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VA Solid Start: A Program for Transitioning Service Members

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VA Solid Start: A Program for Transitioning Service Members



Event Materials

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Today's Presenter

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Veterans Benefits Administration

VA Solid Start

Office of Field Operations

Regina Yount

Assistant Director, Enterprise Contact
Operations



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VA Solid Start (VASS) Background

Executive Order (EO) 13822, “Supporting our Veterans During Their Transition from Uniformed Service to Civilian Life” was signed by the President on January 9, 2018, focusing resources and action to reduce suicide rates among the Service member and Veteran population.

The EO directed the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Defense (DoD), and Homeland Security (DHS), to work together to implement the requirements outlined in the EO. The “Joint Action Plan for Supporting Veterans During their Transition from Uniformed Service to Civilian Life” which was submitted to the White House on May 3, 2018, outlined three goals:

1. Improve actions to ensure all Transitioning Service Members (TSMs), regardless of service or status, are aware of and have access to mental health services.
2. Improve actions to ensure the needs of at-risk Veterans are identified and met.
3. Improve mental health and suicide prevention services for individuals that have been identified as needing care.



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VASS & Suicide Prevention

The first year after separation from military service poses challenges for recently separated Veterans that can make it difficult to adjust to civilian life, and for some, increase their risk of suicide.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) research shows that first-year Veterans face increased challenges with homelessness, family reintegration, employment, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse, all of which can increase the risk for suicide.*

The VA Solid Start program seeks to engage and connect with Veterans during this critical period to provide support and assistance to help ensure a successful transition to civilian life.

*National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide, 2018-2028. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. June 2018



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VASS & Suicide Prevention, cont'd

The Joint Action Plan, recommended VA provide **early and consistent contact** to newly separated Veterans to connect them to VA. VASS was established fulfill this strategy.

★ Early and consistent contact aims to connect newly-separated Veterans with VA resources, especially healthcare.

By establishing a relationship with Veterans, VA Solid Start calls aim to **increase the likelihood that they will get connected to VA earlier and utilize VA mental health resources when needed.**

★ VA Solid Start prioritizes calls to newly-separated Veterans who had a **mental health care appointment in their last year of active-duty service.**

★ During the VA Solid Start interactions, our trained VA representatives will **conduct a warm handover to the Veterans Crisis Line if an individual is identified at-risk for suicide.**



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VA Solid Start

Launched December 2, 2019

- Fundamentally changed the way VA interacts with newly-separated Veterans
- Trained VA Representatives reach out to Veterans, by phone, three times during the critical first year after separation from active duty



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VA Solid Start Program Overview

- Early and consistent contact aims to connect transitioning Service members and newly-separated Veterans with VA resources, especially healthcare.
- By establishing a relationship with Service members, VA Solid Start calls aim to increase the likelihood that they will get connected to VA earlier and utilize VA mental health resources when needed.
- VASS representatives are specially trained to identify and address issues/challenges the Veteran may be experiencing at the time of the call and provide support via VA benefits and/or partner resources to address the issue/challenge.
- VASS calls are not scripted. Each conversation is different and is driven by the needs of the Veteran at the time of the call.
- Veterans are assigned a VASS representative who will remain with the Veteran throughout the entire period of eligibility.
- VA Solid Start prioritizes calls to Veterans who had a mental health care appointment in their last year of active-duty service.
- During the VA Solid Start interactions, our trained representatives will conduct a warm handover to the Veterans Crisis Line if an individual is identified as being at-risk at the time of the call.
- After each successful connection, the VASS representative will provide a follow-up email that provides information on the topics/issues/benefits that were discussed during the call with any necessary contact information for additional support.



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A Different Kind of Call



The Consistent, Caring Contact approach sets expectations with recently separated Veterans to

- ★ be called for 1:1 interactions at three key stages (0-90, 90-180, 180-365 days post transition) during the first year of transition to civilian life.

VA Solid Start representatives use the “Pillars of

- ★ Successful Transition”* as the basis for open-ended questions that seek to establish the current status and potential needs of the Veteran.

Issues or challenges the Veteran mentions are

- ★ addressed by VA Solid Start representatives with both direct VA benefits and partner resources.

- ★ These calls are driven by the needs of the Veteran, and authentic connection is critical to success.

*Missing Perspectives: Service members’ Transition from Service to Civilian Life Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse, 2015



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Pillars of Successful Transition

If the Veteran expresses issues or challenges related to a Pillar of Successful Transition, the VASS representatives will utilize VA and partner resources to address the issue or concern.

For example, if a Veteran is experiencing challenges entering the workforce, the VASS representatives will provide options such as:

- Veterans Preference verification for employment options
- Potential unemployment benefits
- Personalized Career Planning and Guidance Program (CH36)
- Accessing education benefits
- State of residence benefits (and connection)

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VASS Engagement Activities

VA Solid Start Contact

- First, Veterans will receive an email from VA providing information on the VA Solid Start program and setting the expectation they will be receiving a call. Email also includes request to add VASS as a contact so the Veteran will recognize and answer the call.
- VASS representatives attempt to contact each recently separated Veteran, regardless of their character of discharge, by phone at three critical stages (around 90-, 180-, and 365-post RAD).
- For each stage, VASS representatives will make 7 attempts to reach the Veteran.
 - For certain attempts, voice mail messages are left with a callback number for a return call.

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Proactive Outreach

- VASS utilizes voice, visuals, and strategic messaging for the program to ensure consistent and accurate communication over the long term that serves all three domains targeted in the Joint Action Plan.
- Solid Start is different in its proactive approach and requires a multichannel plan to raise awareness of the program and its purpose, establish the legitimacy of the calls going out, and create a baseline of trust between newly-separated Veterans and VASS representatives.

In-person Contact via TAP	Integration into VA Welcome Kit	Email Awareness Outreach	Email Call Reminders
Personal Follow-up Emails	Microsite	Social Media Campaigns	Messages in Established VA Channels


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Success to Date

Since the program launch in December 2019, through March 2022, the VA Solid Start program has successfully connected with more than 214,000 recently separated Veterans, which represents 62.8% of eligible Veterans.

- As a subset of this group, VASS successfully connected with more than 35,000 Priority Veterans, or 75.9% of this group.

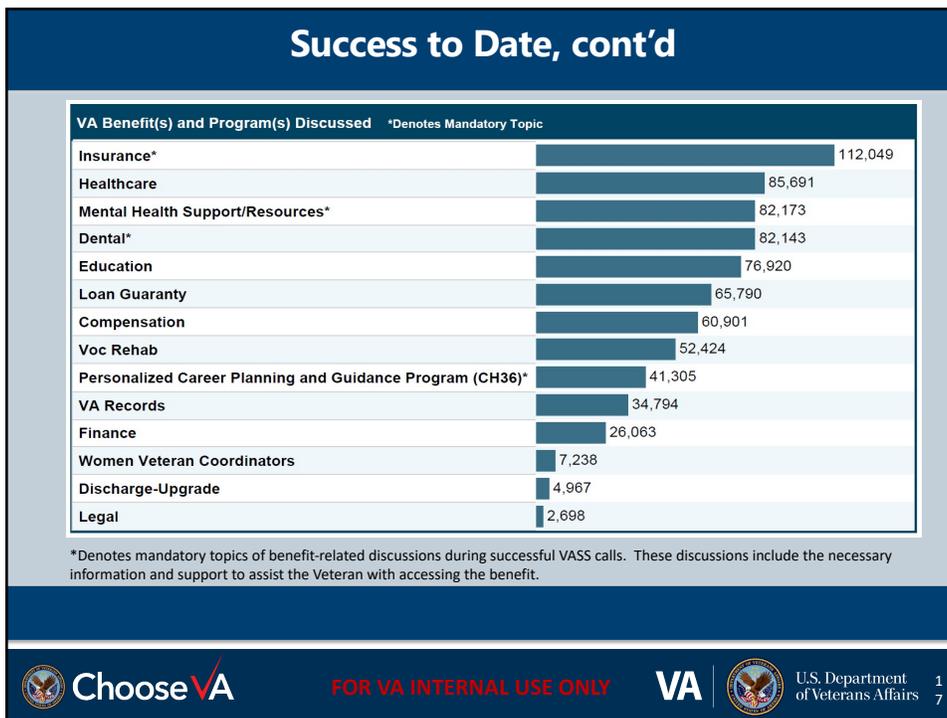
VASS has directly transferred 40 Veterans to the Veterans Crisis Line who were in crisis at the time of the VASS contact.


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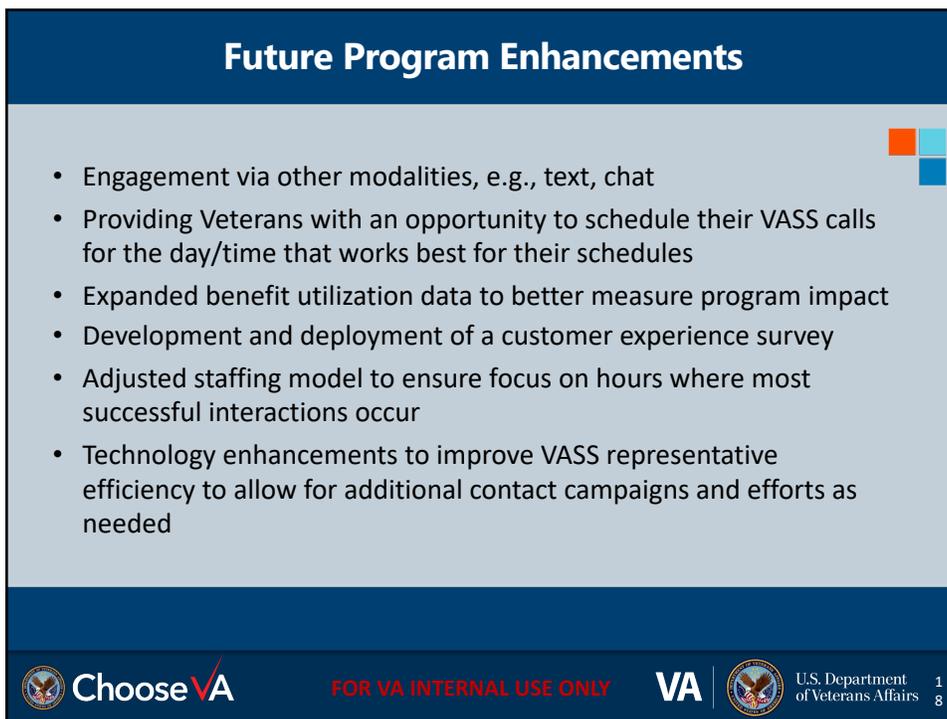


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Proactive Outreach Enhancements

Apply consistent and caring contact to offer proactive support through use of benefits as tools for success

Establish a relationship between VA and service members to both identify at-risk individuals earlier and lower barriers to seeking help in the future

CONSISTENT AND CARING CONTACT MODEL

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VA Solid Start Website

Visit the website for more information:
benefits.va.gov/solid-start

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Resources

- [VA Solid Start Webpage](#)
- [EO 13822 Fact Sheet](#)
- [VBA Transition Landing Page](#)
- [VHA Post-9/11 Transition and Case Management](#)
- [VBA Financial Literacy](#)
- [VBA Personalized Career Planning and Guidance Program \(CH36\)](#)



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Questions

Questions?



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Continuing Education



This webinar has been approved for the following continuing education (CE) credits:

- **Social Work, LPC, LMFT:** 1.0 CE from the University of Texas at Austin, Steve Hicks School of Social Work for social workers, LPCs, and LMFTs.
- **Board Certified Patient Advocates:** 1.0 CE from the Patient Advocate Certification Board to Board Certified Patient Advocates (BCPA).
- **Certified Family Life Educators (CFLE):** This program has been approved by the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) for 1.0 CE credit for CFLE.
- **Certificate of Attendance**

Evaluation Link

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Questions?

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OneOpMilitaryCaregiving@gmail.com

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Upcoming Event



TRICARE 101 Health Plans & Special Programs

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

This webinar is designed to help providers better support families as they navigate the TRICARE system.

Continuing education credit will be available for this session!

<https://oneop.org/event/118708/>

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JUNE 2022

Join us to explore and understand social justice so you can identify barriers that impact a family's health and well-being.

You'll also gain a better understanding of how you can become a front-line social justice advocate!



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