

# CRISIS SERVICES

## For Care Transitions

**Community Gaps**

**August 20, 2025**



**VA**



**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**  
Veterans Health  
Administration



**LA CROSSE COUNTY**

# Agenda

- Meet our Crisis Services agencies:
  - **Tomah VA Medical Center**
    - Suicide Prevention – Nicole Vannieuwenhoven
    - Health Care for Homeless Veterans – Wendy Burdick
  - **La Crosse County Human Services**
    - Integrated Supports and Recovery Services – Melissa McCarthy
  - **Great Rivers 2-1-1** – Carla Lundeen
- How to Make a Referral
- Crisis Services in Action: Meet Joe
- Other Services and Resources

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# VA Suicide Prevention & Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)

Tomah VA Medical Center-Tomah, WI

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# Goal

- Assist community partners in delivering support and resources to the Veteran population, focusing on suicide prevention and homelessness mitigation.

# Veterans Crisis Line



- Veterans and their loved ones can **Dial 988 then Press 1**,
  - Chat online at **VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**
  - Text **838255**
- Receive **free, confidential** support
- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care

# Crisis Intervention Services

La Crosse County Integrated Support & Recovery Services

ANNELIESE SKODA  
*ISRS Assistant Manager*

SAM SEEFELD  
*Crisis Supervisor*

MELISSA MCCARTHY  
*Crisis Supervisor*

(608)784-HELP | (608)784-4357

# La Crosse County Crisis Overview

## CRISIS TEAM

- 2 Supervisors
- Crisis Clinical Therapist
- Clinical Psychologist
- 6 Crisis Social Workers
- 4 Crisis Specialists
  - 3 full-time and 1 part-time
  - 7:30 AM – 11:00 PM daily
- 8-10 Mobile Crisis Responders (On-call)
  - Evenings, weekends, overnight, and holidays

## SERVICES PROVIDED:

- Co-response partnership with La Crosse Police Department
- Initial assessments
- Crisis counseling
- Crisis plan development
- Crisis stabilization and/or placement
- Follow Up

Crisis services are available 24 hours/365 days a year over the phone and in person to children and adults experiencing a mental *health* crisis in La Crosse County.

The logo features the number '211' in a large, white, sans-serif font, centered within a dark blue speech bubble. The speech bubble has a yellow outline and a red tail pointing towards the bottom right. The entire logo is set against a light blue background.

**211**

**Get Connected. Get Help.™**



211



# The 211 Mission

Connect people with health, human, and social service resources through a free, confidential, and easy-to-access information and referral service

# Great Rivers 211

211

Get Connected. Get Help.™





# 211

## WHAT IS 211?

- 211 is a **Free** number that you can dial anywhere across the **Nation** to get connected to **local resources**.
- Available **24** hours a day, **7** days a week, **365** days a year

Available 24/7/365



CHAT on  
211Wisconsin.org



TEXT your zipcode  
to 898211



SEARCH on  
211Wisconsin.org



CALL 211 or  
(877) 947-2211

**GET HELP NOW!**  
**DOWNLOAD THE 211 APP.**



DOWNLOAD THE 211 WISCONSIN APP TODAY!

211 Wisconsin

GET IT ON  
Google Play

GET IT ON  
App Store





# In Wisconsin, Help is 3 Numbers Away



**211** maintains a comprehensive database of community resources and provides information and referrals for essential needs like:

- Food
- Housing and Shelter
- Utility Assistance
- Healthcare Services
- Government Services

**Contact for  
Information and  
Community Resources**

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**211** also can connect people with information and referrals for:

- Substance Use / Mental Health Resources
- Transportation
- Legal Services
- Counseling and Support Groups
- Disaster Aftercare

**988** provides support when a person, or someone they know, is experiencing a crisis:

- Thoughts of Suicide
- Mental Health Crisis
- Substance Use Crisis
- Emotional Distress

**Contact for the  
Suicide & Crisis  
Lifeline**

**988**

Referrals as needed,  
utilizing 211 WI's Resource Database

**Whole  
Person  
Care**

**Call for  
Emergencies**

**911**

**911** provides first responder dispatch for:

- Medical Emergency
- Fire
- Reporting a Crime
- Disaster Response
- Life Threatening Situation



# Making a Referral



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# Veterans Who Present to VA during Business Hours

- A Veteran can present to Tomah VAMC Urgent Care during posted work hours to be seen for a mental health crisis.
- They will be given an evaluation (Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale Screener) and if positive, will be provided a warm hand-off to Acute Services Coordinator.
- Determination will be made regarding whether Veteran will be admitted to Acute Inpatient Mental Health or needs a higher level of care.
- The admissions team will make phone calls for transfer as needed.



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# After Hours Care or Presenting at a CBOC

## Tomah After Hours:

- Veterans are required to go to Tomah Health ER for medical clearance and further determination of need for care.

## CBOC Mental Health Emergency During Business Hours:

- Each Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) will follow protocol call for ambulance transport to closest medical facility.
- A transport summary will be printed and sent with the Veteran and emergency responders.

## CBOC's After Hours

- Veterans are required to present to the nearest emergency room for medical clearance before acceptance to Tomah VAMC.

## Tomah Community Based Outpatient Clinics locations:

- La Crosse
- Owen
- Wausau
- Wisconsin Rapids



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# Required for Admission to Tomah VAMC

If the Veteran wishes to transfer to Tomah VAMC for care, they will need:

- Medical Clearance
- Secure Transport
- Acceptance from Tomah VAMC's Acute Inpatient Medical or Mental Health attending provider



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National Call Center  
for Homeless Veterans

**877-424-3838**

*va.gov/homeless*

Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness—and their family members, friends and supporters—can make the call to or chat online with the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, where trained counselors are ready to talk confidentially 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- It's free and confidential.
- You'll get access to trained VA counselors.
- It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- You'll get information about VA homeless programs, health care and other services in your area.



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# When to Call

## NON-EMERGENCY or 911

- Urgent medical needs
- Immediate threat to safety
- Welfare check requests
- Unable to locate/missing person

### CRISIS CANNOT:

- Conduct Welfare Checks.
- Call an individual to offer support of the individual has not requested our services.
- Provide transportation to individuals in a crisis.
- Provide physical or chemical restraint to individuals.
- Place a Chapter 51 to hospitalize individuals who are willing to admit voluntarily.

## CRISIS

- Suicidal ideation
- Homicidal ideation
- Support for increasing mental health symptoms
- Stabilization referrals

# Imagine a single solution



# Top 10 Referrals for 2024 to Great Rivers Region

- 1 Talklines/Warmlines
- 2 Rent Payment Assistance
- 3 Electric Service Payment Assistance
- 4 Individual Counseling
- 5 Low Income/Subsidized Private Rental Housing
- 6 Community Shelters
- 7 Directory Assistance
- 8 General Counseling Services
- 9 Telephone Payment Assistance
- 10 Homeless Motel Vouchers



## Top Requests by Category - 2024



Housing

**67,594**



Mental Health /  
Substance Use

**54,855**



Food / Meals

**27,381**



Utility  
Assistance

**25,675**



Information  
Services

**17,353**



Health Care

**12,726**



Individual, Family,  
and Community  
Supports

**11,019**



Clothing / Personal  
/ Household Needs

**10,104**

# Meet Joe Smith

- 55 year old Veteran, 12 years in the Army
- Welder for 19 years, fired in past 2 weeks
- Going through a divorce
- Currently sleeping in his car



# Meet Joe Smith

- Joe contacted Veteran's Crisis Line (VCL) 988 and pressed #1
- Connected with **Raul, VCL Operator**
- Pain in his arm on his left side when stressed
- States he “just wants to end it all.”
- Raul stays on the phone with him and arranges a welfare check by La Crosse County Sheriff's Department and the La Crosse Police Department.
- Transported to Emplify Health Emergency Room in La Crosse and seen by a team of medical and mental health professionals.
- Joe is kept overnight as he had thoughts and an intent to complete a suicide, but no access to weapon.

# Safety Planning: The What and The Why



A best practice for anyone evidencing any indication of suicidality



A safety plan is a list of prioritized coping strategies and resources that can be used during times of emotional distress or crisis



Brief, easy to read, and written from a Veteran's perspective



Provides a step-by-step process of managing suicidal thoughts



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# VA Safety Plan

- Completed with the Veteran and filled out in their own words
- Add more specific details versus vague details to make the plan more helpful
- Focus on ensuring phone numbers are accurate and current

MY SAFETY PLAN	
Please follow the steps described below on your safety plan. If you are experiencing a medical or mental health emergency, please call 911 at any time. If you are unable to reach your safety contacts or you are in crisis, call the Veterans Crisis Line at 988 (press 1) or 1-800-273-8255 (press 1).	
<b>Step 1: Triggers, Risk Factors, and Warning Signs</b> Signs that I am in crisis and that my safety plan should be used:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
<b>Step 2: Internal Coping Strategies</b> Things I can do on my own to distract myself and keep myself safe:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
<b>Step 3: People and Social Settings that Provide Distraction</b> Who I can contact to take my mind off my problems/help me feel better:	
1. Name:	Phone:
2. Name:	Phone:
3. Name:	Phone:
4. Name:	Phone:
5. Name:	Phone:
Public places, groups, or social events that help me feel better:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	



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# Safety Plan Continued

- Veterans are given a printed copy of their safety plan
- Ensure both their VA provider and community hospital are provided on the plan
- Other resources are reviewed, and Veteran is given an opportunity to get gunlocks or crisis line materials

## Step 4: Family Members or Friends Who May Offer Help

Who I can tell that I am in crisis and need support:

1. Name: _____	Phone: _____
2. Name: _____	Phone: _____
3. Name: _____	Phone: _____
4. Name: _____	Phone: _____
5. Name: _____	Phone: _____
6. Name: _____	Phone: _____

## Step 5: Professionals and Agencies to Contact for Help

Mental Health professionals or services I can contact for help:

1. Name: _____	Phone: _____
2. Name: _____	Phone: _____
3. Name: _____	Phone: _____
4. Name: _____	Phone: _____

**Veterans Crisis Line:** 988, press 1  
or 1-800-273-8255, press 1

**VCL Text Messaging Service:** Text to 838255

**VCL Chat:**

<https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat>

**Dial 911 in an emergency**

If I need to go to an emergency room or urgent care, I will go to: \_\_\_\_\_

ER Address: \_\_\_\_\_

ER Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 6: Making the Environment Safe

These are the ways I will make my environment safer and barriers I will use to protect myself from potentially lethal means:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

These are the people who will help me protect myself from having access to dangerous items:

1. Name: _____	Phone: _____
2. Name: _____	Phone: _____

## Other Resources:

Virtual Hope Box Smartphone App

[www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net)

Safety Plan in PTSD Coach Smartphone App

[www.KeepItSecure.net](http://www.KeepItSecure.net)



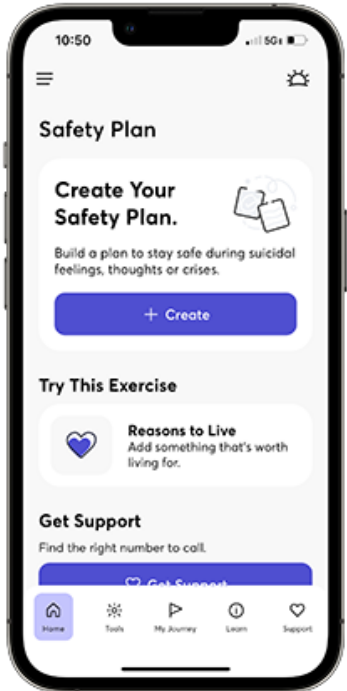
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# Check Out the New Safety Plan App!



**Safety Plan helps Veterans create a personalized step-by-step action plan to keep themselves safe during a crisis. It is highly customizable and provides access to coping tools, self-assessment measures, and crisis support resources like the Veterans Crisis Line.**

**Download the app today by using the QR code, or by visiting the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).**



*Note: Safety Plan is a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs app, developed by the National Center for PTSD Dissemination and Training Division and the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.*

# Emergency Care for Suicide Crisis

## No Enrollment Needed

Veterans in suicide crisis can receive immediate care at any emergency room, VA or non-VA.

### How it works

1. Eligible Veterans experiencing an acute suicidal crisis – whether enrolled in VA or not – can go to a VA or non-VA emergency room.
2. Veterans in suicide crisis should call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room for expedited care. No enrollment in VA care is required.
3. VA will provide or cover the cost for immediate treatment including transportation and up to 90 days of follow-on care, including related prescriptions.

### Who is Eligible

Regardless of VA enrollment status, the following are eligible to have their medical expenses covered by VA:

1. Veterans discharged after 24+ months of service, under conditions other than dishonorable. OR
2. Active and reserve service members with 100+ days of service in combat roles or supporting contingency operations, discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. OR
3. Veterans who experienced military sexual trauma during their service.

**Note:** Dishonorably discharged service members should still seek care at a VA or non-VA emergency room, however, VA will not cover the expenses.

Questions or need help



# Compact Act

Regardless of VA enrollment status, **COMPACT-eligible individuals** are:

- Former members of the armed forces who were discharged or released from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable after more than 24 months of active service
- Former members of the armed forces, including reserve service members, who served more than 100 days under a combat exclusion or in support of a contingency operation either directly or by operating an unmanned aerial vehicle from another location who were discharged or released under a condition that is other than dishonorable
- Former members of the armed forces who were the victim of a physical assault of a sexual nature, a battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment while serving in the armed forces



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# Compact Act Continued

Veterans, their representatives, and in-network community providers should report instances of a Veteran presenting to a community emergency room to VA within 72 hours of the start of emergent care. Out-of-network providers are encouraged to notify VA as soon as possible.

## Notifying VA in a timely fashion is important because this:

- Allows VA to assist the Veteran in coordinating necessary care or transfer, helps ensure that the administrative and clinical requirements for VA to pay for the care are met, and may impact a Veteran's eligibility for VA to cover the cost of emergency treatment
- Case-specific details are necessary for care coordination and eligibility determinations, providers, Veterans and representatives can utilize any one of the following options to report emergency services
- **Online:** [Emergency Care Reporting](#)
- **Phone:** 844-72HRVHA ([844-724-7842](#))
- **In-person:** Appropriate VA official at the nearest VA medical facility



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# Suicide and Homelessness

- According to the 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, in 2022, the suicide rate for Veterans with a homelessness diagnosis who had recently used VHA was 110.2% higher than for those without a diagnosis of homelessness. (1)
- However, for recent VHA users with a homeless diagnosis who received VA homeless program services, the suicide rate was 37.1% lower than for those who did not receive VA homeless program services.

(1) 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report Part 2 of 2: Report Findings, [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-2-of-2\\_508.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-2-of-2_508.pdf)



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# Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)

Programs specific to housing:

- HUD-VASH (Department of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs Supported Housing)

Outreach services for those homeless or at risk, community & facility wide regardless of income or asset threshold



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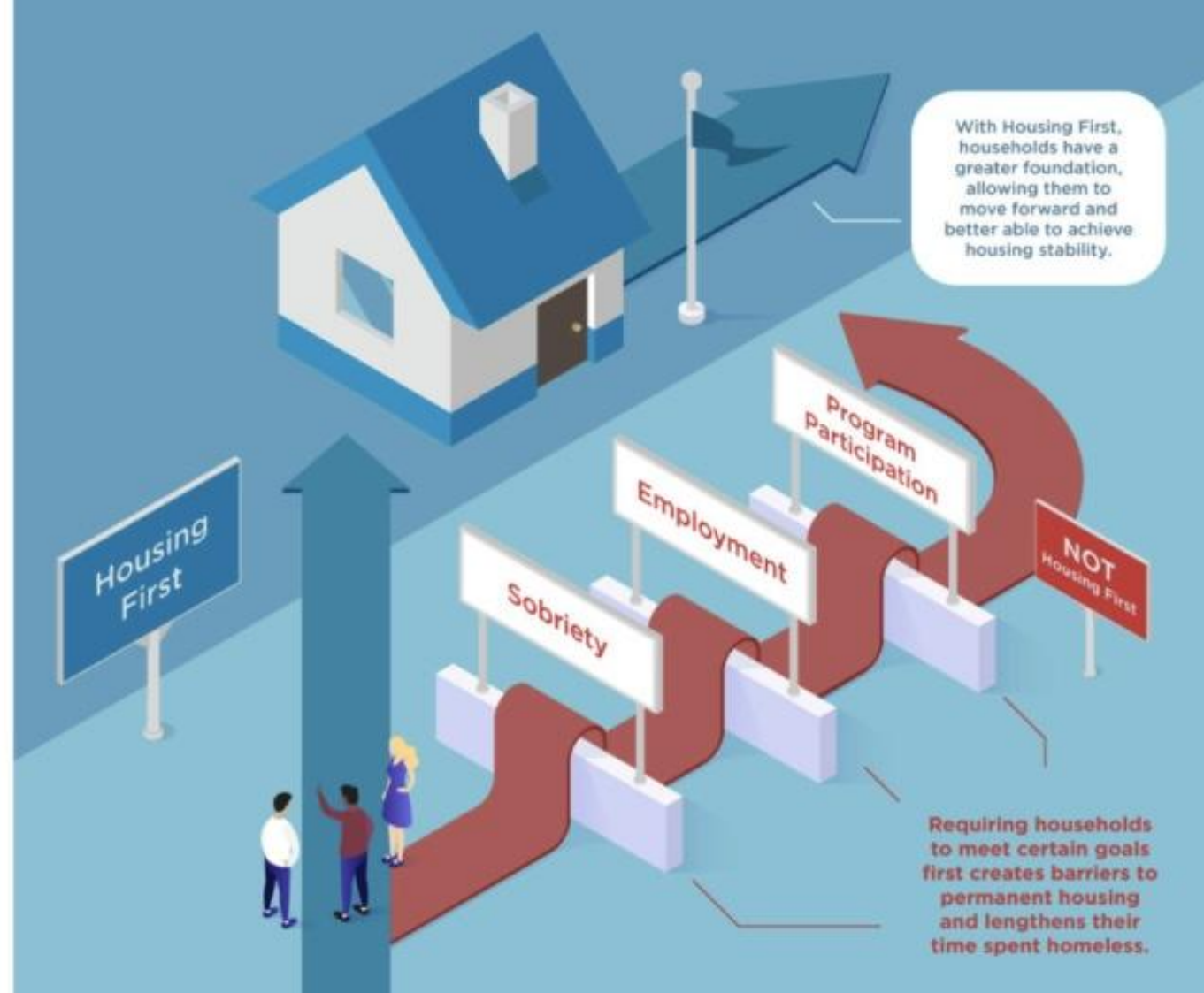
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# HOUSING FIRST

**Housing First provides a direct pathway into permanent housing**, allowing households to achieve stability and a foundation to support sustainability goals.

**Housing First removes barriers to permanent housing**, such as first obtaining sobriety, employment, program participation, or citizenship.

With Housing First, *services are voluntary and not forced*: household choice and agency in the housing process is essential to success. Both natural and community supports aid in successful, long-term permanent housing outcomes and reduce returns to homelessness.



National Alliance to End Homelessness

<https://endhomelessness.org/resources/toolkits-and-training-materials/pressure-points/>



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# Referrals

## HCHV/HUD/VASH Main Line

To make a referral please contact:

608-372-3971 or 1-800-872-8662,  
Ext. 67758

[VHATOMHOMELESSVETERANSPROGRAM@va.gov](mailto:VHATOMHOMELESSVETERANSPROGRAM@va.gov)

## Veterans Justice Program

To make a referral please contact:

608-372-3971 or 1-800-872-8662,  
Ext. 61710

[VHATOMVJP@va.gov](mailto:VHATOMVJP@va.gov)



**Insurmountable  
Impossible  
Too Hard  
Why Even Try  
Lonely  
Isolated**





# Basic Needs & Mental Health Crisis Support: Connections to....



- Food Resources
- Community Meals
- Shelter for People without Housing
- Health Insurance Navigation
- Help to Get a Phone
- Housing Programs
- Help paying rent/mortgage
- Help to pay for water, gas, electricity, etc.
- Financial Counseling
- Finding Work
- Bus Fare/Gas Money
- Diapers
- Clothing & Household Goods
- Healthcare Services
- Help with Car Payment
- Accessible Transportation Options

# Other Services and Resources



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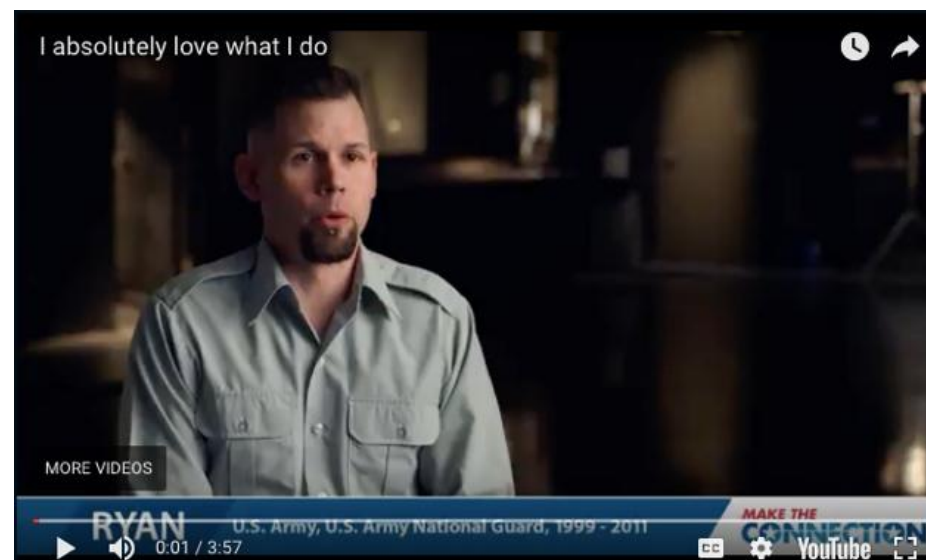
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# Make the Connection

Online resource featuring hundreds of Veterans telling their stories about overcoming mental health challenges.

**MAKE THE  
CONNECTION**

***www.MakeTheConnection.net***



<https://maketheconnection.net/conditions/suicide>

# New Lethal Means Safety Resources

- **Reducing Firearm & Other Household Safety Risks Brochure** provides best practices for safely storing firearms and medications along with advice for loved ones on how to talk to the Veteran in their life about safe storage.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

## Reducing Firearm & Other Household Safety Risks for Veterans and Their Families



# VA Firearm Lockbox Distribution Program

The VA Firearm Lockbox Distribution Program helps remove financial barriers and facilitates secure firearm and medication storage among veterans with elevated suicide risk.

## For Veterans who:

1. Were assessed as having intermediate (acute or chronic) or high (acute or chronic) suicide risk on a Comprehensive Suicide Risk Evaluation (CSRE) in the past 12 months AND
2. Have access to a handgun AND
3. Can independently use the lockbox or can do so with the assistance of a caregiver AND
4. Consent to receiving the lockbox and having it mailed to them AND
5. A clinician has determined may benefit from receiving a lockbox



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# Supporting Providers Who Serve Veterans

Free consultation and resources for any provider in the community or VA who serves Veterans at risk for suicide.

To request a consult: [srmconsult@va.gov](mailto:srmconsult@va.gov)

*#NeverWorryAlone*

[www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/consult](http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/consult)



Risk assessment



Lethal means safety counseling



Conceptualization of suicide risk



Best practices for documentation



Strategies for how to engage Veterans at high risk



Provider support after a suicide loss (Postvention)



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# Housing and Urban Development-Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD/VASH)

## What is the HUD-VASH program?

- HUD-VASH is a partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH).
- HUD-VASH provides case management, supportive services, and housing vouchers for eligible homeless Veterans.
- Veterans must follow the rules of the Public Housing Authority and housing voucher to maintain housing.
- The program is designed to allow the Veteran to live with family members.



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# Veteran's Justice Program

Justice-involved Veterans are at a heightened risk for both homelessness and suicide.

## Veteran Deflection

A collaborative intervention connecting public safety and public health systems to create community-based pathways to treatment for Veterans with complex psychosocial service needs and who are at risk for homelessness, arrest, and suicide.



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# Veterans Justice Services Offered

- Connection to medical and mental health services
  - ✓ Virtual and in-person appointments
  - ✓ Referrals
  - ✓ Treatment matching assessment
- Individual, group, and re-entry services and support
  - ✓ Case management education
- Employment services
- Housing resources
- Opportunities to take part in social activities



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# Veterans Treatment Courts and Other Alternative Sentencing Programs

- The VJP Team works with treatment courts.
- Treatment courts may offer Veterans access to treatment services.
- Treatment services may replace being sentenced to time in a county jail or state prison.



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Our community partners may be the first ones to encounter a Veteran experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

With SQUARes, they can seamlessly acquire eligibility determination within minutes and immediately begin the enrollment or referral process.



SQUARES Overview Video-  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTDw4Lh7Kso>



# Additional Resources

- 988
  - 24/7 call, text, or chat online
- Great Rivers 211
- The Trevor Project
  - Offers 24/7 call, text, or chat online
  - Support for LGBTQ+ age 13-24
- UpliftWI
  - Peer-run Warmline for mental health & substance use
  - Daily 10:00 AM – 10:00 PM (including holidays)
  - 534-202-5438

# Who to Contact



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Administration



**LA CROSSE COUNTY**

# Tomah VAMC Contacts

## Suicide Prevention:

**Staff:** Todd Stage, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, SPC Program Manager

Cynthia Groskreutz, Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Talia McCabe, Registered Nurse

Brittany Schaefer, Advanced Practice Social Worker

Nicole VanNieuwenhoven, Licensed Professional Counselor

**Office Phone:** 608-567-1336 **staff only**

608-372-3971 ext. 64340 **Veterans only**

**Email:** [VHASPCWI-676TOMSuiicidePreventionTeam@va.gov](mailto:VHASPCWI-676TOMSuiicidePreventionTeam@va.gov)



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# Tomah VAMC Contacts

## Homeless Program:

**Program Contact:** Danielle Jacobs

**Phone:** 608-372-3971 extension 64704

**Email:** [Danielle.jacobs2@va.gov](mailto:Danielle.jacobs2@va.gov)

For more Information or for a referral , please call :  
608-372-3971 ext. 67758



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Get Connected. Get Help.™

**Call: 2-1-1 or (800) 362-8255 | Text: Your ZIP code to 898-211**

**Search the 211 Database (WI, MN, IA) /Chat:  
<https://www.greatrivers211.org/>**

**Service Providers:**

**Contact Great Rivers 211 to share agency & service updates for the 211 referral database**

Call Handling Contact  
Amy Kuester, Line Supervisor  
[alkueste@emplifyhealth.org](mailto:alkueste@emplifyhealth.org)  
(608) 775-1251

Administrative Contact  
Carla Lundeen, Agency  
Director  
[cflundee@emplifyhealth.org](mailto:cflundee@emplifyhealth.org)  
(608) 775-6335

Referral Database Contact  
Ru Ance Lor, Database  
Coordinator  
[rlor1@emplifyhealth.org](mailto:rlor1@emplifyhealth.org)  
(608) 775-6331

# Crisis Intervention Services

La Crosse County Integrated Support & Recovery Services

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# Questions?



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