

## Veterans Response Team (VRT)

The Birmingham VA Medical Center has launched a new program called the Veterans Response Team (VRT). This program's mission is to help link our community first responders to one source for a vital connection to VA specific resources when they encounter a veteran within our community in crisis.

VA Dispatch is armed with information on VA specific crisis services and programs available to help our veterans in crisis situations or times of need. Resources include Mental Health, Homeless, Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists, Substance Use, Intimate Partner Violence, Peer Support and LGBTQ+ programs.



### Veterans Response Team

Birmingham VA Health Care System

VA Police Dispatch: 205-212-3963





## Screening for Service Member or Veteran Status is the First Step

Asking the question

“Have you ever served in the U.S.  
Armed Forces?”

or

“Have you ever served in any branch of  
the U.S. Military?”

# VRT

VETERANS RESPONSE TEAM





## Screening for Service Member or Veteran Status is the First Step

If the answer is Yes, this can not only open the door to possible resources but also increase your awareness of other potential risk factors, like emotional or psychological issues, that could have led to the situation or escalate the situation

You could consider Thanking the Service Member or Veteran for their service

Follow-up Questions could also include:

When did you serve? What branch?

In what ways, if any, are the issues you're having today related to your service?

Are you enrolled or connected to the VA for healthcare services or any other veteran service organizations?

Do you have any reservations about seeking support or assistance?

# VRT

VETERANS RESPONSE TEAM



## The Process

Once you identify the Service Member or Veteran, you would call the VA Dispatch number (205-212-3963)

Dispatch will need to verify eligibility for VA Healthcare by obtaining the individuals full name and Social Security Number

Once Eligibility is determined, the appropriate resource will be provided to you for the individual to consider

In certain situations, at your request, a VA Police Officer can deploy to the situation to assist in deescalation and connection to VA specific care and resources. This can be requested through VA Dispatch

# VRT

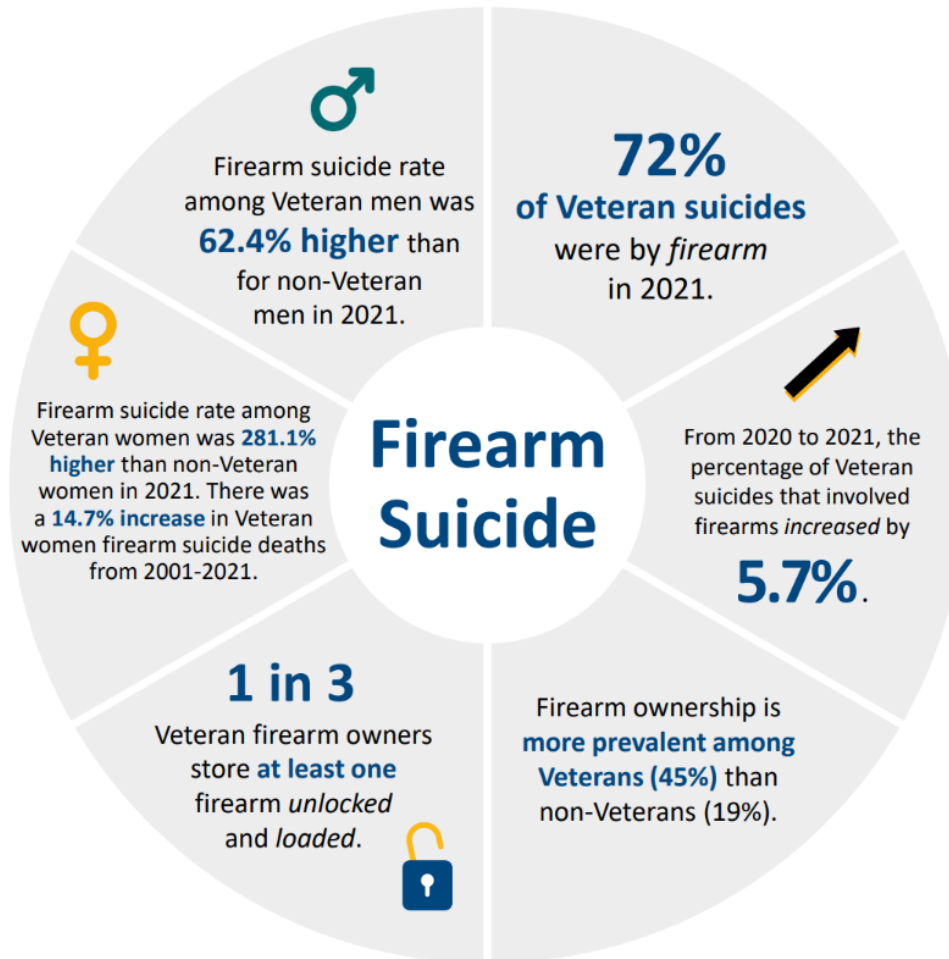
VETERANS RESPONSE TEAM





# Veterans Response Team (VRT)

## Lethal Means Safety



# VRT

VETERANS RESPONSE TEAM





## The Message Matters

Your goal is not to make people feel interrogated or worry that their guns may be taken from them. Your goal is to let them know about voluntary steps they can choose to take to help keep themselves or a loved one safe during a crisis

*“I want to have a conversation about means safety.”*

*“When someone is struggling in the ways that you are, sometimes suicidal feelings can emerge and escalate rapidly. There are a few steps we routinely recommend for the home to make things safer.”*

*“Guns are the most frequent method of suicide death, and pills are the most frequent method of suicide attempts, so let’s start by limiting access to those.”*

# VRT

VETERANS RESPONSE TEAM







## Raising the Issue – An Example

*“Lots of people have guns at home. What some people in your situation have done is store their guns away from home until they’re feeling better or lock them and ask someone they trust to hold onto the keys. If you have guns at home, I’m wondering if you’ve thought about a strategy like that.”*

*“If temporarily storing them elsewhere is not an option, perhaps we can discuss some alternative ways to keep you safe until you’re feeling better.”*



## Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program

The purpose of the VJO program is to ensure eligible Justice-Involved Veterans have access to appropriate VA services with the goal of preventing unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and incarceration among Veterans

A Justice-involved veteran is:

1. A Veteran in contact with local law enforcement who can be appropriately diverted from arrest into mental health or substance abuse treatment;
2. A veteran in local jail, either pretrial or serving a sentence ; or
3. A Veteran involved in adjudication or monitoring by a court

# VRT

VETERANS RESPONSE TEAM





VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
Birmingham VA Health Care System

# Veterans Response Team (VRT)

## Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program

Your local Veterans Justice  
Outreach Specialist:

Quinton Pickett  
205-844-2885

# VRT

VETERANS RESPONSE TEAM





# Veterans Response Team (VRT)

## Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT)

We will begin hosting Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT) to both VA and community-based law enforcement beginning in 2024.

The full 40-hour course will be taught in partnership with various VA subject matter experts within our Clinic.

The dates for these trainings are:

- February 12-16, 2024
- April 15-19, 2024
- July 15-19, 2024
- October 21-25, 2024

## Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT)

**February 12–16, 2024**  
7:45 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

**April 15–19, 2024**  
7:45 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

**July 15–19, 2024**  
7:45 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

**October 21–25, 2024**  
7:45 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

**25 Officers Maximum**  
Full Name, Agency, Email Address, Phone Number, Dates requested for class.

**Class location:**  
Birmingham East VA Clinic  
7901 Crestwood Blvd. Irondale, AL 35210

If you have any question regarding the class, please email [VHABIRVRT@va.gov](mailto:VHABIRVRT@va.gov)

[Click Here to Register](#)









U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Birmingham VA Health Care System

