

US reports spike in suicides among youngest vets

January 10 2014, by Kevin Freking

There has been a sharp increase in the suicide rate among the youngest U.S. male veterans, and a smaller but still significant jump among women who served in the military, the Department of Veterans Affairs said Thursday.

However, the VA found "no clear change" in the overall suicide rate among all veterans using VA health facilities.

Dr. Jan Kemp, who oversees suicide prevention efforts at the VA, said she expected to see an increase among the youngest veterans based on rising [suicide rates](#) in the military, but called the numbers alarming, particularly for those in their early 20s. She said too many younger veterans are going to the VA to get care for their physical wounds, but many don't seek treatment for longer-term mental health issues as well.

"They really haven't even been out long enough to maybe recognize they're having longer-term issues with PTSD or with depression," she said, referring to [post-traumatic stress disorder](#). "I think they're still kind of in that invincible period. There's somewhat of a culture out there within the military and within these young kids that they don't need help and they should have all of the answers."

Treatment works, she said, and it's important for veterans to seek care.

The department said the suicide rate increased nearly 44 percent for male veterans between the ages of 18-29 from 2009 to 2011. During the

same period, the rate among [female veterans](#) increased more than 11 percent.

The VA's latest analysis reflects data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for 2010 and 2011. Suicide rates among veterans are higher than non-[veterans](#) for both men and women.

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