



## **Program Overview**

The Be Connected program is a statewide effort to strengthen access to support and resources for the 600,000+ service members, veterans and their families who call Arizona home. Be Connected launched in 2017 with one team member. The program is now expanding to a team of 20+.

## **Be Connected Goals**

There are three goals for the Be Connected program:

- Reduce deaths by suicide in Arizona's population of service members and veterans.
- Build upon existing capacity and strengths within our service systems, adding a new layer of coordination and support.
- Demonstrate effectiveness and develop a sustainability plan that builds program components into systems and funding.

## **Be Connected Components**

There are three parts to the program:

**CALL** – A 24/7 support line that anyone can call, including service members, veterans, family members, helpers and providers.

**MATCH** – Help and support to navigate to the right resources for each person or family's situation.

**LEARN** – Training, including in-person and online options, to equip everyone with the knowledge, skills and confidence to help.

## **How did this program come about?**

The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act is a federal law signed into effect in 2015. There were several states identified as pilot sites. While Arizona was not on the original list, because of our robust public/private partnership and infrastructure, the Office of the late Senator John McCain advocated for Arizona to be added as a pilot state.

## **Is this a new program?**

Be Connected takes the existing strengths in our community and layers on a new layer of coordination and support that did not exist before. It is connected to all of our key statewide initiatives and uses our community's existing capacity to focus on extending support deeper into our military, veteran and family population.

## **What is unique about Arizona's approach?**

According to the Arizona Violent Death Reporting System, the risk of suicide is 3x higher among Arizona veterans than non-veterans. The magnitude of this issue means it will likely not be addressed by a single system or organization. Be Connected brings together key stakeholders from across different sectors (military, government, community) to work together to focus on upstream suicide prevention and intervention. We are building upon the existing capacity of our community by layering on additional levels of coordination and support. Be Connected is more than a suicide prevention campaign. It focuses on providing the tools, support and training for each person to make a difference in the lives of those around them by being trained and prepared to reach out or respond in a moment of need. By embedding support deep in our community, we can collectively intervene earlier and more effectively.

### **Why is this the right approach for Arizona?**

Be Connected is based on a concept that has already demonstrated significant results in Arizona. At the height of the post-9/11 deployments, the Arizona National Guard experienced the highest rate of suicide ever. Through a partnership between the Guard, the Arizona Coalition for Military Families and other key stakeholder organizations, there was a significant increase in use of supportive resources and zero suicides for the three year period the program was in operation. Be Connected expands on this success to bring this support to all service members, veterans and family members throughout Arizona.

### **How is this program being rolled out within Arizona?**

The official launch of Be Connected took place April 19, 2017, at the annual Statewide Symposium in Support of Service Members, Veterans & Their Families in Phoenix. Over the past two years, the program has expanded to serve the needs of our community. In the first two weeks, the Be Connected support line fielded 5 calls. In October 2018, the 5,000 call was fielded. At the two year anniversary of launching the program, we are on the cusp of fielding the 10,000 call. In summer 2019, the Be Connected Statewide Roadshow will launch, with a focus on engaging communities around the state.

### **What role do community members and organizations play in this effort?**

Our community is essential to the effectiveness of Be Connected. The goal is to ensure that every community member and organization is equipped with the knowledge, training and information to connect the service members, veterans and family members they may encounter with resources and support to address any stressors or needs. Be Connected adds a layer of support for helpers so they know there is always someone to reach out to if they need help or support in assisting someone.

### **How does an organization get involved?**

Public and private sector organizations can participate by going through a partnership process, having their staff and volunteers trained and by ensuring they are connected to what is happening with Be Connected and other key military/veteran initiatives in Arizona.

### **How does an individual get involved?**

Individuals are encouraged to [equip themselves](#) to be ready to reach out or to respond. Just like you might take a CPR or First Aid class to be prepared to assist someone with a physical health issue, you can equip yourself to be ready to help someone who is struggling mentally and emotionally. The goal isn't for you to be the one to solve their issue, but to notice, listen, respond and get them connected to the many available supportive services across Arizona. We encourage everyone to participate in Military/Veteran Resource Navigator training as well as a suicide prevention training. Visit the Learn section of the site for more information about training options. We also encourage everyone to use the [Be Connected support line](#), either for yourself or if you are concerned about someone you know and need support as a helper.

### **What do I do if I encounter someone who needs help?**

First, let them know you care. Second, listen if they want to talk. And third, connect them to support and resources. You can use the [Resource Match Tool](#) to connect them to information and resources. You or they can also call the Be Connected support line anytime at 1-866-4AZ-VETS to connect to the program coordinator or a crisis counselor.