

[Suicide Rate for Young Male Veterans Up Significantly](#)

NEW YORK (January 10, 2014) – The Department of Veterans Affairs today issued a new [report](#) that found that the suicide rate for male veterans between the ages of 18-29 increased significantly in three years, up nearly 44 percent. The report found that an estimated 22 veterans commit suicide a day – a figure unchanged over the three years. Suicide prevention is a top issue for the veteran community and will be a main priority for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America in 2014.

“This is awful and alarming news to start the new year, and a stark reminder that we cannot forget about our veterans,” said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. “While our nation’s focus on the wars – and the warriors – has waned, our veterans continue to confront invisible wounds. We must do all we can to support every man and woman struggling with mental health issues. One veteran or servicemember life lost to suicide is one too many, so we clearly have much more work to do.”

The report did indicate that there was a decrease in the suicide rates of veterans who sought mental health care treatment. In addition to advocating for strong mental health policies, IAVA connects veterans to mental health services through its Rapid Response Referral Program (RRRP), IAVA’s case management and referral services program. IAVA also partners with the Veterans Crisis Line to ensure that every servicemember, veteran, family member and provider knows that there is free and confidential help available 24 hours a day through phone, text and online. Veterans, or those concerned about veterans, need only call 800-273-8255 and press 1 to be directly connected to qualified responders.

Two other government reports released this week highlighted critical issues facing veterans transitioning from combat: veterans unemployment and the VA disability claims backlog.

Today, the Bureau of Labor Statistics [reported](#) the unemployment rate for Post-9/11 veterans decreased to 7.3 percent in December. For the veteran population overall, unemployment dropped from 6.4 percent to 5.5 percent. In the last year, the post-9/11 veterans unemployment rate decreased from 11.3 percent to 7.3 percent. It is still higher than the national unemployment rate of 6.7.

“While we still have much work to do to bring down unemployment, today’s report reflects an encouraging trend,” Rieckhoff said. “Companies throughout the United States are investing in veterans and realizing the incredible returns from that investment. In 2014, we must continue to support highly qualified veterans as they look for work.”

Earlier this week, the VA [reported](#) that since December 21, 2013, the number

of backlogged VA compensation and pension claims rose by over 17,000 claims, pushing the number of backlogged claims above 413,000. Based on last year's holiday numbers, an increase was expected, but the sluggish period capped off a month of December where progress on the backlog came to a halt.

Veterans who are facing hardship due to being underemployed or unemployed or waiting on a disability claim, can contact IAVA's Rapid Response Referral Program team to get connected with resources to help them. Contact RRRP directly by calling 855-91-RAPID (855-917-2743), emailing transition@iava.org, or visiting www.IAVA.org/RRRP. RRRP's highly qualified staff of case managers assist veterans with employment, education, housing, mental health, and other services.

This month, IAVA is expanding RRRP throughout New York State and California.