

News Release — Missouri Veterans Commission

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Inaugural Veterans Suicide Prevention Report Released

JEFFERSON CITY — Today, the Missouri Veterans Commission released its inaugural Veteran Suicide Prevention report, as required by Senate Bill 912 and House Bill 1495. The report is titled “Left of Boom,” which in military terms describes the period of time before an incident occurs, where proactive measures can be put into place to prevent or mitigate a life-threatening event such as an attack, explosion, or crisis. The nine-page report details the intent, planning framework, and implementation strategies to be used to help curb Veteran suicides in Missouri. A key finding was the ongoing battle with the stigma surrounding mental health struggles and reaching out for help for Veterans.

The report can be found on MVC’s website mvc.dps.mo.gov. In conjunction with the Missouri Department of Mental Health, MVC’s Suicide Prevention Manager, Lindsey Ward, gathered information over eight months and began to decipher the barriers Veterans face concerning mental health. The report details how Veterans face higher rates of mental health challenges and suicide compared with non-Veterans, and the shocking statistic that 42.6 of every 100,000 Missouri Veterans died by suicide in 2022. The national average for Veteran suicide of 34.7 of every 100,000 is already alarmingly high compared to non-Veterans. The report also details the strategies MVC plans to implement to help reduce these numbers in the coming years.

“I am excited to see this report come to fruition,” said Representative Dave Griffith. “Last year, when the Veterans Omnibus Bill was signed, we began the journey to understand the factors involved with Veteran suicide and can now work to enact changes to help decrease the number of incidences we see in Missouri.”

“We are proud to present the inaugural ‘Left of Boom’ report,” says MVC Executive Director (Ret.) Col. Paul Kirchhoff. “Our Suicide Prevention Manager, Lindsey Ward, has worked tirelessly, in conjunction with other stakeholders, to collect the information we need to adapt to the changing landscape of this issue, and to start putting into action the strategies needed to understand and prevent Veteran Suicide.”

The Missouri Veterans Commission was charged with creating a new program, to aid in efforts to prevent Veteran suicide and to create a report each year outlining recommendations and procedures, programs, and other assistance MVC considers necessary to assist in efforts to prevent Veteran suicides. Additional information can be found in RSMo 42.022.

The Missouri Veterans Commission operates seven State Veterans Homes, five Veterans Cemeteries, Veterans Services Program and the Veterans Suicide Prevention Program. The Commission is committed to providing high-quality, compassionate care for Veterans, seamlessly integrated with the Veteran community, emphasizing a culture of transparency and excellence. For more information about Missouri Veterans Commission programs, call 573-751-3779 or visit mvc.dps.mo.gov.