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Pennsylvania Receives CDC Cooperative Agreement to Build a Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program for Veterans in Northwest Pennsylvania



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Harrisburg, PA –The University of Pittsburgh Program Evaluation and Research Unit (PERU), in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) today announced the receipt of a cooperative agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to implement and evaluate a comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention, focusing especially on service members, veterans, and their families.

“We all share the responsibility to prevent suicide, which is why we are proud to work with PERU, the CDC, and our other partners to develop programs and practices that will address suicide and offer support and resources to individuals who think about it, plan for it or attempt it,” said DHS Secretary Teresa Miller. “We know that veterans carry a greater risk for suicide than the general population, and that’s why the work we are doing is so critical. The work that this cooperative agreement funds will help save lives across Pennsylvania.”

“Our veterans and their families endure added stress in their lives because of the incredible sacrifices they made while serving our nation,” said Maj. Gen. Anthony Carrelli, Pennsylvania’s adjutant general and head of the DMVA. “As a result, veterans are 1.5 times more likely to die by suicide than Americans who never served in the military. Our goal is to reduce veteran suicide to zero and we will need the support of community partners like DHS and PERU to achieve that goal. We look forward to the positive impact this grant will have on the lives of our veterans and their families.”

The CDC, through this cooperative agreement, awarded PERU \$700,000 in funding each year over the next five years for suicide prevention by creating the Northwest Pennsylvania Veteran Suicide Prevention Program. The primary long-term outcome of the program is to reduce the average rate of suicide in 15 counties – Erie, Warren, McKean, Crawford, Forest, Elk, Clearfield, Jefferson, Armstrong, Clarion, Butler, Venango, Mercer, Lawrence, and Beaver – by at least 10 percent by the conclusion of the five-year project period.

The program will consist of an assessment of active county, state, and national suicide prevention initiatives to identify gaps in services and programming. Following the assessment, PERU will develop

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and implement additional risk assessment programs, community-based trainings, and healthcare-related initiatives across the 15-county target region. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected throughout the program to identify best practices and develop future policy.

“PERU is honored to work with the Commonwealth on this important initiative, which will provide Pennsylvania’s northwestern counties with the opportunity to implement data-driven strategies to prevent veteran suicides in their communities,” said Janice Pringle, PhD, PERU executive director and the project’s principal investigator. “It is our hope that this program will become a model for other parts of the state and the nation.”

PERU has partnered with the Pennsylvania departments of Health, Drug and Alcohol Programs, the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the CDC, and the mental health administrators in each of the counties to implement and evaluate a comprehensive approach to prevent suicide in the northwest Pennsylvania veteran population. This work will also supplement Pennsylvania’s Statewide Suicide Prevention Plan and the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and Their Families.

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health or suicidal ideation or have in past, know that help is always available:

- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255.
- The Spanish-language National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-888-628-9454
- For the Mental Health Crisis Text Line: Text PA to 741741
- Support and Referral Helpline: 1-855-284-2494. For TTY, dial 724-631-5600.

These free resources are available 24/7. If you are concerned about someone else’s well-being, these resources can help you be a life-saving assistance. No matter what you are going through, help is available.

Find more information on the Wolf Administration’s efforts to prevent suicide [here](#).

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