

## Veteran suicides down in Michigan and nationwide

New data released by the Department of Veterans Affairs found that veteran suicides fell to their lowest level in 12 years in 2019, down more than one death a day from the previous year's levels, as reported by the [Military Times](#).

In Michigan, there were 173 veteran suicides in 2019 – down from 202 veteran suicides in 2018. View the VA's [Michigan veteran suicide data sheet](#) for more information on the state's numbers.

Yet the rate of suicides among veterans nationwide remains almost double the rest of the U.S. public, accounting for more than 32,000 deaths from 2015 to 2019, the latest data available. In Michigan, the rate of veteran suicides was 29.6 per 100,000 people in 2019 – much higher than the rate among all Michiganders, which was 17.9 per 100,000 people.

VA officials called the decrease in veteran suicides in 2019 a notable improvement but acknowledged the work still ahead.

“Suicide prevention remains a top priority for VA, with the most significant amount of resources ever appropriated and apportioned to VA suicide prevention,” VA Secretary Denis McDonough said. “Suicide is preventable, and everyone has a role to play in saving lives.”

*Veterans experiencing a mental health emergency can contact the Veteran Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and select option 1 for a VA staffer. Veterans, troops or their family members can also text 838255 or visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](#) for assistance.*



**MichiganVeterans.com**  
**1-800-MICH-VET**



## MVAA Director named to VA's Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention Workgroup

Zaneta Adams, Director of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency, has been appointed a member of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention Workgroup and will begin serving a one-year appointment this month.



The appointees are experienced subject matter experts and will advise VA Secretary Denis McDonough on department policies and procedures to eliminate sexual assault and harassment in VA facilities.

"Veterans, service members, VA patients, their families and caregivers, as well as sexual assault survivors, staff, visitors and advocates should feel safe in all VA facilities," McDonough said. "The Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Workgroup is a critical step in making sure that happens."

Adams is an attorney and former president and founder of Women Injured in Combat. She was also instrumental in forming the Veterans Legal Assistance Project. Adams is a U.S. Army veteran.

She is one of 16 members in the workgroup. For a full list of members, visit the [VA's website](#).

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## Michigan recognizes 63 Veteran-Friendly Schools

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) has awarded Veteran-Friendly Schools status to [63 universities, colleges and trade schools](#) across Michigan for the 2021-22 school year.

The state agency's Veteran-Friendly Schools (VFS) program recognizes postsecondary institutions committed to supporting the needs of military-connected students. Veterans who are interested in more information about Veteran-Friendly Schools can visit the [VFE dashboard](#) on our new website, michigan.gov/MVAA.

Any institution of higher learning or training facility in Michigan eligible to receive veteran education benefits can apply for the program regardless of size or program delivery. This year's awardees range from a boat-building school to community colleges to Big Ten universities.

MVAA Director Zaneta Adams noted that since the VFS program was created in 2013, there has been a steady increase in the number of schools dedicated to enrolling student veterans and enhancing the Michigan workforce with each graduating class.

"I would like to extend my best wishes for a successful school year to all student veterans and their families - from the student who is just beginning their educational pursuits to the student veteran who will make the transition from boots and a helmet to a cap and gown," Adams said. "We are thankful for the commitment of our

63 Veteran-Friendly Schools to our country's veterans by ensuring that these students are supported throughout their entire educational journey."



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## Veterans can plan their legacy with VA burial and memorial benefits

Preparing for the passing of a loved one, or even yourself, can be a difficult and confusing time. VA can help you and your survivors prepare for the future. The VA's [VAntage Point blog](#) explains how VA's burial and memorial benefits can honor your legacy.

No one wants to leave their family with large burial and funeral expenses. VA's compassionate and professional memorial and burial services can help ease families through loss and save them thousands of dollars. If you are a veteran, service member, spouse or dependent, [you may be eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery and other benefits](#). These benefits include:

- Access to more than 140 national cemeteries, 95 of which are open to interments of caskets or cremated remains. Specific burial options are limited to those available at a cemetery and will vary based on availability.
  - A U.S. flag, provided at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a veteran who served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces.
  - A single headstone, columbarium niche cover or a flat marker for a veteran's final resting place, whether in a private, state or national cemetery.
  - A medallion for use on a headstone, or other memorial in a private cemetery, to indicate a deceased person's veteran status. Multiple sizes are available, and VA delivers the headstone or marker anywhere in the world at no cost.
  - A Presidential Memorial Certificate – an engraved certificate signed by the current president that honors the memory of honorably discharged veterans – for families of deceased veterans.
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## Friday, September 17 is POW/MIA Recognition Day

POW/MIA Recognition Day is commemorated on the third Friday of every September, a date that's not associated with any particular war. This year, the day is recognized on Friday, September 17. In 1979, Congress and the president passed resolutions making it official after the families of the more than 2,500 Vietnam War POW/MIAs pushed for full accountability.

POW/MIA Recognition Day ensures that American remembers to stand behind those who serve and to make sure we do everything we can to account for those who have never returned. "You Are Not Forgotten" is the central phrase behind the POW/MIA remembrance movement, which honors America's prisoners of war, those who are still missing in action and their families.

Learn more about POW/MIA Day from [Military.com](https://www.military.com).

September 17, 2021



# National POW/MIA Recognition Day



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Employment



Education



Health Care



Quality of Life



Veterans Homes