



AMERICA'S WARRIOR PARTNERSHIP

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

HAMPTON ROADS



Made possible by Virginia Department of Veteran Services



TABLE OF CONTENT

- **Executive Summary | 2**
- **Introduction | 2**
 - **Community Overview | 2**
- **Methodology | 6**
- **Results | 8**
 - **Leadership | 7**
 - **Outreach | 8**
 - **Use of Technology | 9**
 - **Purposeful Activities | 10**
 - **Physical Health Care | 12**
 - **Behavioral Health | 13**
 - **Use of Community Funding | 15**
 - **Homelessness Program | 16**
 - **Employment | 17**
 - **Education | 18**
 - **Access to Benefits Services | 19**
- **Conclusion | 20**
- **Sources | 22**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Suicide is recognized as a major, preventable public health issue within the Hampton Roads region along the southeastern coast of Virginia. Organizations like the Peninsula Community Health Collaborative are bringing healthcare providers and public health departments together to address the community's health needs through assessment and improvement planning. Hampton Roads has a strong foundation of community service boards, hospitals, medical schools, and community organizations anchored by statewide resources and crisis lines, such as the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (Dial 988). Numerous organizations and programs provide services such as health and wellness workshops, food distribution, wellness coaching, and connect individuals to healthcare careers. However, gaps still exist, including the lack of a coordinated regional strategy, limited Veteran outreach, and insufficient prevention efforts to reduce access to lethal means. To have the greatest near-term impact, the region should prioritize forming a region wide suicide prevention coalition that coordinates data-sharing, expands upstream programs, focuses on outreach, and addresses lethal-means safety. Additionally, an in-depth review of Veteran suicide death records in the Hampton Roads area would provide a more nuanced understanding into service gaps and help communities address these challenges.

INTRODUCTION

America's Warrior Partnership (AWP) conducted a landscape analysis of the Hampton Roads community under the Governor's Challenge Team to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families initiative which was funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This analysis provides the background and baseline evaluation for a collaborative, community-led initiative to conduct suicide death reviews among Veterans in this area. This document provides the results of an in-depth review of the services and gaps in the community using a validated Community Assessment Tool.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Hampton Roads region is a large metropolitan area situated along the southeastern coast of Virginia and is home to over 1.7 million people. The Hampton Roads region comprises 15 counties, 9 of which are consolidated city-counties. The region is characterized by urban, suburban, and rural areas, which vary in population density.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

The region's history is rooted in its colonial beginnings and is characterized by diverse communities, which includes a strong military presence as it contains several military installations. Hampton Roads is home to Naval Station Norfolk, the largest naval base in the world and hosts the headquarters for the U.S. Fleet Forces Command, making it the epicenter of military activity along the East Coast. As a result, the region's economy is heavily influenced by substantial spending from the Department of War (DOW) and other maritime activities across the Atlantic and Chesapeake Bay waterways.

GEOGRAPHY

The Hampton Roads region is located in the heart of Virginia's larger Tidewater Region on the western shore of Chesapeake Bay, centered on a deep-water estuary where the James, Nansemond, and Elizabeth Rivers converge. An intricate network of waterways separates the area into four sections (Figure 1).

The Peninsula is surrounded by the James and York Rivers and includes cities like Hampton, Newport News, and Poquoson. Connecting the Peninsula to the mainland is the Central Region, which contains the city of Williamsburg and largely represented by Gloucester and Matthew County. Further south, the Eastern Region sits at the North Carolina-Virginia border and helps form the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. The Eastern Region encompasses major cities like Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, and Norfolk. The Southern Region of Hampton Roads is situated further inland, just west of the Eastern Region, and runs parallel to the Peninsula. The Southern Region includes the city of Suffolk and the Isle of Wight and Surry County. Due to its location and rising sea levels, the region is susceptible to coastal flooding. Ongoing measures to mitigate these risks have been taken through various vulnerability assessments and initiatives like First-Floor Elevation.



Figure 1. Image credit: Einfach Frankfurt

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Hampton Roads region is characterized by urban, suburban, and rural areas, which vary in population density. According to the 2020 Census, Virginia Beach is the most heavily populated city in the Hampton Roads region with 459,470 residents. The neighboring city of Norfolk is home to 238,005 residents; however, it is the most densely populated city within Hampton Roads with 4,467 residents per square mile. A significant portion of the region's total population is concentrated in these two cities and the other urban centers clustered around the harbor. Despite the concentrated population, the greater metropolitan area is known for its suburban sprawl, with the cities linked through a network of bridges and tunnels. Due to its significant military presence, Hampton Roads has the highest proportion of Veterans among all U.S. urban areas, with nearly 14% of its population holding Veteran status. Nearly half of the Veteran population in this area is over the age of 65 (Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy, Old Dominion University, 2024).

DEMOGRAPHICS (CONTINUED)

The Hampton Roads region is experiencing a demographic shift with slower-than-average population growth and an aging population. From 2010 to 2023, the population grew by just 4%, which is about half the national expected rate. While the percentage of residents under 18 remains at 22%, the median age increased from 35.4 in 2005 to 37.3 in 2022. This reflects a trend of young adults leaving the region (Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy, Old Dominion University, 2024). At the same time, there has been a 14% increase in residents aged 65 or older since 2005. A WAVY article from September 2025 suggests that this shift is due to younger residents seeking a lower cost of living and the flexibility of remote work (Hughes, 2025). According to the 2023 Greater Hampton Roads Community Indicators Dashboard, the median household income in Hampton Roads is \$82,186, which is below the state average of \$92,714 (United Way of South Hampton Roads, 2025).

The racial and ethnic makeup of Hampton Roads is diverse, with a significant representation of racial minorities living in the area. Based on 2025 data, around half of the area is Caucasian (52.32%), approximately 30.29% of the area's occupants are Black, and 8.76% are of Hispanic ethnicity (Hampton, Virginia, n.d.). It is important to note that these demographics refer to the entire region and will vary by city or county.

ECONOMY

The Hampton Roads' economy is driven by a diverse range of industries centered around the area's port and waterways. As the fastest growing port on the East Coast, this region is a key location for facilitating global trade and maritime activities and has become a strategic location for military activity and spending. The economy is also largely driven by other industries such as tourism, manufacturing, and Information Technology. While Hampton Roads has seen sustained job and wage growth over the past several years, there are still economic challenges. Key issues include a workforce with skill gaps and a lack of affordability, especially related to housing. The economic outlook for this region faces some uncertainty due to national employment trends and potential shifts in defense spending (Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, n.d.).

EDUCATION

Over recent years, the Hampton Roads region has seen both successes and ongoing challenges in K-12 education. On the positive side, certain school districts are achieving high marks. For example, Hampton City School Districts have a 98% on-schedule graduation coupled with a low dropout rate of just 0.5%, the best performing in the region and among the best in Virginia (Hampton City Schools, 2024). Affluent and less densely populated school districts like those in York County and Poquoson tend to have more stable funding, better access to advanced coursework, and less impoverished schools. In contrast, there are districts and areas struggling with concentrated poverty, limited access to advanced coursework, and the lingering effects of the pandemic, which resulted in learning loss, especially in math and reading (ProPublica, 2018).

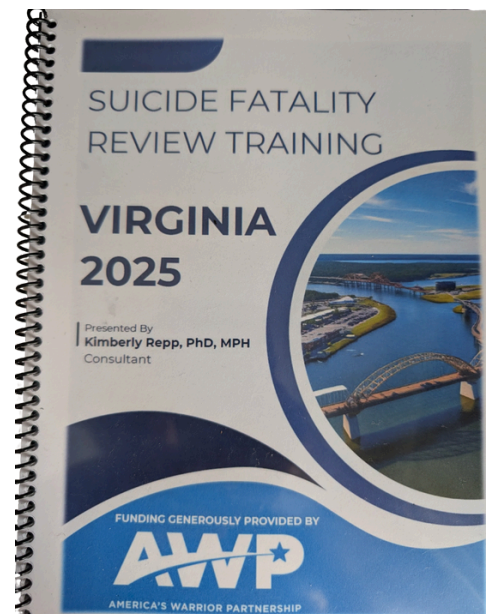
Despite the fact that Virginia's education system ranks among the top states nationally, its recovery from these pandemic-era declines has been slow. Recognizing these disparities, the region is now prioritizing educational outcomes and addressing inequities in school quality and resources, especially in low-income areas and communities of color.

HEALTH

Hampton Roads has a robust healthcare infrastructure with a comprehensive network of hospitals, clinics, and various healthcare providers serving the community. The Hampton VA Medical Center, located in Hampton, Virginia, is part of the Veterans Health Administration's Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6). It provides a wide range of services to Veterans, including primary care, specialty care, mental health, women's health, and extended care as well as an on-site pharmacy. The Hampton VA Medical Center serves Veterans across the entire Hampton Roads region, including the Southside, Peninsula, and surrounding rural areas. Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, located in Norfolk, Virginia, is a 525-bed tertiary care center and the only Level I Adult Trauma Center in the region. It serves as the primary teaching hospital for Eastern Virginia Medical School. National Catholic health system, Bon Secours, also has three facilities in the area, including two hospitals and a short-term acute care facility with an emergency department.

Top Health Concerns:

- **Behavioral and Mental Health:** Challenges in mental and substance abuse have been highlighted by community members and supported by data, which shows an increase in emergency department visits related to self-harm and overdoses. Reports of overdose-related deaths have surged in Newport News from 24.6 deaths per 100,000 residents between 2016 and 2020 to 42.7 deaths per 100,000 between 2020 and 2022, an approximate 70% increase. The city of Hampton also saw an increase from 27.3 to 36.9 per 100,000 over the same period, an approximate 35% increase (13News Now, 2023).^{[OBJ.] [OBJ.]} The surge in overdoses is largely driven by fentanyl contamination (Virginia Department of Health, n.d.).²
- **Chronic Disease:** High rates of hypertension, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes are significant concerns in this region
- **Access to Healthcare:** Availability of appointments and affordable healthcare remains a top concern for some residents, particularly working families, the uninsured, and underserved adults and children. Patients have reported waiting 3-6 months for an appointment with their provider.
- **Suicide:** Programs aimed to prevent and support those affected by suicide are available to all residents. Notably, Bon Secours' KIDZ'NGRIEF serves children coping with grief and loss due to suicide through therapeutic activities. The Urban League of Hampton Roads partners with the Birdsong Health Literacy Center of Excellence to offer free suicide prevention and health education resources to the community.





METHODOLOGY

A landscape analysis of the Hampton Roads region was created using AWP's community assessment tool which was developed to evaluate a community's effectiveness and ability to assist military Veterans and their families. This method was applied throughout all phases of the community development process, online analysis, and on-the-ground observations.

Eleven areas deemed necessary to achieve this goal and holistically support Veterans as they transition into civilian life were assessed for effectiveness and importance using a Likert-based scale. Effectiveness is rated from low to high on a scale of 1-5 and importance (weight) is rated from low to high on a scale of 1-11. These ratings are then multiplied to calculate the relative score of each area. A community is given an overall score, referred to as a relative score of community effectiveness. This score is calculated dividing the sum of relative scores by the highest possible score of 330 and normalized against a percentage of 100.

Areas evaluated through the community assessment tool:

- Leadership
- Outreach
- Use of Technology
- Purposeful Activities
- Physical Health Care
- Behavioral Health
- Use of Community Funding
- Homelessness Program
- Employment
- Education
- Access to Benefits Services

The results of the landscape analysis form a baseline assessment and may be used as a tool by community leaders to objectively measure and track the community's development. The use of the community assessment tool and the eleven focus areas will ensure consistency throughout all phases of assessment and allow for easy tracking of progress.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the community assessment for all eleven focus areas outlined under methodology.



LEADERSHIP

Leaders from several Veteran support organizations in the Hampton Roads area actively collaborate to improve the quality of life for Veterans, their families, and caregivers. These leaders exemplify strong communication skills and demonstrate a passion for supporting Veterans. They effectively communicate a shared, community-based mission and actively seek collaboration with other support organizations. Some of the lead organizations identified are:

Organization / Role	What they do related to Veteran Suicide Prevention / Veteran Mental Health	Leadership role or potential leverage point
VA Hampton Health Care	The VA Hampton facility has a suicide prevention program; coordinators, and case managers. They offers gun safety locks; connect Veterans in crisis to both VA and community resources.	Central anchor in coordinating clinical and community-based responses. They can convene, provide clinical perspective and resources, and partner with non-VA entities.
VOA Chesapeake & Carolinas – SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Program	They run the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox program, which is community outreach and prevention for veterans and their families: mental health screenings, emergency treatment, case management, benefits assistance, etc.	They are a community-based partner with capacity and funding; well placed to coordinate non-VA veteran-facing outreach and to serve as a bridge between VA and local stakeholders.
Veteran’s HomeFront (VHF)	A nonprofit in Hampton Roads aimed at connecting homeless, at-risk, and transitioning veterans with resources and supports; peer-led and takes a community collaborative model.	Has strong potential to mobilize grassroots, peer support, engaging veterans in prevention via community ties. Could provide leadership in peer-oriented and social determinants work.
Lock and Talk Virginia & Region-Five Service Member, Veterans, and Family Support	“Lock and Talk” is a program that educates about lethal means safety (firearms, medications), including partnerships with CSBs and retailers/ranges; Region-Five is involved in Veterans & family support.	Acts as a prevention partner focusing on risk reduction, especially on lethal means; strong leadership lever in safety / preventative education.
Virginia Department of Health / DBHDS: Suicide Prevention Interagency Advisory Group (SPIAG)	Statewide advisory body for suicide prevention; works across agencies in Virginia to build connected systems of suicide care. Posture includes veterans among other populations.	Provides policy, strategic oversight potential; can align local coalitions with state initiatives, help marshal state resources and standardize best practices.
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) – Virginia Chapter	Education, public awareness, training, advocacy across the Commonwealth. Local leadership includes people in Virginia Beach among others.	Partner for raising awareness, organizing community education, stigma reduction, fundraising, and mobilizing volunteers.



LEADERSHIP (CONTINUED)

Hampton Roads lacks a central coalition or unified leadership to consistently bring together stakeholders involved in Veteran suicide prevention, resulting in organizations and programs often operating in silos. This is compounded by the region's numerous service jurisdictions. Furthermore, small or local organizations lack robust mechanisms for tracking Veteran suicidality across systems. While peer work is present, many leadership roles are held by clinical or administrative actors. More Veteran voices would strengthen relevance and trust. Finally, nonprofits and community organizations lack the necessary capacity, such as staff, funding, or infrastructure, to fully engage in or lead collaborative initiatives, particularly for upstream prevention.



OUTREACH

Hampton Roads has multiple access points for Veterans to obtain resources and services, including VA, nonprofits, and peer support organizations. Existing federal and state funding maintains these services and expands outreach initiatives. Trusted peer and grassroots groups are able to reach Veterans who are not connected to the VA. Organizations across the Hampton Roads region have implemented the Lock and Talk suicide prevention strategy as a practical, non-stigmatizing means to conduct outreach. This strategy focuses on reducing access to lethal means like firearms and medications by distributing secure storage devices and promoting open conversations about mental health and suicide risk.

Organization / Program	Outreach Activities	Notes / Relevance
VA Hampton Health Care – Suicide Prevention Program	Outreach to veterans via Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs) and Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinators (CEPCs). Includes firearm lock distribution, training to community partners, postvention support.	Centralized clinical outreach; connects veterans in VA care and those outside VA.
VOA Chesapeake & Carolinas – SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program	Provides community-based outreach and prevention: mental health screenings, emergency treatment referrals, case management, housing, employment, benefits navigation, family support.	Federally funded program (through VA) specifically targeting veterans and families outside the VA system.
Veteran's HomeFront (VHF)	Peer-led street and community outreach to homeless/at-risk veterans; connects them with resources (housing, food, mental health services).	Reaches vulnerable veterans who may not seek VA services.
Region Five – Lock and Talk Virginia	Outreach to veterans and families about lethal means safety (gun locks, medication lock boxes); partners with gun retailers, veteran orgs, and families.	Preventive outreach that engages communities directly.
NAMI Coastal Virginia / NAMI Virginia	Community education, family support groups, Mental Health First Aid and suicide prevention trainings, often with veteran participation.	Bridges family and veteran communities.
Local VFW / American Legion posts, faith-based orgs	Informal outreach through veteran service organizations, churches, and civic groups.	Trusted messengers; underutilized in structured suicide prevention outreach.
CHKD / YMCA / schools (for military families)	Youth & family programs that reach children of veterans/service members.	Indirect but critical outreach to military families.



OUTREACH (CONTINUED)

Fragmented efforts have resulted in gaps in outreach. Outreach tends to be program-based and not regionally coordinated. This lack of coordination may lead to an unnecessary duplication of services and risk certain subsets of the population being overlooked or missed. Hardest-to-reach, isolated Veterans, such as the homeless or those who do not trust the VA, may not be systematically reached outside of their peer organizations. To maximize the protective role of family in suicide prevention, outreach efforts must expand to include spouses and children. Outreach efforts are challenging to evaluate for effectiveness. As a result, gaps in outreach efforts and messaging contribute to many Veterans remaining reluctant to seek care for mental health issues or suicidal thoughts.



USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Telehealth and technology capabilities exist in Hampton Roads, but this focus area has been identified as having significant potential for improvement.

Technology / Program	What it does	Relevance to Veterans in Hampton Roads / Virginia
VA Telehealth / VA Video Connect / Remote-Visits	Provides video and virtual care for mental health and suicide prevention, reducing the need to travel. For example, the “Suicide Prevention 2.0 (SP 2.0)” Clinical Telehealth program supports veterans with recent self-directed violence behavior via virtual delivery: safety planning, CBT, DBT, etc.	This reduces geographic or mobility barriers for veterans in outlying or rural parts of Hampton Roads, for those with transport issues, or with time constraints. The VA Hampton facility supports telehealth for mental health and other services.
“Digital Divide Consult” & device / connectivity support	VA offers programs for veterans who lack internet / technology: lends tablets/internet-connected devices; works with public/private to reduce data-charges for videoconferencing; places for local telehealth access (e.g., ATLAS sites at VFW posts, American Legion halls) in some cases.	Helps reach veterans who might otherwise be excluded by lack of tech or broadband. In Hampton VA info, telehealth is explicitly offered as a service.
Veterans Crisis Line & 988 / Text / Chat	24/7 crisis support via phone, text, chat. For veterans, the VCL line (via 988 + press 1, etc.).	Critical “always-on” access. Veterans in crisis in Hampton Roads can access these. This is core suicide prevention tech.
AI / Predictive Analytics Tools	A VA-adjacent/partner company (Clearforce) is using AI to help organizations that serve veterans by identifying risk factors (financial stress, substance abuse, employment issues) so outreach can be more proactive rather than passive.	This kind of upstream detection could help local service orgs in Hampton Roads focus limited outreach resources on higher-risk veterans. This could be especially useful for nonprofits and VSOs.
Immersive / Extended Reality (XR), Virtual Reality (VR) Tools	The VA’s “Immersive Technology to Impact Chronic Pain and Suicide Prevention” project. VA Immersive with providers are using VR headsets with mindfulness / relaxation content; also designing/validating VR content for exposure therapy for PTSD, etc.	Potentially useful in Hampton Roads as part of mental health service offerings (at VA facilities or partner centers). VR may appeal to some veterans (esp. younger ones) or provide alternative treatment modalities.
Tech & Mobile Apps; Digital Tools	The VA has mobile apps (VA Health & Benefits app, etc.), secure digital tools; also topic lectures/webinars (e.g. “Tech into Care” lecture series) about using apps, mobile devices, etc. for PTSD, suicide prevention related concerns.	These increase access to self-help tools, safety-planning apps, resources, and can supplement therapy/



USE OF TECHNOLOGY (CONTINUED)

A primary obstacle to telehealth and technology is the digital divide. Many Veterans lack reliable internet, necessary devices, or the skills to use technological tools. According to the Federal Communications Commission report in 2019, nearly 15% of Veterans lacked a home internet connection and an estimated 30% of those with internet service lack the bandwidth necessary to support telemedicine technologies (O'Shea et al, 2022). In fact, a 2021 VA survey found nearly 43% of Veterans reported having at least one “digital need.” Beyond lacking affordable or reliable internet, other common issues include not having a smart phone or computer, running out of minutes or data, and needing help operating telehealth services (Russell et al, 2024).

To overcome these challenges, comprehensive outreach and education are needed to sustain engagement and increase awareness, trust, and usability among Veterans and their families. As predictive analytics and artificial intelligence become increasingly prevalent, the need to handle data in an ethical, transparent, and consensual manner will be paramount to ensure patient privacy. By integrating telehealth tools, crisis lines, and other analytic tools, healthcare and service providers can avoid the risk of duplication and disjointed care. Workforce capacity, training, and reimbursement issues should also be addressed to ensure that digital care can be effectively implemented by providers.



PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES

Purposeful activities refer to intentional actions or tasks an individual participates in to achieve a personal goal or contribute to their sense of meaning in life. These activities may offer Veterans a sense of belonging, identity, or mission after leaving the uniformed service. Purposeful activities may provide a sense of structure as they often require regular commitments, foster motivation, improve wellbeing, and provide Veterans with a sense of accomplishment. These activities often support personal growth and mastery through opportunities for learning, skill-building, and leadership. Purposeful activities may also offer an avenue to positively contribute to the community and serve others while building social support and reducing isolation. Ultimately, these activities serve as a powerful protective factor in preventing suicide.

Program / Activity	What it offers	How it supports purpose/connection etc.
Virginia Beach Vet Center	Offers non-medical setting counseling plus recreational activities. Groups: PTSD, combat veterans, women veterans; also couples & family counseling.	Recreational + group activities create social belonging; regular group meetings build peer ties.
Peer Groups via Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VVFS)	Peer support groups (in-person and virtual), “lunch and learn” sessions, wellness groups; veteran facilitators share experiences.	Peer belonging, shared experience, helps with mentoring, encouragement; structure and social contact.
The Mission Continues – Hampton Roads Platoon	Veterans engaged in service / volunteer projects in the community: helping underserved populations, working with nonprofits, tackling community needs.	Gives back, mission-driven work; reconnects veterans with mission and purpose; social engagement.
Lock and Talk (Region Five)	While primarily lethal means safety / awareness, they also engage veterans/families in community education and providing locking safety devices; outreach.	Sense of contributing to safety of community, actionable engagement; meetings/events build connections.
Veterans Outreach – Hope Exists	Mobile outreach, case management, awareness; reconnects veterans to VA services; supported under SSG Fox Program.	Re-connection to services, meaningful relationship building, sense of being supported, not forgotten.
Women Veterans Peer Support Groups (Serving Together / Virginia DVS)	Virtual peer support groups for women veterans.	Easier to connect in smaller, identity-based peer groups; sharing, purpose through mutual support.
WWP Peer Support Groups	The Wounded Warrior Project offers peer groups and events, both online and in-person, for veterans to connect, find mutual support.	Camaraderie and shared experience, sense of not being alone; regular gatherings.
Career / Transition Services (Hampton Roads USMC MCCA)	Programs like Transition Readiness Program (TRP), SkillBridge, career counseling, volunteer opportunities for veterans & families.	Purpose via work / training; sense of future; helping them re-orient life goals; connection to institutions.

PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

While these programs are impactful, they face significant gaps in consistency and scale. Some programs are virtual while others are in person, and their availability is not evenly distributed. This fragmentation can leave certain subgroups underserved, including younger, rural, or women Veterans, and those not engaged with the VA. Additionally, Veterans with physical or mobility disabilities have limited options. Many of the programs observed are episodic or short-term in nature rather than ongoing. As a result, the Veteran’s continued sense of purpose can fade once their engagement ends.



PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE

Physical wellness has a strong influence on an individual's mental well-being. For Veterans, challenges like chronic pain, traumatic injuries, and sleep disturbances can significantly increase suicide risk by causing distress, reducing quality of life, and limiting social engagement. Systemic issues and lack of access to care observed in the healthcare system may exacerbate these challenges.

Service / Resource	What's offered	Relevance to suicide prevention via physical health care
Hampton VA Medical Center (100 Emancipation Drive, Hampton)	Full spectrum of primary care; specialty care (nephrology, audiology, etc.); rehabilitation and extended care; home-based primary care; medical foster home support; hospice & palliative care.	Access to consistent primary care helps with managing chronic conditions, pain, mobility; extended care helps with quality of life for those with severe health issues.
VA Hampton Health Care System - Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)	Primary care and other outpatient services via clinics in Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, etc.	These make access easier (geographically) so veterans are more likely to use physical health services.
Veteran Readiness & Employment / Vocational Rehabilitation (within VA Hampton)	Services like Compensated Work Therapy, Supported Employment / Education, etc. These help veterans engage in meaningful work, but also require physical health functioning, and often involve fitness, physical readiness components.	Improving physical capacity and stability helps veterans engage in productive roles, improving mental health and reducing isolation.
Rehabilitation Services	Physical therapy, pain management, rehab for injuries, extended care including home-based primary care.	Helps manage chronic pain and disability, which are major risk factors. Also restores mobility, independence, social engagement.
Care for Return-to-Duty / Polytrauma / Multi-injury Veterans	The VA Hampton offers returning service member care including adjustment to civilian life, rehab, counseling, etc.	Many veterans returning with physical trauma need integrated services; delays or poor physical recovery can worsen mental health.
Preventive Health & Screening	Lab services, immunizations, women's health, screenings via primary care / specialty clinics.	Early detection of disease reduces morbidity / distress; keeping physical health in check supports better mental health resilience.
Support Services (for accessibility, transportation, caregiver support)	The VA offers van transport services (DAV vans), "beneficiary travel" reimbursements, home-based services, medical foster home support, caregiver support.	These reduce barriers to accessing care, which is essential for utilization of physical health services.



PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE (CONTINUED)

Major delays in care were observed in this region, primarily due to wait times and difficulty accessing specialized care, such as rehabilitation or physical therapy. These problems are often caused by staffing shortages at VA facilities, which lead to service delays, and a reduced quality of care. A compounding factor in these issues is the lack of transportation. Even with public or private Transportation services, rural Veterans and Veterans in underserved areas of Hampton Roads still face challenges accessing care.

Although chronic pain is a major risk factor for suicide, access to comprehensive, multidisciplinary pain management is limited. There seems to be a lack of focus on lifestyle interventions, such as diet, exercise, and sleep in the Veteran healthcare system. This lack of preventative care makes it difficult for Veterans to proactively manage their health. Programs should be better developed to combine physical activities and social support through Veteran peer groups to effectively address these issues.

Another observed challenge to suicide prevention is physical healthcare providers do not always screen for mental health concerns or suicide risk, nor do they have a tendency to refer patients to mental health professionals. Consequently, these programs often only focus on the body's recovery, neglecting or ignoring the psychological impact of an injury or illness.



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Adequate and effective behavioral healthcare is a central pillar of suicide prevention for Veterans. Veterans are at higher risk of developing or experiencing mental health conditions such as PTSD, depression, substance misuse, trauma, moral injury, or social isolation compared to the general population.

Service / Program	What it provides	Veteran-focused / relevance
VA Hampton Health Care – Behavioral Health Department	Both inpatient & outpatient behavioral health: psychiatry, psychology, treatment for addictive disorders (including residential rehabilitation), homeless veteran services, transitional care for returning Operation Iraqi Freedom / Operation Enduring Freedom veterans. Telehealth options.	This is the core clinical backbone; provides many of the clinical interventions needed for high risk veterans.
Mission Interdisciplinary Behavioral Health (VA's BHIP)	The BHIP program teams up providers (therapists, psychiatrists, peer specialists, etc.) to coordinate care, tailor treatment plans, adjust care paths as needed.	Helps ensure that treatment is well-coordinated, rather than fragmented, which improves outcomes and reduces risk.
Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS)	Peer recovery / behavioral health supports; linkage to counseling and treatment for mental health and substance use; group supports; state / regional offices that serve veterans & families.	Important nonclinical / support pathways, especially for those outside VA or not yet in clinical care; helps bridge gaps and reduce stigma by using peer support.
Region Five CSBs (Community Services Boards)	Offers a full continuum: crisis call center; outpatient counseling; clinician training; services for military, veterans, and families; peer & family support.	Key providers in the public sector for veterans who may not use or have access to VA; good local presence.
Behavioral Health Associates of Virginia (BHAOFVA)	Private/community provider group: individual, family, group psychotherapy; telehealth; substance use / behavioral health support.	Useful for veterans who need care more quickly, or want non-VA / non-public options; sometimes less wait or more flexibility.
Hampton Roads Behavioral Health, P.C.	Assessment, diagnosis, therapy, medication management, etc., for adults and older adolescents in the region.	Adds to the network of providers; potential partner for referrals, outreach, or crisis aftercare.
Virginia DBHDS (Dept. of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services)	Oversees public behavioral health system; works with CSBs; has law/policy, acute psychiatric facilities, etc. Specific efforts for service members/veterans/military families.	Provides structure, oversight, funding; can influence strategy and resource allocation.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (CONTINUED)

The effectiveness of behavioral care is limited by several systemic barriers, including long wait times, provider shortages, affordability, lack of access due to coverage or location, and the pervasive stigma associated with seeking mental healthcare services. These issues are often compounded by other challenges, such as a lack of coordination in care and the failure to address co-occurring disorders, such as substance misuse. There also appears to be a lack of consistent follow-up after a crisis or discharge, plagued by a lack of cultural competence among providers.

USE OF COMMUNITY FUNDING

In addition to VA funding, Hampton Roads has local community resources and funding aimed at addressing suicide risk and protective factors. The Hampton Roads Community Foundation (HRCF) awards annual grants to local non-profits that provide mental health services through its Community Leadership Partners: Giving Circle initiative. The HRCF grants have also been allocated for training and certification of staff in the behavioral health sector to provide mental health screenings. Despite funding efforts aimed at proper training, there is still a significant gap in the workforce of qualified and properly trained behavioral health professionals. It is also important to note that these programs aim to serve all community members. In fact, most local funding observed in the Hampton Roads region is allocated to the general public.



While Veterans can still benefit from these programs, a lack of Veteran-specific programs and funding can hinder Veterans' access to services. Community funds directed towards Veterans are often limited, typically coming from local foundations or giving circles in smaller amounts or as one-time grants, rather than substantial, ongoing support. This can put smaller nonprofits at a disadvantage since it takes time and resources to apply for multiple grants from numerous agencies and foundations.

Reports from providers indicate that a delay in payments from insurance or governmental payers created a strain on operations and service delivery. Community funds also appeared to be directed towards more visible or established cities or populations and not necessarily aligned with areas or those most in need. A lack of local analytics for these communities could have also played a role in the sociopolitical decision of where to allocate funds.

HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM

There are multiple services available for homeless Veterans in the Hampton Roads area.

Program / Organization	What They Do / Services Offered	How It Helps Reduce Suicide Risk among Veterans
VA Hampton Health Care – Homeless Veteran Care	If a veteran is homeless or at risk, VA Hampton offers a <i>homeless services care coordinator</i> who helps with immediate food and shelter (both transitional and permanent), job training, life skills, education, assistance with re-entry from jail, financial support, treatment for addiction/depression, health & dental care.	Provides safety, structure, and continuity – stable housing + treatment for addiction or mental health; helps reduce crisis situations; prevents downward spirals (eviction, addiction, unemployment) which are risk factors for suicide.
VetsHouse, Inc.	A nonprofit that provides a 12-month program (not a shelter per se) with group living quarters, help with employment, transportation, life-skills, development, budgeting, etc.	The extended stay + support gives veterans time to stabilize, rebuild, create structure, reduce isolation and stress, improve self worth which are protective factors. Completion of their program leads to self-sufficiency.
Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), via Hampton Roads Community Action Program	Provides short-term assistance for very low income Veteran families either to prevent homelessness (eviction notices, hotel/motel stays, moving towards permanent housing) or very recently homeless to help re-house quickly.	Preventing homelessness or minimizing time homeless reduces stress, trauma; helps veterans stay connected to family, services, maintaining mental health, reducing risk of suicidal ideation.
Virginia Supportive Housing (VSH), Hampton Roads	Through its supportive housing programs (e.g. Housing First, permanent supportive housing with case management and social connection, on-site services) includes veterans among residents.	Stable housing (permanent or long term), supportive services, social connection, ability to address comorbidities (mental health, physical health, substance use) help reduce suicide risk.
Veteran's HomeFront (VHF)	Community nonprofit with mission to bridge gaps for homeless, at-risk, transitioning veterans – offering peer navigation, resource coordination, housing placements, etc.	Directly addresses homelessness and suicide by helping veterans exit homelessness, get connected to services, and providing social / peer support which buffers risk.
Support programs like Hope Exists (Veterans Outreach)	Funded in part by the SSG Fox Grant, performs mobile outreach to reconnect veterans with services (including VA services) among homeless or disengaged populations.	Outreach is crucial: homeless veterans may not be aware of or able to connect with VA / behavioral health / housing services; outreach increases access, reduces isolation, helps to prevent suicide by connecting to supports.



HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

Despite the programs that exist, challenges and gaps were observed in this region. These include capacity limitations and geographic accessibility, which make it difficult for all who need help to get it. A major issue is the lack of integration of mental health and suicide prevention services into many homeless programs, creating a disconnect for Veterans who need this critical support. There are problems with data sharing and coordination among key organizations like the VA, nonprofits, housing agencies, and behavioral health systems. Many homeless programs depend on unstable funding, making it difficult to scale or sustain services over time. Furthermore, homeless Veterans may distrust systems or feel stigmatized when seeking help, creating a barrier to serving this population. Lastly, providing comprehensive wrap-around supports, such as employment assistance and case management, is resource-intensive and puts a strain on these programs.



EMPLOYMENT

Employment programs are an essential element in the suicide prevention toolkit for Veterans because they may provide individuals with a sense of purpose, social connection, and financial stability.

Program / Organization	What they provide for veteran employment / workforce development	Relevant strengths for suicide prevention (or protective factors)
Virginia Works / Virginia Workforce Development Agency	Job referral, job training & placement assistance; career counseling; developing individual employment plans; connecting veterans to apprenticeships or training providers. Virginia Works	Helps veterans re-enter workforce, build skills, find stable employment – reduces financial and psychosocial stressors.
Virginia Employment Commission (VEC)	Services for veterans, job seeker supports; job banking; labor market data; connecting veterans with employers; set up via Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) staff.	The DVOP/LVER model provides targeted, often individualized support, which helps with job readiness and follow-through.
Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS): V3 (Virginia Values Veterans) Program & V3 Transition Program	V3 trains employers to be veteran-friendly; helps transitioning service members & spouses; provides peer-to-peer support, resume review, connection to V3 certified companies, referrals.	Helps lower transition stress, improves fit of employer environment, may reduce frustrations and failure to launch that can contribute to despair.
STEM Fleet-Forward Initiative (Tidewater Community College / ONR / Military Ed / Workforce Initiative)	For military-related individuals (veterans, service members, dependents), this creates a pipeline for STEM education & careers; academic support; recognizing military experience; linking to jobs in Hampton Roads defense/tech industries.	STEM jobs often offer better pay, long-term stability and opportunities; this kind of pathway can offer upward mobility and meaning.
Eggleston Services – Warrior Bridge program	Employment support for veterans with disabilities: connections to resources, services, and employment through Eggleston's business units; assist veterans to move to sustained employment.	Supports a group at particularly high risk (veterans with disabilities), helps restore self-sufficiency, reduces isolation and dependency.
Employer Connect / Job Networking Events (e.g., Hampton Roads Military Community Employer Connect, Peninsula)	Weekly or regular events where veterans, transitioning service members, families can meet with V3-certified employers, learn about jobs, network.	Facilitates connections, reduces barriers to employer awareness of veterans, improves confidence / motivation.

EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

Veteran employment support programs observed in Hampton Roads are faced with a number of challenges. Veterans often face difficulties translating their military skills and experience into civilian terms that employers understand, which can lead to under-utilized credentials and a lack of recognition of military experience. High risk Veterans, such as those with behavioral health challenges or a history of instability also face hurdles, particularly when workplace adjustment assistance is not available. Furthermore, Veterans who lack reliable transportation are also at risk for job retention, which is crucial for long-term success.

EDUCATION

Education plays a pivotal role in preventing Veteran suicide. By fostering awareness and reducing stigma, educational initiatives are able to equip individuals with the tools they need to identify and respond to signs of distress. A number of initiatives and programs dedicated to enhancing this type of education were observed throughout the Hampton Roads region.



Several key education and training programs are available in Hampton Roads to support suicide prevention. These include the VA S.A.V.E. Training, Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS), and LivingWorks training programs. The Virginia Department of Education also provides resources for schools to raise awareness about suicide prevention. The Recognize Talk Act's: Suicide Prevention Toolkit offers educational materials and social media templates to help schools educate students and staff about the warning signs of suicide and how to access help during a crisis.

While Hampton Roads has several strong educational programs for Veteran suicide prevention, significant gaps remain. These included a limited ability to reach high-risk groups, a lack of integration with other services, and challenges with standardizing programs, ensuring long-term sustainability, and effectively evaluating their outcomes.

ACCESS TO BENEFITS SERVICES

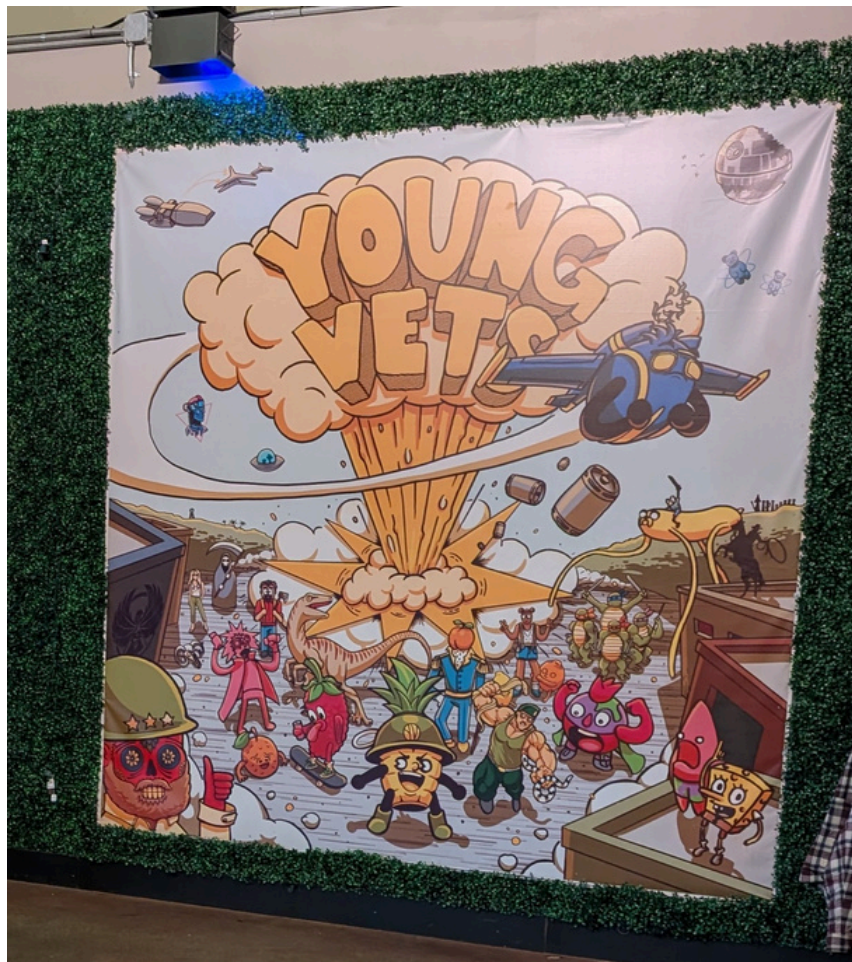
Veterans in Hampton Roads have access to a variety of benefits and services aimed at suicide prevention. These resources are provided by federal, state, and local agencies, as well as community organizations. The VA Hampton Health Care system offers comprehensive support, including emergency and crisis support, care coordination, and an array of behavioral health services. At the state level, the Virginia Department of Veteran Services (DVS) provides resources through its Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) program. Additionally, the Virginia Veterans Network also serves as a central hub for Veterans and their families to connect with a wide range of services and resources.

ACCESS TO BENEFITS SERVICES (CONTINUED)

Several local organizations in Hampton Roads provide additional support, including:

- Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board: Offers 24/7 crisis services and a peer warmline for mental health support
- Hampton Roads Community Health Center: Provides free or reduced-cost health services, including mental health care.
- Virginia Supportive Housing: Assists Veterans in finding stable housing solutions.
- Bon Secours Care-A-Van: Delivers mobile health services to underserved communities.

While Hampton Roads has a range of Veteran suicide prevention resources, several critical gaps remain, limiting their efficacy. There is limited awareness of available programs, particularly among Veterans not engaged with the VA or community organizations. Service delivery is often fragmented, creating risks during transition to civilian life. High-risk populations, such as women and homeless Veterans, often lack tailored support, and available funding is sometimes underutilized. Furthermore, prevention efforts are hindered by inconsistent training, limited integration with behavioral health and benefits services, and stigma surrounding mental health. These challenges, along with insufficient data collection, call for a more coordinated outreach effort that will require culturally competent programs, sustainable funding, and robust evaluation mechanisms.





CONCLUSION

The Hampton Roads region possesses a strong network of federal, state, and local resources dedicated to supporting all of its residents. The community appears to be actively engaged and committed to improving the quality of life for Veterans in their community. While a range of Veteran suicide prevention resources are available, this landscape analysis reveals significant gaps that limit the effectiveness of these efforts. The primary challenges identified across multiple areas include a lack of centralized regional strategy, fragmented service delivery, and inconsistent outreach to high-risk Veteran populations. Other critical barriers include underutilized funding, insufficient data collection, and the persistent stigma around mental health. Expanding access to mental health support and addressing substance misuse issues is critical to successfully addressing these risk factors. Efforts to address and prevent other health issues, such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, are essential to addressing physical risk factors related to suicide risk as well. Moving forward, the community must focus on creating a coordinated, data-driven approach that prioritizes targeted outreach, integrates services, and builds a sustainable support infrastructure.

Results Summary		
EXCELLENT	AVERAGE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP The Hampton Roads area has strong leaders who are committed to serving Veterans and preventing suicide. The leaders have adopted the suicide mortality review process recognizing the need for collaboration to address this critical issue.	OUTREACH The Hampton Road Community has limited interaction with veterans and their families who are not actively seeking services. Organizations in the community depend on veterans and their family members to reach out to them, rather than proactively offering support. Additionally, these organizations primarily use basic social media and their websites for communication. Former service members and their families often struggle to find information about where to go in the community for holistic support.	USE OF TECHNOLOGY Technology cohesion does not exist within the community. Key service providers have segmented technology platforms minimizing effective and secure communication among partners. Outcomes are tracked by each individual organization making analysis of the community's service and support impacts and identification of gaps difficult.

Results Summary		
EXCELLENT	AVERAGE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
AVAILABILITY OF HEALTHCARE The Hampton Roads area excels in access and availability of healthcare for military personnel, veterans, and their families. A plethora of choices are conveniently located throughout the area, and many transportation options allow for full access to services. EMPLOYMENT The Hampton Roads area in Virginia demonstrates effectiveness in veteran employment programs. The area has implemented several initiatives to support veteran employment, focusing on training, networking, and direct placement services.	PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES In Hampton Roads, community efforts for veterans largely focus on crisis response and mental health, with limited proactive engagement in building relationships or providing meaningful activities. While some national programs and seasonal events exist, opportunities are unevenly distributed—mostly in Southern Hampton Roads area. HOUSING PROGRAMS The Hampton Roads area in Virginia has adopted a comprehensive approach to tackling homelessness. This strategy combines emergency shelter initiatives, permanent housing solutions, and coordinated efforts from non-profit organizations, religious groups, and government agencies. However, the Hampton Roads area faces a significant shortage of affordable housing, resulting in placing veterans in the low to moderate income range at risk.	USE OF FUNDING/GRANTS The Hampton Roads area of Virginia effectively utilizes federal, state, and private funding to support community programs. However, funding sources are not sustainable, are not focused on Veterans, and are limited in their availability. EDUCATION While Hampton Roads has several strong educational programs for veteran suicide prevention, gaps exist in reach, targeting high-risk groups, integration with services, standardization, sustainability, and outcome evaluation.

SOURCES

Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy, Old Dominion University. (2024). Part 6: The graying of Hampton Roads. In *The state of the region: Hampton Roads 2024* (pp. 137–169). Old Dominion University. https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1214&context=sor_reports

Federal Communications Commission. (n.d.). Fixed broadband deployment data from FCC form 477. Retrieved May 14, 2021, from <https://www.fcc.gov/general/broadband-deployment-data-fcc-form-477>

Hampton, Virginia. (n.d.). Census 2020. Retrieved October 2, 2025, from <https://www.hampton.gov/3666/Census-2020>

Hampton City Schools. (2024, October). Hampton City Schools reports a 97.93% on-time graduation rate and 0.5% dropout rate. Hampton City Schools. <https://www.hampton.k12.va.us/news/Oct24/GradRate.html>

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission. (n.d.). Hampton Roads Economic Monthly. Retrieved October 2, 2025, from <https://www.hrpdcva.gov/330/Hampton-Roads-Economic-Monthly>

Hughes, K. (2025, September 18). Young adults leaving Hampton Roads for rural areas amid rising costs. WAVY.com. <https://www.wavy.com/news/local-news/young-adults-leaving-hampton-roads-for-rural-areas-amid-rising-costs/>

ProPublica. (2018, October). Miseducation | Hampton City Public Schools. ProPublica. Retrieved October 2, 2025, from <https://projects.propublica.org/miseducation/district/5101800>

Russell, B. E., Dickson, D., Tomlinson, K., Shiner, B., Bartels, S. J., & Bickmore, T. W. (2024). Sociodemographic and clinical characteristics associated with veterans' digital needs. *JAMA Network Open*, 7(6), e2416887.

United Way of South Hampton Roads. (2025). 2025 Community Indicators Dashboard. GHRconnects. Retrieved October 2, 2025, from <https://www.ghrconnects.org/>

U.S. Census Bureau. (2021, August 25). VIRGINIA: 2020 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/virginia.html>

Virginia Department of Health. (n.d.). Drug overdose deaths. Virginia Drug Overdose Data. Retrieved October 2, 2025, from <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/drug-overdose-data/overdose-deaths/>

13News Now. (2023, May 24). Virginia overdose death rates rising in Newport News, Hampton. <https://www.13newsnow.com/article/news/health/virginia-overdose-rates-rise-newport-news-hampton/291-dc4d6e5d-9e09-4735-a6d9-07b84102bdf7>



AMERICA'S WARRIOR PARTNERSHIP

**TOGETHER, WE
CAN DO BETTER**

