



IT'S YOUR CALL

VCL 988 Expansion Initiative & Implications

Presenter: Lisa K. Kearney, Ph.D., ABPP (Lisa.Kearney3@va.gov)

Director, Veterans Crisis Line

Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**Veterans
Crisis Line**



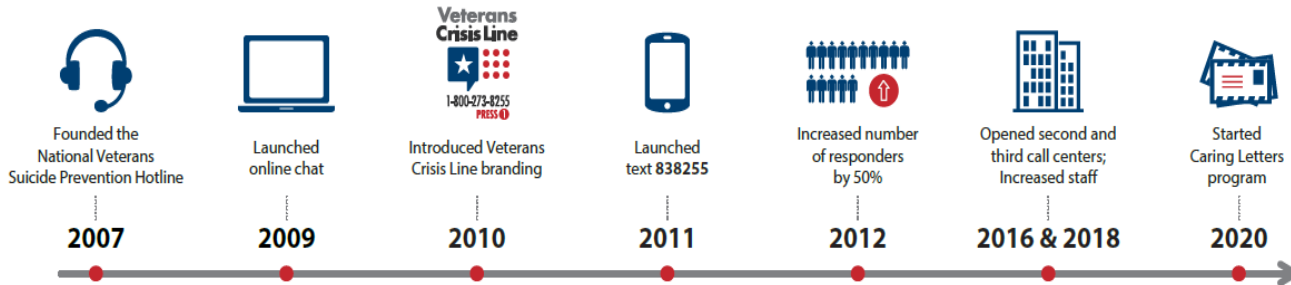
**1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1**

VeteransCrisisLine.net
or text to **838255**

Confidential help for Veterans and their families and friends

Answering the Call

The Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource available to any Veteran, even if they are not enrolled in VA health care or registered with VA. Care does not end when the conversation is over. The Veterans Crisis Line can connect Veterans to their local suicide prevention coordinators, who will follow up and coordinate care.



Metric	FY20	FY21 to date
True Demand (Daily Avg Including Backup Center)	1978.7	1978.2
Percentage of Calls Handled	95.95%	96.94%
Rollover %	0.141%	0.069%
Average Speed to Answer (Seconds)	10.38	9.15
Abandonment	3.81%	2.99%
Referrals Daily Average	371.76	426.10
Emergency Dispatch Daily Average	79.57	96.24

Beyond the Call

Caring Letters

- Evidence-based intervention for suicide prevention found to reduce the rate of suicide death, attempts, and ideation (VA/DoD 2019 Clinical Practice Guideline)
- Focused on expanding critical crisis intervention work to help Veterans continue to feel supported and engaged
- Will reach over 90,000 Veterans annually with nine letters over the course of a year after their call to VCL
- Launched June 2020, VCL has mailed over 530,000 caring letters to over 100,000 Veterans

Peer Support Outreach Call Center

- Mission: To provide support, hope and recovery-oriented services to Veterans who are identified as at increased risk for suicide.
- Care provided via phone and text messaging services with several calls or texts to identified Veterans over a course of months
- Staffed by VHA Peer Specialists who are Veterans that are in recovery, under supervision of licensed independent providers



Choose **VA**

Draft - Pre-Decisional Deliberative Document
Internal VA Use Only

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

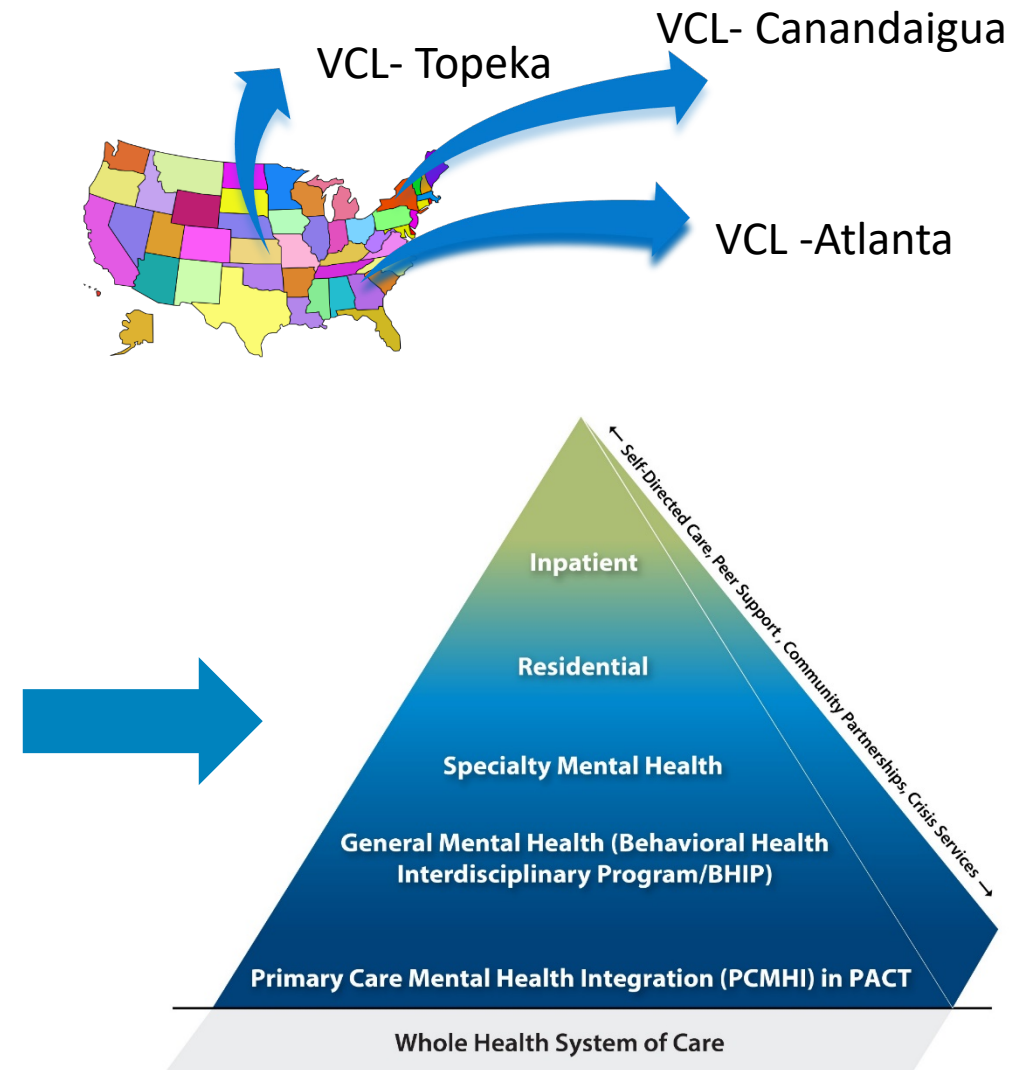
We Know VCL Services are Needed and Matter

- VCL serves a very high-risk population (suicide rate= 797 per 100,000 in month after call and 298 per 100,000 over 12 months; Hanneman et al., 2020).
- Callers were over **5 times more likely to have less distress at the end of the call than at the beginning** (Britton et al, present study)
- Callers **almost 5 times more likely to have less suicidal ideation at the end of the call than at the beginning** (Britton et al, present study)
- Callers were **91% less likely to have suicidal urgency at the end of the call than at the beginning**(Britton et al, present study)
- 83% of callers reported feeling better following their call (Rasmussen et al., 2017).
- Veterans more likely to engage in care after receiving a responder referral (Britton et al., 2016).

H.R.5392 - No Veterans Crisis Line Call Should Go Unanswered Act requires by law that VCL maintains all key performance indicators

988 Impacts

- Ease of Access to VCL/VA services leads to
 - Increased volume
 - Increased need for collaboration and coordination internally and externally
- Potential single point of entry for Veterans, Service members and their families
- Significant impacts for VCL
 - clinical operations,
 - quality and training,
 - infrastructure expansion,
 - IT
- Significant impacts on the VA system with increased access to full continuum of care



Answering the Call - 988

- **Use of Monte Carlo forecasting models** to anticipate initial and ongoing projected changes in call volumes
- **Preparation for 988 implementation to ensure operational readiness** continues across multiple domains of effort, including staffing, technology, and operations.
- Although final and full activation of 988 is not expected until July 16, 2022, some carriers have already implemented. An important takeaway is that **988 is NOT available for all Americans. Those who do not subscribe** to carriers who have activated 988, should still dial 1-800-273-8255, Press 1, to reach VCL/MCL. VCL/MCL will continue to be available via phone, online chat (<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat>) and Text (838255), 24/7.
- After full activation of 988, 1-800-273-8255 **will not** be sunset; it will remain active.

Shaping Demand and Capacity: An Exercise for Considering Options

	Maximize Existing Capacity	Increase Capacity
Shape Demand	ATC	AI
Offload Demand	CWCN	PSOC

What do we all need to do together
and in our own systems to embrace
this new future?





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

• • • • Confidential chat at **VeteransCrisisLine.net** or text to **838255** • • • •

- Veterans
- Family members
- Service members
- Friends