



Troubling new data show there are an average of 950 suicide attempts each month by veterans who are receiving some type of treatment from the Veterans Affairs Department. Seven percent of the attempts are successful, and 11 percent of those who don't succeed on the first attempt try again within nine months.

The numbers, which come at a time when VA is strengthening its suicide prevention programs, show about 18 veteran suicides a day, about five by veterans who are receiving VA care.

Access to care appears to be a key factor, officials said, noting that once a veteran is inside the VA care program, screening programs are in place to identify those with problems, and special efforts are made to track those considered at high risk, such as monitoring whether they are keeping appointments.

A key part of the new data shows the suicide rate is lower for veterans aged 18 to 29 who are using VA health care services than those who are not. That leads VA officials to believe that about 250 lives have been saved each year as a result of VA treatment.

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