



## Jesse Brown VA Medical Center

### *News and Announcements*

Anytime is a great time to talk to your providers about completing a Suicide Prevention Safety Plan! This is a tool that will help you identify safe strategies and distractions to manage a future emotional crisis. Just as we prepare for other emergencies in our lives (fire evacuation route, first aid kits, auto insurance), it's so important that we protect ourselves in the event of an emotional crisis. Here are the **six simple steps** to complete a Safety Plan.

- 1) **Identify warning signs** that you may be at risk for a crisis. Do my sleep patterns change when I'm in crisis? Do my eating patterns change when I'm in crisis? Does my mood change when I'm in crisis? Exploring these questions can often help you identify some early warning signs.
- 2) **Identify internal coping strategies.** These are things you can do **BY YOURSELF** in case you are alone when you need a distraction. These can be activities that last a short time or distract you for hours! The important thing is to distract your mind from any negative or dangerous thoughts.
- 3) **List friends or family that are positive distractions.** These don't need to be people you share your crisis with, but people who are positive in your life that would help you feel better. Other options are identifying places you can go and be around other people in a positive way (support group, favorite coffeeshop, local park).
- 4) **Create a list of 'lifeline' friends and family.** This may be the same list of people from step three, or it may be different. These are people that you would confide in if you were experiencing a crisis or suicidal thoughts, who may be able to offer you help.
- 5) **Identify your professional 'lifeline' supports.** This can include your treatment providers like a psychiatrist, therapist, or case manager. *Remember, in an emergency, contact 911, the Veteran's Crisis Line, or go to the nearest Emergency Department!*
- 6) **Make your environment safe.** This involves discussing what might be dangerous for you to have access to during an emotional crisis. Take this opportunity to discuss if you have firearms available and how to reduce access to them if you or a family member are vulnerable. This means discussing safe storage and identifying strategies to remove the firearm safety from the home temporarily. It's also a great opportunity to discuss how medications and any other potentially dangerous items are stored. Please consider involving a family member or friend in this discussion as well so you know you have support at home.

Now that you have your Safety Plan, consider where you will keep it so you can review it. You may want to have several copies or you may want to use an electronic safety planning app such as My 3 or Virtual Hope Box. Remember, if you lose your Safety Plan, you can always ask your treatment team for an extra copy.