



Significant Other Involvement in Veteran Safety Planning

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Collaborative safety planning is part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' standard suicide care. While safety planning can help a veteran identify sources of social support, little is known about the feasibility and acceptability of involving family or friends in the actual development of the plan.

Study participants included 29 veterans and 4 concerned significant others (CSOs)—for example, a spouse, partner, parent, adult child, sibling, other family member, or friend involved in the veteran's care. All participants completed a semi-structured interview about the feasibility and acceptability of involving a CSO in the development of a safety plan for veterans at risk for suicide. Researchers used a systematic content analysis to explore themes in the interview transcripts.

Most of the veterans and all of the CSOs felt it would be acceptable to involve a CSO in safety planning. Many veterans indicated that their preferred CSO would be a friend, spouse/partner, or adult child. Veterans identified several advantages to CSO involvement, including comfort, reassurance, connection, and emotional and practical support. CSOs identified concrete ways they could help the veteran, such as checking in daily and recognizing warning signs.

While all veterans identified advantages to CSO safety planning involvement, some veterans identified disadvantages, including concerns that it could burden the CSO or change their relationship with the veteran. The authors concluded that CSO involvement in safety planning could create an additional safety net for preventing a suicidal crisis among some veterans.

DeBeer, B. B., Matthieu, M. M., Kittel, J. A., Degutis, L. C., Clafferty, S., Qualls, N., & Morissette, S. B. (2019). Quality improvement evaluation of the feasibility and acceptability of adding a concerned significant other to safety planning for suicide prevention with veterans. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 41(1), 4–20.

Spark Extra! Register for an [upcoming webinar](#) [1] on promoting connectedness among veterans and military personnel.

Links within this resource

[1] https://events-na1.adobeconnect.com/content/connect/c1/1002235226/en/events/event/private/1318643947/1686602642/event_registration.html?sco-id=3087887828

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Suicide Prevention Resource Center

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