

News Release



For Immediate Release

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Second Lady of the United States Highlights Program's Approach to Suicide Prevention

Arizona's Be Connected Statewide Program Provides Veteran Suicide Prevention, Upstream

Phoenix, Ariz. (Sept. 24, 2020) – Arizona's rate of suicide among veterans is more than double the general population. Last week, Second Lady of the United States, Mrs. Karen Pence, conducted a roundtable event in Phoenix focused on veteran suicide prevention. The roundtable highlighted Arizona's Be Connected® program, which has been nationally-recognized as a best practice for how the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services and communities across Arizona work together to prevent suicide among our state's veterans, using an upstream approach.

The visit by Mrs. Pence comes as the stressors of the prolonged pandemic, along with job and income loss, health issues and added parental duties required by distance learning are putting many Arizonans at risk for suicide. These risks are even more pronounced for veterans and the military community. To help reduce the risk of suicide, Be Connected, led by the [Arizona Coalition for Military Families](#), builds upon a decade of effort to coordinate and develop resources across Arizona that provide a network of support.

[Be Connected](#) is an unparalleled statewide partnership between the VA, Governor Doug Ducey's Office, state agencies and dedicated community members united in preventing suicide through a public health, upstream approach that addresses issues before they have a chance to develop into a life-threatening crisis. Be Connected takes a three pronged approach to offering services, including:

- A [statewide support line](#): 866-4AZ-VETS (429-8387);
- A team of [navigators](#) who provide personalized solutions using a [resource network](#); and
- Free [training for anyone](#) in the community that provides techniques to become a helper for service members, veterans and their families.

As a testament to the united approach in Arizona to prevent suicide among veterans, Mrs. Pence stated at the roundtable, "You all know each other and are already working together. It's so inspiring to me." The Second Lady serves as the Lead Ambassador for the [PREVENTS](#) Initiative, which stands for the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide. At the roundtable, Michael Fisher, Network Director of the VA's Veterans Integrated Service Network 22, which covers Arizona, said, "I have been a part of VA for 27 years and this is the most vibrant successful collaboration that I have seen in my career."

The Be Connected team is available to assist all service members, veterans, their families and community helpers statewide. The support line team develops solutions to problems that might seem hopeless to someone experiencing them. Anyone who needs assistance for themselves or someone they care about can access this no cost support by calling the Be Connected Support Line at 866-4AZ-VETS (429-8387).

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About the Be Connected® Program

[Be Connected](#) links Arizona service members, veterans, families and community helpers to information, support and resources. Be Connected includes a support line, resource matching website, statewide team of community-based navigators and training for everyone. Launched with the help, support and guidance of the late Senator John McCain, and now operated in partnership by the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, Arizona Office of the Governor, Arizona Department of Veterans' Services and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Be Connected is available to any member of the military, veteran, family member or community helper by [calling](#) 866-4AZ-VETS (429-8387) for [help and support](#). Organizations that want to [support](#) and join our efforts should begin by [completing a pre-application](#). For more information, to find support and learn more, visit www.BeConnectedAZ.org.