



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## PRESS RELEASE

### VA Provides \$1 Million in Funding for Florida Veterans Support Line

**TAMPA, FL – (December 12, 2018)** To enhance veteran suicide prevention efforts, the [Crisis Center of Tampa Bay](#), [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#) and [Florida Department of Veterans Affairs \(FDVA\)](#) announced today that the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay (Crisis Center) has received a \$1 million contract from the VA to enhance services provided to Florida veterans through the [Florida Veterans Support Line \(1-844-MyFLVet\)](#).

“This new collaboration with the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay and the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs will play a vital role in our suicide prevention efforts,” said Dr. Miguel LaPuz, VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8) Director. “Connecting veterans who are experiencing an emotional or mental health crisis with certified veteran counselors at 2-1-1 Centers across Florida can and will save lives.”

The funding provides necessary resources to place veteran resource management staff and Veteran Peer Care Coordinators at local, non-profit organizations throughout Florida who answer calls from the Florida Veterans Support Line. Funding also provides technical assistance to those local organizations. Through veteran resource management staff, a database of VA and Non-VA community resources helpful to veterans will be created and maintained through this project. Veteran Peer Care Coordinators provide follow-up, short-term support to veterans who call 1-844-MyFLVet and 2-1-1. These veteran peers are able to easily relate to veteran callers because of similar life experiences that are unique to the veteran community.

“Peer to Peer support is proven to be extremely effective in connecting veterans to the network of help they need and deserve. By talking with a fellow veteran, these men and women have the opportunity to work with someone who has walked a mile in their shoes. Because of this, there is already a baseline of trust established as we work to help the veteran,” said Clara Reynolds, President & CEO of the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay.

The VA funding provides the next step in implementing a model of care for Florida’s veterans modeled after the peer function of the national [Veterans Crisis Line](#) (1-800-273-8255 and press 1) and innovated for statewide use by the Crisis Center. The Crisis Center first launched the Florida Veterans Support Line in 2014 as a five-county pilot program. The Florida Department of Veterans Affairs was instrumental in the launch of the program and continues to provide support in facilitating inter-agency collaboration for 1-844-MyFLVet.

In late 2017, the Florida Veterans Support Line expanded from the five-county pilot stage to being answered statewide through a network of local agencies who answer calls to 2-1-1. The Crisis Center is in the final stages of securing additional, necessary funding to further enhance services provided by the Florida Veterans Support Line.

“This is a heartfelt, collaborative effort among government and private entities to reduce the number of veteran suicides in our state through intervention and education,” said Glenn Sutphin, executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs. “Our goal is to bring awareness that we all have a hand to play in crisis intervention to tackle a very real public health challenge. The formal collaboration announced today will help save lives.”

### **About the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay**

The mission of the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay is to ensure that no one in our community has to face crisis alone. The organization is the community’s gateway to help, hope, and healing, and is Tampa Bay’s elite provider of crisis and trauma services. Responding to over 160,000 requests for help each year, the nonprofit agency offers a range of evidence based programs designed to meet community needs:

- Corbett Trauma Center (trauma counseling and sexual assault survivor services)
- Gateway Contact Center (2-1-1: suicide prevention, crisis counseling, and information and referral services)
- TransCare (9-1-1 emergency and mental health ambulance services, medical van transportation)

For more information regarding the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, please visit [www.crisiscenter.com](http://www.crisiscenter.com).

### **About the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is a federal Cabinet-level agency that provides comprehensive health care services to eligible military veterans at VA medical centers and outpatient clinics located throughout the country; several non-healthcare benefits including disability compensation, vocational rehabilitation, education assistance, home loans, and life insurance; and provides burial and memorial benefits to eligible veterans and family members at national cemeteries.

### **About the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs**

The mission of the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs is to advocate with purpose and passion for Florida’s more than 1.5 million veterans and link them to superior services, benefits and support. The Division of Veterans’ Benefits and Assistance provides no-cost professional assistance to Florida veterans and their dependents in obtaining financial benefits and health care treatments from the VA. The State Veterans’ Homes Program provides comprehensive, high-quality health care to eligible veterans in need of long-term skilled nursing or assisted living care.

For more information on the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs, please visit [www.FloridaVets.org](http://www.FloridaVets.org).

Crisis Center of Tampa Bay Media Contact:

Ken Gibson

Senior Director of Marketing & PR

Cell: (813) 410-4129

[kgibson@crisiscenter.com](mailto:kgibson@crisiscenter.com)

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network Media Contact:

Mary Kay Rutan

Manager, Office of Communication & Stakeholder Relations

Cell: (352) 225-1246

[MaryKay.Rutan@va.gov](mailto:MaryKay.Rutan@va.gov)

FDVA Media Contact:  
Steve Murray  
Communications & External Affairs Director  
Cell: (850) 491-1092  
[MurrayR@FDVA.STATE.FL.US](mailto:MurrayR@FDVA.STATE.FL.US)

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