

Operation Deep Dive Fact Sheet

Summary

Operation Deep Dive is a four-year research study conducted in partnership between [America's Warrior Partnership](#), [University of Alabama](#) researchers and the [Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation](#) that will examine the factors and potential causes involved in suicides and early mortality due to self-harm among military veterans. The study began in 2018 and will conclude at the end of 2021. The goal of the study is to identify the risk factors that lead to suicide within veteran communities, as well as to guide the development of programs to reduce self-harm among veterans.

What Makes this Research Unique?

Operation Deep Dive is different than any other research study about veteran suicides. It is the first of its kind to examine:

- The impact of community environments on veterans, as studies to date have generalized the indicators of suicide without a focus on the role the community may play.
- Veterans across the spectrum of service, gender and lifespan. No other study has conducted research to this level of detail before.
- The impact of less-than-honorable discharges on veteran suicides, as well as the differences in suicide rates between those who did and did not receive support services from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For the first time ever, this study will include veterans with Honorable Discharge, Entry Level Separation (ELS), General Discharge - Under Honorable Conditions, Other Than Honorable Conditions Discharge, Bad Conduct Discharge (BCD), Officer Discharge, or Dishonorable Discharge.
- Cases of self-harm in addition to suicide, which will provide a more comprehensive view of self-destructive behaviors that can potentially prove fatal.

Methodology

This study will be divided into two phases over four years using a mixed-methods, Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach.

Phase I (Year 1)

1. Partner with Medical Examiners (MEs) in each community to conduct a two to five-year retrospective of veteran suicides or suspected suicides, determine their military service history via the Department of Defense Database, and identify which veterans were receiving VA services.
2. Recruit and implement Community Action Teams in each community, consisting of MEs, Veteran Serving Organization (VSO) leaders, community leaders, and veterans/family members to help shape, review and help direct the research from design to dissemination.
3. Geo-map all identified veteran suicides or suspected suicides in each community to determine different geo-cultural contexts and locations that affect likelihood of suicide/suspected suicide.
4. Develop sociocultural death investigation tool that identifies individual, organizational, and community factors leading to veteran suicide or self-harm leading to suicide.



5. Recruit seven (7) non-Affiliate Communities with similar demographics to the seven (7) Affiliate Communities

Phase II (Years 2-4)

1. Implement sociocultural death investigations of new suicides in communities with friends and family members of deceased in Affiliate and non-Affiliate Communities.
2. In seven new non-Affiliate Communities, implement retrospective analysis of former service member suicides or suspected suicides as completed for Affiliate Communities in Phase I.
3. In-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews with veterans at higher risk for suicide to explore the role of community in engaging those who have served to prevent negative outcomes contributing to suicide and self-harm.
4. Conduct a quantitative multi-database statistical analysis linking the WarriorServe® information system linked with the joint Department of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) Suicide Data Repository (SDR) and VA health records data. We will also link to U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service data sources to facilitate a comprehensive capture of potential community and social factors related to suicides identified in Phase 1.

Project Funding

- \$2.9-million grant from Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation
- Additional investment from America's Warrior Partnership and other in-kind supporters

Media Contacts:

Joe Wolf
jwolf@daltonagency.com
904-398-5222

Anthony Popiel
apopiel@daltonagency.com
404-876-1309