



2021 DOD/VA
**Suicide
Prevention**
CONFERENCE

Make Every Connection Count

How to Earn Suicide Prevention Mass Media Messaging Through Community Partnerships

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Presentation Learning Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1

Review and discuss suicide safe messaging in mass media advertising venues.

OBJECTIVE 2

Provide and review successful suicide prevention marketing strategies using collaborative partners with the intention to be sustainable and using methods to measure mass media outcomes.

OBJECTIVE 3

Review our future plans to incorporate state-wide suicide prevention messages (e.g., lethal means, firearm storage and safety, etc.), which can impact the cultural issues within specific communities using academic partners to develop appropriate messengers, safe messages and measure the impact of these variables.



Suicide prevention is a top priority for VA

Among its top recent accomplishments, VA has:

- Standardized its universal screening and evaluation processes**
- Developed predictive analytics programs to identify and engage more Veterans at risk for suicide**
- Found additional opportunities to involve patients, families, and community stakeholders in its prevention and treatment efforts.**
- Require dedicated staff to facilitate suicide prevention activities in each Medical Center.**



WHAT IS THE INCENTIVE TO WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY ON ADVERTISING?

VA's National Strategy for Suicide Prevention 2018 - 2028

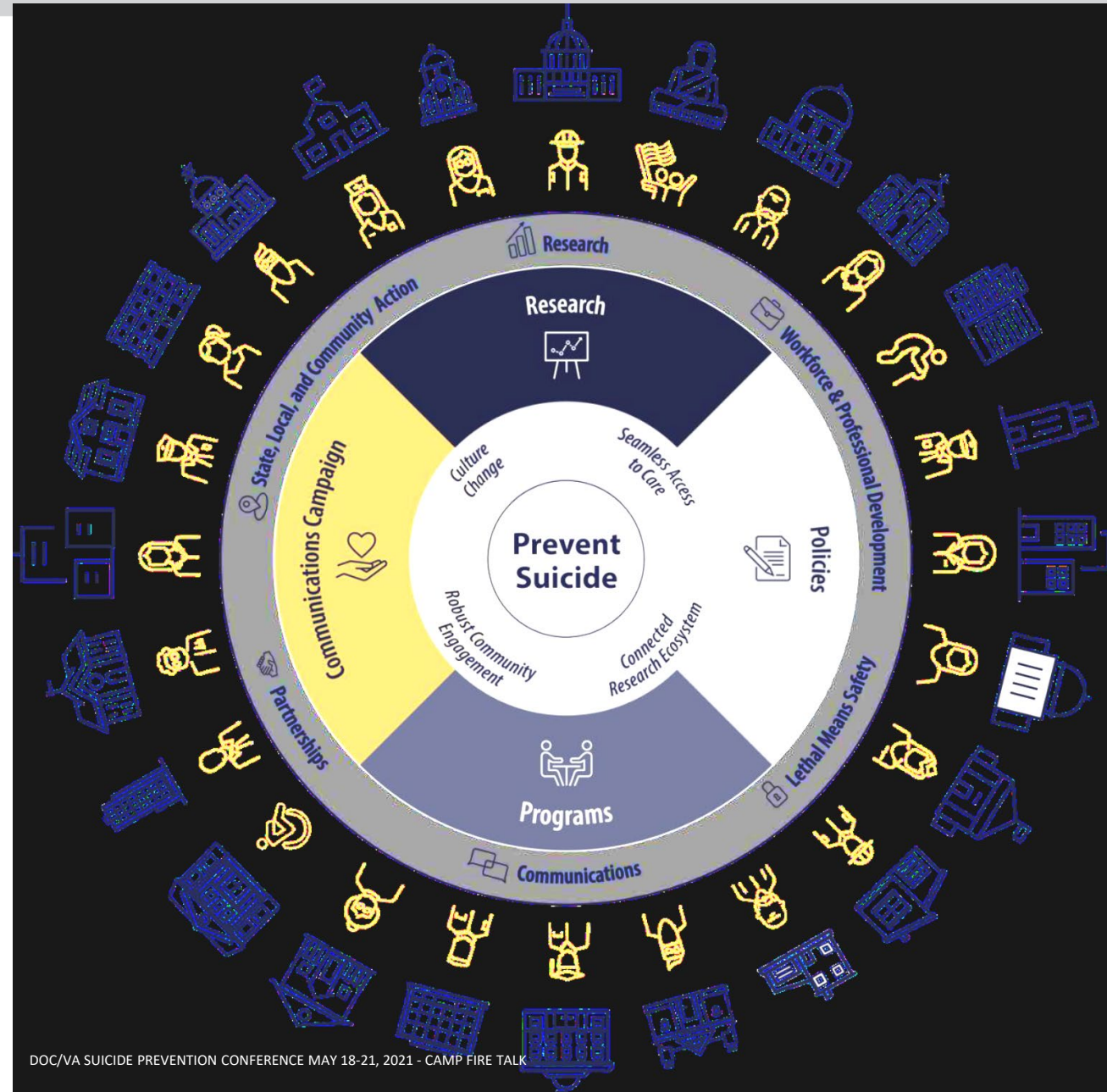
The VA will reach beyond the health care setting, and empower agencies and the community to prevent Veteran suicide in other sectors, including:

- Non-VA health care
- Veterans and Military Service Organizations
- Faith communities
- Higher learning
- Law enforcement and criminal justice
- Employment
- **Community service**
- **Nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations**
- **Media and entertainment**
- Private sector industries
- Public-private partnerships
- **Federal, state, and local government**



PREVENTS Roadmap Strategic Framework

- **Communications (campaign)**
- **Culture Change**
- **Lethal Means Safety**
- **Partnerships**
- **Workforce & Professional Development**
- **State, Local and Community Action (engagement)**
- **Research (connected ecosystem)**
- **Policies**
- **Programs**
- **Seamless access to care**



Advertising allows our Task Force mission to reach everyone!

PREVENTS is Not Only for Veterans

- **PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGING:** This approach recognizes that Veterans do not live in a vacuum — they live and work in the community, they have families and friends outside the military, and they are affected by the same genetic, behavioral, social, and environmental determinants of health that affect all Americans.
- Taking a whole-of-Nation approach reaches all Veterans and those who support them, as well as the men and women who continue to serve in the military but will someday join the community of Veterans.

2020 Priority Focus Areas

Aspiration: **PREVENT suicide within the Veteran community — and lead the way in preventing suicide for all Americans — by employing a public health approach that focuses on empowering every individual through a nationally driven, community-implemented four-part integrated strategy.**

Focus areas:



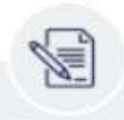
Communications Campaign:
Develop and drive a national public health campaign.



Research: Prioritize precision suicide intervention and enhance the federal research ecosystem.



Programs: Scale data-backed programs at the community, local, state levels.



Policies: Develop and support policies to improve prevention.

What success looks like:

- Strong **awareness of risk factors** for suicide and the adoption of help-seeking behaviors among all communities and Veterans in particular
- **Culture of openness, support, and belonging** surrounding the topic of suicide and mental health more broadly
- Prevention and intervention methods tailored to each Veteran's **unique suicide risk profile**
- **Enhanced federal research ecosystem** — promote team-based research approaches, public-private partnerships, shared resources, and frequent engagement with government funders and regulators
- Streamlined access to **comprehensive end-to-end mental health and suicide prevention care** for all communities and with a specific focus on Veterans
- Active **suicide prevention initiatives and conversations** by workplaces, schools, faith-based communities, and other stakeholder organizations
- **Legislative proposal** that drives grant funding to communities, enabling them to increase collaboration and integration of services to Veterans
- **Universally driven and adopted policies** that allow for more coordinated, action-oriented research and the implementation of evidence-based suicide prevention programs



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

PREVENTS Roadmap Strategic Framework

Recommendation 1: Create and implement a national public health campaign focused on suicide prevention for Veterans and all Americans.

- ❖ **Adopting and promoting — both internally across all PREVENTS Task Force agencies and externally across the nation — targeted messaging, consistent with the PREVENTS Roadmap public health campaign, that focuses on preventing suicide.**
- ❖ **Providing targeted messaging through high-visibility channels that empower the public to recognize risks, increase protective factors, and take action.**
- ❖ **Developing a cross-sector ambassador program — within government and in the community — for high-profile individuals and influencers to amplify**

Our Task Force on Veteran Suicide Prevention

We developed a task force (coalition) in the **fall of 2019** in southeastern Wisconsin. Our Task Force was started by inviting many groups including: Veteran groups (American Legion), War Memorial Center, VA staff, State of Wisconsin Dept of Veteran Affairs, Wisconsin Veteran Service Officers, and suicide prevention focused agencies, (i.e., American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and Mental Health of America (MHA)). We have more than **30** members to our Task Force.



Southeastern Wisconsin Task Force on Veteran Suicide Prevention Our Charter

- We all agree to work on ending suicides in all populations with a focus on Veterans
- Develop and share new ideas and innovations to reduce suicides and reduce the risk of suicide
- Teach the community about military culture and on their role in preventing suicides
- Provide support to those affected by suicides
- Definition of Veteran is anyone who has worn the uniform including National Guard and Reservists even if they have not been active duty.

Our Task Force on Veteran Suicide Prevention

The initial meetings were followed by a **retreat** to develop action areas with measurable activities. Our task force developed **4 Action Areas** which follow the National Academy of Medicine's Framework which include:

- 1) Universal strategies to address the ALL **(Public Health Messaging)**
 - 2) Selective strategies for SOME **(Outreach)**
 - 3) Indicated strategies to reach the FEW **(Clinical)**
 - 4) Change culture and promote new interventions **(Research/Policy)**
-

Task Force on Veteran Suicide Prevention Action Areas

Public Health Message

- **Strategies**
- **Safety – Lethal means**
- **Positive Narrative**
- **Guidelines**
- **Who, where, When**

Outreach & Support

- Peer outreach
- Suicide Postvention
- Homeless Prevention
- Crisis Intervention
- Lethal means safety
- Connections with Family, Faith-based & cultural communities

Treatment & Whole Health

- Access to Mental Health Services
- Whole Health Services
- Smartphone Apps
- Crisis Intervention
- Evidence-based Suicide Treatment

Data, Evaluation & Research

- Consistent Reporting of Suicides
- Clinical Research
- Community Interventions
- Lethal Means Research

Public Health Messaging

Community Task Force on Veteran Suicide Prevention Mission Statements for the Action Areas

PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGING ACTION AREA

SOUTHEASTERN WIS TASK FORCE ON VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION



For veterans facing hard times, your support can provide hope when it's needed most - and you already have what it takes to show you care. Take a few minutes to check in today.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

Call Email Text

BETHEREWIS.COM

Mission Statement: The Public Messaging Action Area of the SE Wisconsin Task Force on Veteran Suicide Prevention will promote the Task Force's action areas through positive messages to change the cultural concepts of Veteran suicide using social media, mass media advertising, educational presentations, and earned media events.

Help us inform the public about of Veteran suicides and save lives!

MISSION STATEMENT



This Action Area will use mass media messaging to change cultural concepts about Veterans thoughts to die by suicide.

Public Health Messaging Plan

The Public Messaging Action Area (PMAA) led by the VA's community partner, the War Memorial Center, used \$4000.00 "seed" funding to advertise Veteran suicide prevention resources.



Our 1st Marketing Plan

1. Develop a website for a landing site for the advertising
 1. #Be There (for Veterans) is one VA National slogan
 2. We added "WIS" to the slogan for our slogan: BeThereWis.
 3. <https://www.BeThereWis.com> has been operational since August 2020.



Marketing Plan

The advertising on radio and email was directed to the Task Force's website, Facebook group/page at BeThereWis.com.



Our Email blast – designed by iHeart

The radio audio produced by iHeart

BE THERE WISCONSIN
September is Suicide prevention month. You can make a difference for a veteran in Wisconsin!

[LEARN MORE](#)

For veterans facing hard times, your support can provide hope when it's needed most - and you already have what it takes to show you care. Take a few minutes to check in today.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

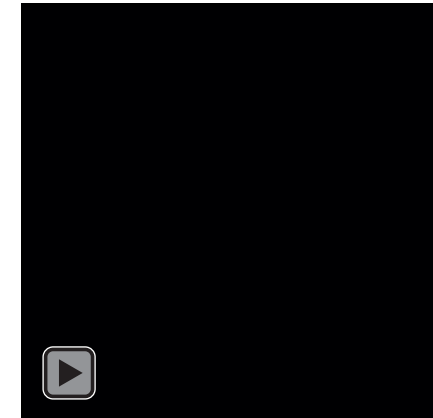
[Call](#) [Email](#) [Text](#)

BETHEREWIS.COM

BETHEREWIS.COM

BeThereWis.com is a new local resource for Veterans to connect to national and local services. It has been developed by the Southeastern Wisconsin Task Force on Veteran Suicide prevention. Please share this message with family and friends

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1



Public Health Messaging



Results of the 1st Advertising campaign by the Task Force:

The advertising on radio and email was directed to the Task Force's website, Facebook group/page, and Twitter account modeling the VA's "Be There" campaign (BeThereWis.com). (See box 1).

Box 1: Public Health Messaging Action Area Advertising

1. Public Health Messaging impact: Radio advertising began on 7 September 2020 and ran until 10 October 2020 for a total of 262 radio spots statewide. (plan 210 spots)
2. The first newsletter was emailed on 14 September 2020 to 64,964 veterans
3. The second (retargeted) newsletter was emailed on 22 September 2020 to 6,496 veterans
4. 50,000+ streaming audio impressions on WISN radio 7Sept-5Oct
5. Total campaign cost **\$4100.00** value (real market costs):
\$24,300.00

Campaign Stats:

Total Quantity:	64,964
Total Opens:	11,309
Open %:	17.41%
Total Clicks:	1,048
Clicks %:	1.61%
HTML CTR:	9.27%

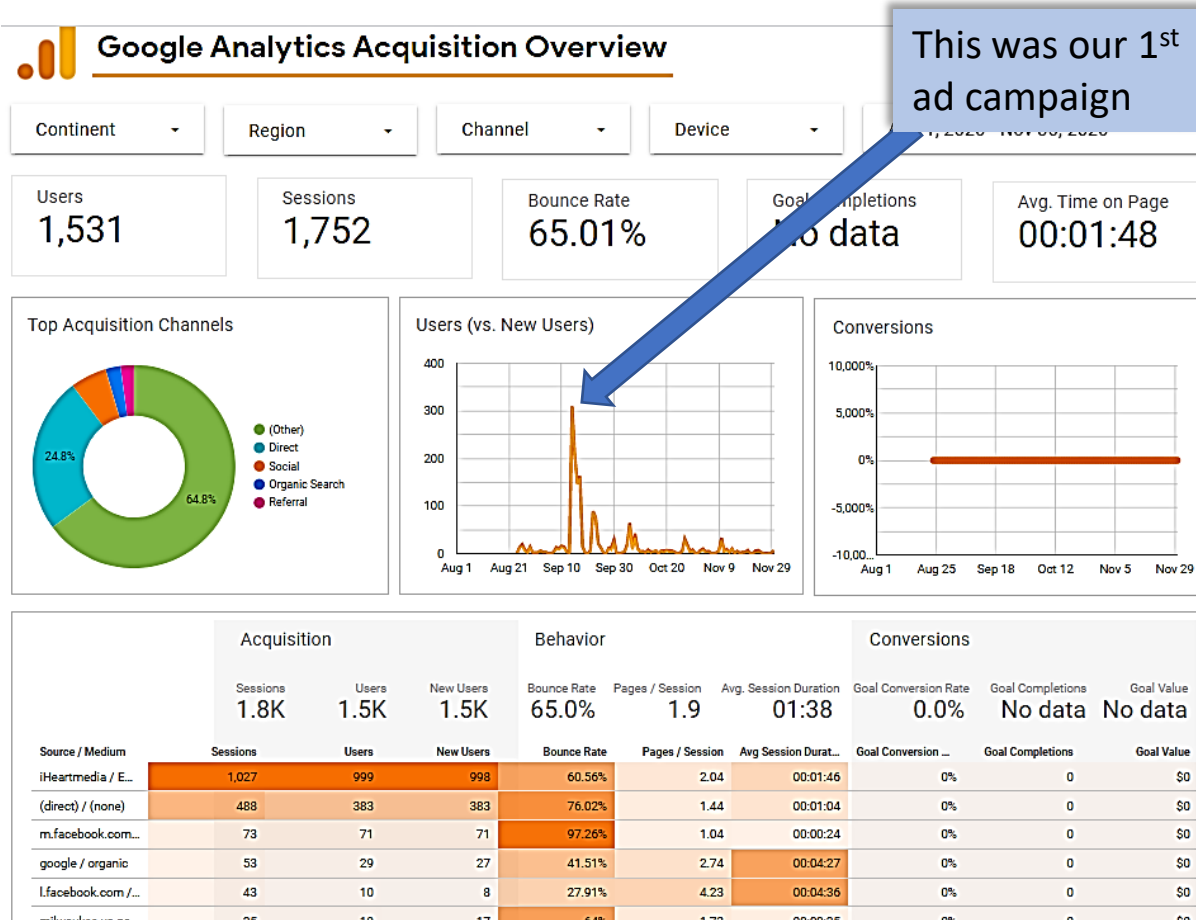
Public Health Messaging

Results of the 1st Advertising campaign by the Task Force:

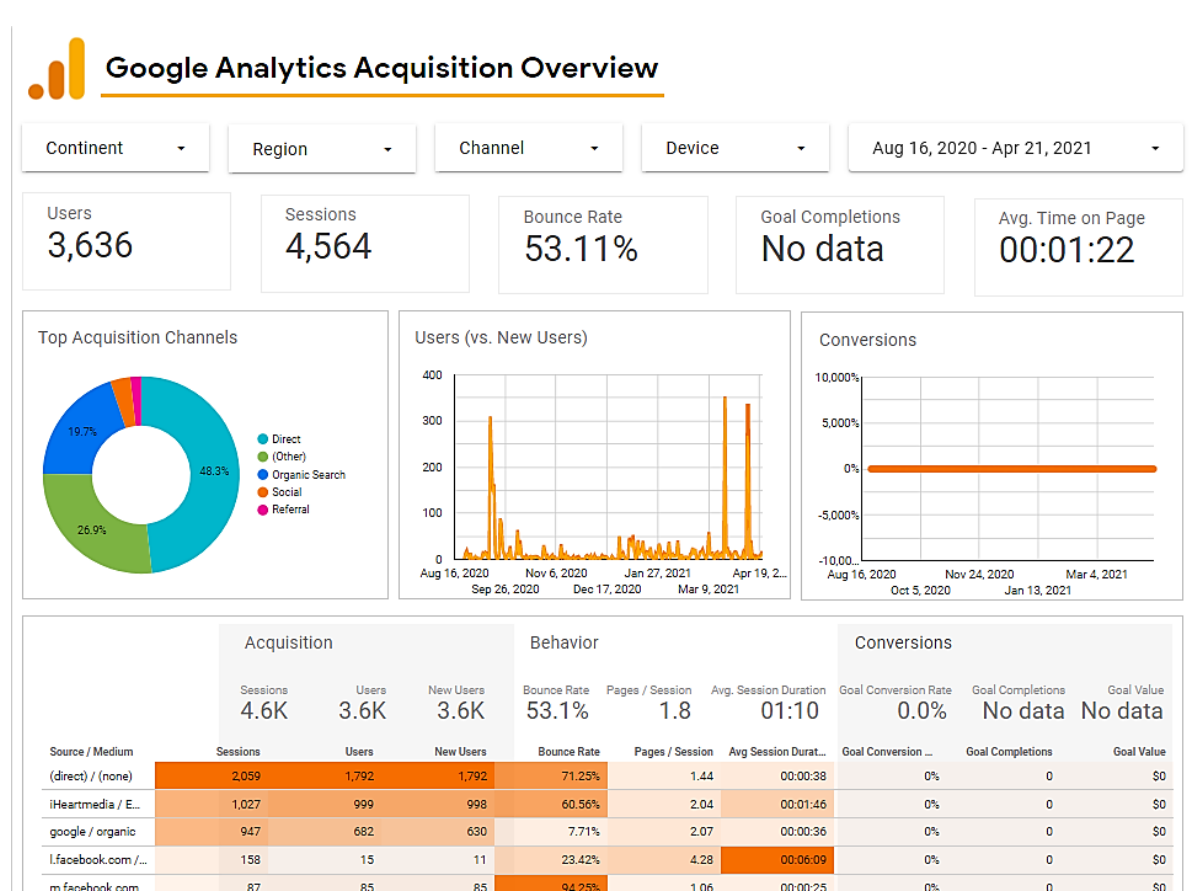


The results on the **BeThereWis.com** Google Analytics website.

Data from Aug 1, 2020 to Dec 1, 2020



All data Aug 2020 to April 21, 2021



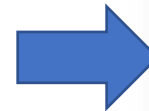



Public Health Messaging Action Area

Task Force Action Area: Activities – Panel discussions

Panel discussions held in January 2020:

- Community Discussion Panel Regarding Outreach to Veterans with Diverse Backgrounds presented by Capt John D Mason Veteran Peer Outreach Program
- Desert Storm at 30: Continuing to Serve presented by War Memorial Center. Press release example:



 **War Memorial Center**

750 North Lincoln Memorial Drive ~ Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202
Phone: 414-273-5533 ~ www.warmemorialcenter.org

“Desert Storm at 30: Continuing to Serve.”

Veterans will talk about their experiences during Operation Desert Storm 30 years ago and their ongoing work to help Veterans during an online panel discussion later this month.

The event begins at noon Thursday, Jan. 21. It will be accessible to the public via Zoom. To take part, click [here](#) or go to <https://www.eventbrite.com> and search for “Desert Storm at 30.”

The anniversary of the beginning Operation Desert Storm -- Jan. 17, 1991 -- comes just one day before the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

Rather than just a remembrance of the war to free Kuwait from Iraq, the panel discussion will use King’s statement -- “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?” -- to look at how Veterans from the Gulf War have continued their service to others 30 years later.

In particular, the panel will discuss how some Veterans, once they leave the military, find it difficult to transition to civilian life and to find the same sense of mission they had while in the military. This “lost” feeling can sometimes lead to tragic outcomes, including homelessness, family strife, job insecurity and suicide.

The panelists:

- James M. Cocroft, Assistant Director, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Military and Veterans Resource Center; U.S. Navy veteran, 1987-2007
- Jim McLain, Deputy Medical Center Director, Milwaukee VA Medical Center; U.S. Army veteran, 1987-2007
- Michael Koszuta, Command Sergeant Major (ret.), U.S. Army; member of War Memorial Center Board; chairman of Operation 30:30 Committee; U.S. Coast Guard veteran of Desert Storm

The moderator will be Dan Buttery, President and CEO of the War Memorial Center in Milwaukee and a U.S. Army veteran.

The event is sponsored by the [Southeastern Wisconsin Task Force on Veteran Suicide Prevention](#) in conjunction with the Milwaukee VA Medical Center, the War Memorial Center and the Operation 30:20 Committee.

For more information about the panel discussion, contact Buttery at 414-273-5533 or email dbuttery@warmemorialcenter.org.

If you’re a Veteran struggling with thoughts of suicide, or know a Veteran who is struggling, go to BeThereWis.com to get help.



Public Health Messaging Action Area

Additional Activities – Panel discussions & Trainings

- **February: S.A.V.E Zoom training occurred on Feb 24, 2021 at 1000**
- **On going funding of the marketing campaign by the VA Suicide Prevention Program**
- **March 2021: Veteran Women’s Healthcare and Outreach**
- **Each month the action area is working on new presentations to promote Veteran issues and connections, (e.g., PTSD, Sleep hygiene, Firearm lethal means, etc.)**

Sample press release of an expert panel on Veteran Diversity & Outreach



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Milwaukee VA Medical Center

Milwaukee VA Medical Center
5000 W. National Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53295

Media Advisory

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Public Affairs
414-982-5964

Release No. 01-04-01
Jan. 4, 2021

Panel discussion looks to connect Veterans from diverse backgrounds with health care services

Connecting Veterans from diverse backgrounds with vital health-care resources, including the Milwaukee VA Medical Center, is the topic of a panel discussion to mark Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Six Veterans from different ethnic, racial and gender backgrounds will take part in the virtual discussion, to take place over Zoom.

It begins at noon Tuesday, Jan. 19, presented by the Captain John D. Mason Veteran Peer Outreach Program.

The discussion will center on Dr. King’s statement, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?”

Specifically, the panel will look at the statement in how it relates to connecting with Veterans and reducing the rate of Veteran suicides.

“Research has shown that Veterans from diverse backgrounds have trouble connecting with VA and other health-care resources,” said Dr. Bert Berger, head of the Mental Health Division at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. “We want to make sure all Veterans get the help they need and deserve.”

Veterans Mark Flower and Chris Swift from the peer outreach program will lead the discussion.

For more information and to register, click [here](#), go to the [Mason program’s Facebook page](#) or contact Susan Smykal at 414-955-8914 or via email at ssmykal@mcw.edu.

The event is hosted by the Medical College of Wisconsin and the Department of Veterans Affairs, in conjunction with the Southeastern Wisconsin Task Force on Veteran Suicide Prevention. For more information, go to www.BeThereWis.com.

The Captain John D. Mason Veteran Peer Outreach Program was created in 2018 and named after a Vietnam veteran who lost his own battle with depression and PTSD. The program, in the Medical College of Wisconsin Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine in collaboration with the Milwaukee VA Medical Center, aims to save lives by locating veterans in need and engaging them in VA health services.

Facebook Advertising Trial (2 weeks) Expert Minority Panel Presentation on Veteran Outreach

Cost was about \$10.00

The results of the Ad

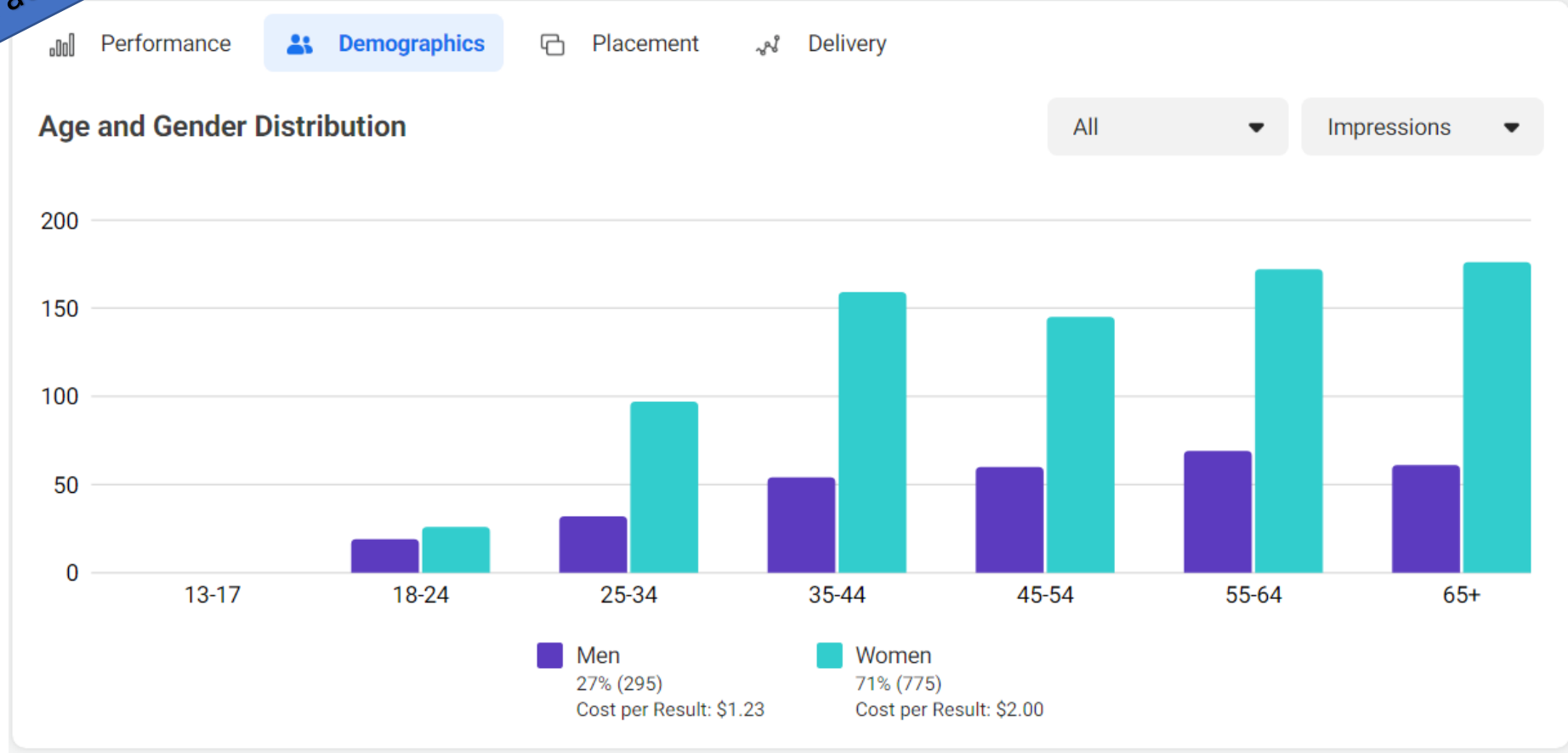
The actual Ad

BeThere Wisconsin
Sponsored · 🌐

Connecting Veterans from diverse background with vital health-care resources, including the Milwaukee VA Medical Center, is ...See More

be there.
Check in with a Veteran today.
BeThereForVeterans.com

TUE, JAN 19
Connecting Minority Veterans to Healthcare





Public Health Messaging Action Area

Earned Media Examples

- Oct 2, 2020: Spectrum News 1: New App is Here to Help Veterans Struggling with Mental Health During the Pandemic.
<https://spectrumnews1.com/wi/milwaukee/news/2020/10/02/coronavirus-pandemic-app-for-veterans>
- Nov 21, 2020, Fox Channel 58 News: Milwaukee VA, War Memorial Center to offer suicide prevention training: <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/milwaukee-va-war-memorial-center-to-offer-suicide-prevention-training>
- Jan 21, 2021: Spectrum News 1: Three Veterans on their time serving the nation and where they are today. <https://spectrumnews1.com/wi/milwaukee/news/2021/01/21/three-veterans-on-their-time-serving-the-nation--and-where-they-are-today#>



Public Health Messaging Action Area

Earned Media Examples

[Veteran outreach program works to prevent suicides in Wisconsin communities with firearm safety initiative | The Milwaukee Independent](#)

[Medical College of Wisconsin Veteran Outreach Program Helps Prevent Suicide with Firearm Safety Initiative | Local News | Racine County Eye - Racine, Wisconsin](#)

Take away ideas to get started on your own Public Messaging Campaigns.

- Work with the public affairs department at your facility or agency.
- Develop a committed team willing to work on projects
- Develop a mission and goals
- Put out press releases for your activities
- Have a way to measure and track your progress – like a website or other social media.



Take away ideas

- Find a media group to help you develop a campaign.
- Use a media group willing to provide **VALUE ADDED** advertising
- Network with Veteran focused agencies and groups to help find Veteran/Military friendly media groups.



Take away ideas

How do you keep the advertising effective over time?

- Planning for Continuity, consistency, and sustainability
- Track the data through a website, Facebook, foot traffic to events and training sessions.
 - Tracking/measuring the data allows you to modify the message and target message.
- Modify the message as needed. Keep it fresh and appropriate.
- Develop new partnerships and a network of community groups to help provide new content and
- Don't give up!



Conclusions and Future Directions

Our Collaborative Process is key to growth and sustainment:

The collaboration between our Task Force Action Areas with specific goal and missions allows for the development of new actions and brainstorm new ideas.

This reiterative process has allowed action areas to support each other and to help to sustain our Messaging campaigns.

Example: Our Public Health Action Area provided media attention to the **CVI HELP** phone app through **press releases** from the VA and War Memorial Center and virtual training for VA suicide prevention training (**SAVE**).



Connecting Veterans
Across Wisconsin to Services
A Safety Net Mobile App & Website for Anyone in Need

CVI HELP
POWERED by the VFW of WI WFW

Web App www.cvihelp.com
Available for FREE on the
Apple and Google App Stores

For more information please visit www.cviet.org

CVI Help

Available on the App Store
GET IT ON Google play

Conclusions and Future Plans

We are looking for ways to:

- **Improve the message**
- **Increase the impact of the message**

At the same time to have the message:

- **change the culture &**
- **provide suicide prevention interventions**



Conclusions and Future Plans

How do we make an impact on Veteran suicides using Public Health Messaging?

We need to determine:

What is the best Message?

Who is the best Messenger for our target population?

How do we determine our impact on Veterans and the culture?

We hope to do this through research projects:

We have submitted a grant application for a 2 year state-wide (Wisconsin) study to research the best way to message and impact on Veterans around the issue of help seeking behavior and firearm lethal means safety.

Our funding source: MCW/Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Foundation in their Call for Population & Community Health Studies



Questions?/Thank you!

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