



## **Randomized Program Evaluation: Caring Letters Suicide Prevention Campaign**

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We have continued to work with research partners and OMHSP to identify alternative opportunities to conduct a randomized evaluation of suicide risk mitigation strategies. One of these, Caring Letters, is described below.

This project was new in FY19. The suicide prevention program in VA Central Office is planning to provide caring letters to veterans calling the Veterans Crisis Line. Caring letters are a series of 8 letters sent over one year that include decision support, help with coping skills, and assistance navigating the healthcare system. OMHSP plans to evaluate whether caring letters sent more frequently (14 vs 8 times a year) or letters signed by a peer rather than a provider are more likely to improve mental health outcomes for transitioning service members. PEPReC is leading the design and analysis of the randomized evaluation of these caring letter modalities. Using a parallel randomized controlled trial (RCT) design, all transitioning service members will be randomly assigned to one of 4 conditions (peer signatory 8 times/year, peer signatory 14 times/year, provider signatory 8 times/year, provider signatory 14 times/year). This work will be done in partnership with experts in suicide prevention at OMHSP, Little Rock and Puget Sound. Goals of this project are to evaluate the effects of caring letters on clinical outcomes and VA health care utilization rates, to evaluate the effects of different versions of caring letters on clinical outcomes, and to conduct a budget impact analysis of the costs of implementing the caring letters program.

Future activities:

We will continue to participate in design and analysis activities related to the caring letters evaluation.