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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
VA activates suicide hotline

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Veterans Affairs has established a national suicide prevention hotline to ensure veterans with emotional crises have round-the-clock access to trained professionals.

“This is a great service for our veterans,” said Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, South Dakota secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs. “It’s important to have this hotline so our veterans have someone they can talk to.”

The toll-free hotline number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and will be staffed by mental health professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Hotline professionals will also work closely with local VA mental health providers to help callers from anywhere in the country.

“We have some of the best mental health care in the nation,” said Gorman. “It’s important for veterans to know there are professionals available to them – people who know and understand what they are, or may, be going through and how to help.”

The suicide hotline is among several enhancements to mental health care that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has announced this year. Veterans can also call the South Dakota Division of Mental Health at 605-773-5991 or 1-800-265-9684 for other mental health assistance. The services are all a part of a continual effort to ensure veterans are provided the best care possible.

“When our men and women serve, the nation has an obligation to help them,” said Gorman. “These programs are important to help ensure we are doing everything possible to give our veterans the resources and help they need.”

Gorman also added that the hotline is for families of veterans as well. He said it’s a matter of educating the Soldier and their family that these programs exist.

“Family members of veterans should also know about this suicide prevention hotline,” Gorman continued. “It’s important for family members to understand the signs and symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress. The hotline is a resource for them to get the information - and help their loved ones get the help they may need.”

As the largest provider of mental health care in the nation, the VA will spend about \$3 billion for mental-health this year. With more than 9,000 mental-health professionals, along with primary-care physicians and other health professionals, nearly one million veterans will be provided mental-health care this year in VA medical centers and outpatient clinics across the country.

“There is no shortage of resources and help that is available and is being put forth to help our veterans,” said Gorman. “Our service members have been called on to serve our nation – and it’s our duty to ensure that everything is being done to serve them.”

For more information on the VA’s commitment to providing world-class health care or about other veterans’ benefits and services, please contact the following offices:

- ☎ South Dakota Department of Military and Veterans Affairs – (605) 773-4981
- ☎ South Dakota National Guard Family Readiness Program – (800) 658-3930 or (605) 737-6728
- ☎ South Dakota National Guard State Benefits Advisor – (605) 737-6669
- ☎ South Dakota National Guard State Chaplain – (605) 737-6009
- ☎ Veterans Administration – Fort Meade (605) 347-2511, Hot Springs (605) 745-2000, or Sioux Falls (800) 316-8387 or (605) 336-3230
- ☎ Vet Center – Rapid City (605) 348-0077, Sioux Falls (605) 330-4552, or Martin Outstation (605) 685-1300
- ☎ Your County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer – Listed in phonebook under your county government.

Or check out the following web sites:

- 🌐 Veterans Administration Home Page www.va.gov
- 🌐 South Dakota Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
<http://www.state.sd.us/applications/MV91MVAInternetRewrite/default.asp>
- 🌐 South Dakota National Guard <http://sdguard.ngb.army.mil>