and their families, VA Healthy Minds professionals, Community Partners and Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) in order to improve the quality of Mental Health Services, to improve Veteran and family understanding of those services, and promote best use of those services.*

# What is the Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council – South Texas (VHMACST)?

The Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council – South Texas (VHMACST) is a group of Veteran healthy mind consumers and their family members.

- **Consumer:** a Veteran who has received or who is receiving mental health or substance use services
- May also include representatives from community mental health agencies
  - Ex: NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, Veteran Service Organizations, and local community employment and housing groups

The council is independent of the VA, but partnership is the goal.

- Current VA employees cannot be members

**Staff Liaison:** coordinates the work of the council and its communication with the leadership of the facility's mental health programs

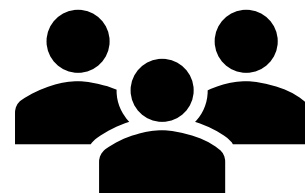


# What are the functions of the VHMACST?

- Educate Veterans, family members, VA Staff and the community on issues and resources surrounding veteran mental health issues
- Reduce barriers to accessing mental health services for Veteran's and families, including stigma, lack of information about services, and difficulty navigating the VA System
- Provide Veteran and other stakeholder (e.g., family members, caregiver, VSO's, community partners) input into the VA mental health services
- Advocate for Veterans (collectively) to the extent that is appropriate and pertinent to healthy mind issues



Veteran Community



Veterans' Healthy Minds  
Advisory Council – South Texas



South Texas Veterans Health Care System

# Why is VHMACST important?

- The Handbook on Uniform Mental Health Services in VA Medical Centers and Clinics mandates that **all VA mental health services be “recovery-oriented.”**
- Recovery-oriented care involves **recognizing the role of the Veteran and family in informing the mental health care system and providing the opportunity for their input.**
  - Involves giving Veterans **real and meaningful choices and full participation in decisions** about their care.
- VHMAC’s are one way of meeting this goal.

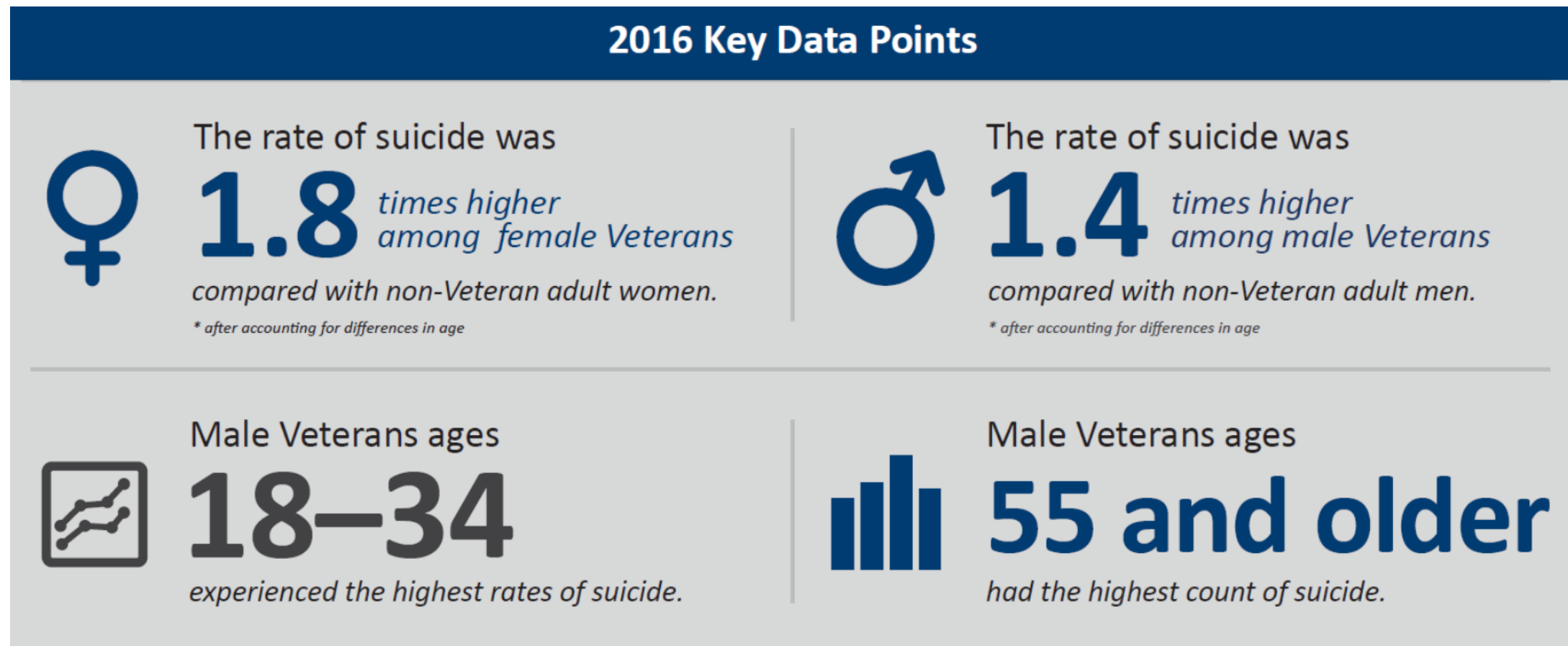


## What are VHM MAC's doing around the country?

- Identifying areas of improvement in mental health care for all Veterans and their dependents
- Advocating for necessary changes in mental health services
- Identifying and attending local mental health events
- Helping create Veteran-centered outreach materials and strategies
- Hosting outreach events (ex: retreats, luncheons, and ice cream socials)
- Conducting outreach to specific groups
- Developing relationships with major stakeholders
- Participating in Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Healthy Mind Awareness Month (May), Mental Health Summit, & Mental Illness Awareness Week (Oct)
- Honoring Veterans on specific holidays (ex: Valentine's Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas)

# Suicide Prevention

- Suicide Prevention is the VA's top clinical priority.
  - Effective outreach, access to services, and Veteran-centered care are all key to this effort.



- Engagement in VHA care:
  - 63% of Vets who died by suicide in 2016 were *not* in VHA care.



# Outreach & Navigation of Services

Activities of the VHMACST are up to the Council, but...

There will be opportunities for the VHMACST to assist VA staff with outreach to Veterans and families:

- Advise VA providers on outreach strategies & co-develop materials
- Attend outreach events
- Help engage other Veterans in need of VA services



# How do I become involved?

- Starts with your attendance today
- Complete and submit an application
- Come to meetings, participate, and share your ideas and talent
- Be consistent and dependable
- Have FUN
- Attend Outreach Events (optional)



# Questions?



*Helping Veteran's,*

*Help Themselves*

# Questions?

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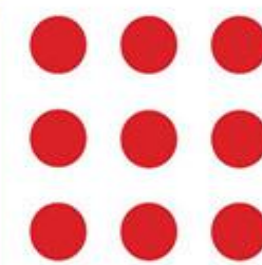
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**Veterans  
Crisis Line**

**1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1**

# Questions?

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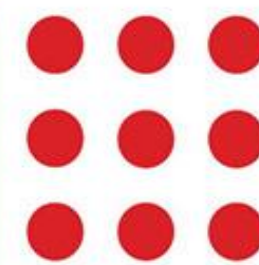
(210) 949-3151

Monday-Friday 8am-4:30pm

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