



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 273-6000
www.va.gov

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 30, 2007

VA's Suicide Hot Line Begins Operations *Nicholson: "Help a Phone Call Away"*

WASHINGTON – To ensure veterans with emotional crises have round-the-clock access to trained professionals, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun operation of a national suicide prevention hot line for veterans.

“Veterans need to know these VA professionals are literally a phone call away,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson said. “All service members who experience the stresses of combat can have wounds on their minds as well as their bodies. Veterans should see mental health services as another benefit they have earned, which the men and women of VA are honored to provide.”

The toll-free hot line number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). VA's hot line will be staffed by mental health professionals in Canandaigua, N.Y. They will take toll-free calls from across the country and work closely with local VA mental health providers to help callers.

To operate the national hot line, VA is partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

“The hot line will put veterans in touch – any time of the day or night, any day of the week, from anywhere in the country – with trained, caring professionals who can help,” added Nicholson. “This is another example of the VA's commitment to provide world-class health care for our nation's veterans, especially combat veterans newly returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.”

The suicide hot line is among several enhancements to mental health care that Nicholson has announced this year. In mid July, the Department's top mental health professionals convened in the Washington, D.C., area to review the services provided to veterans of the Global War on Terror.

- More -

Hotline 2/2/2/2

VA is the largest provider of mental health care in the nation. This year, the Department will spent about \$3 billion for mental health. More than 9,000 mental health professionals, backed up by primary care physicians and other health professionals in every VA medical center and outpatient clinic, provide mental health care to about 1 million veterans each year.

#

For the latest news releases and other information, visit VA on the Internet at

[http://www.va.gov/opa.](http://www.va.gov/opa)

To receive e-mail copies of news releases, subscribe to VA's list server at:

[http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/opalist_listserv.cfm.](http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/opalist_listserv.cfm)