

2022 SCAC Awards Program

This application is for:

J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award

Project Title

Pickens County Crisis Intercept Mapping for Suicide Prevention for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

County/Counties

Pickens County

Staff Contact

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Job Title

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Please provide a summary of your entry (no more than 100 words) to be used in a handout for the awards competition and included in press releases/publications. You may either type the summary in the text box or upload it as an attachment below.

Pickens County ranks highest in the state for suicide deaths per 100,000 population and has sought to raise mental health awareness and provide prevention resources to our community. Our efforts in the SAMHSA-led Crisis Intercept Mapping for Suicide Prevention for Service Members, Veterans and their Families have included educational training, providing avenues for interagency communication and resource-sharing. While these efforts have focused on one of the most vulnerable demographics of the population, resources have been shared with the public at-large and have the potential to reach a much broader portion of our community.

Presentations may include more than one speaker; however, each speaker should be aware that the 10-minute time limit is strictly enforced. Please list the name, title, and e-mail address of each speaker:

Name	Title	Email
Jessica Varney	Collaboration Manager	jessicav@co.pickens.sc.us
Chris Bowers	ED Manager Prisma Health Baptist Easley	Chris.Bowers@prismahealth.org

To submit these attachments online, please upload Microsoft Word or PDF documents below.



PCCIMSuicidePreventionSMVF.JMG2022.pdf



PCCIMSuicidePreventionSMVF.Letters.JMG2...



PCCIMSuicidePreventionSMVF.Support.JMG...

Please check boxes for attachments you will submit as part of your application

A concise Project Description to explain the purpose and significance of the entry (up to eight pages). Please follow the prescribed naming convention for your Project Description file.

Any additional materials needed to support your application (up to five pages).

Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award applications must include letters of support from the chief administrative officers for each participating political subdivision.



PICKENS COUNTY
SOUTH CAROLINA

**CRISIS INTERCEPT MAPPING
FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION
FOR SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS AND FAMILIES**

2022 J. MITCHELL GRAHAM AWARD SUBMISSION

Pickens County Crisis Intercept Mapping for Suicide Prevention for Service Members, Veterans, and Families (SMVF).

Benefit/Importance of Project

1. Why was this project undertaken?

In 2019, SCDHEC published their Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injuries in South Carolina data from 2016. It was brought to the attention of County Council and the Administrator that Pickens County had the highest suicide death rates from 2012-2016 (5-years) per 100,000 population. This was shocking and called for a response. The Administrator convened an ad-hoc committee in the fall of 2019 composed of county employees that could share information and resources, including representatives from the Administrator's Office, Sheriff's Office, Emergency Services, and Coroner's Office. The committee worked steadily and planned and executed a "lunch and learn" event in February 2020 that brought the issue of suicide prevention to the forefront of county staff's minds. Immediately following this event, the County faced another challenge: COVID-19. This slowed the committee's progress, but the need for suicide prevention was still prevalent. In 2020, SCDHEC released their Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injuries in South Carolina data for 2017. Pickens County was once again ranked the county with the highest suicide death rates from 2013-2017 (5-years) per 100,000 population.

In December of 2020, the Pickens County Administrator was approached by the South Carolina Secretary of Veterans' Affairs regarding participation in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Crisis Intercept Mapping for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) Suicide Prevention program. Our county's Veterans' Affairs Officer responded to apply for this opportunity to address a community need, and Pickens County subsequently became the first county in South Carolina to be chosen for this program. The focus on our service members, veterans, and their families as a demographic that is at an increased risk for suicide would be a huge step toward addressing the overall mental health awareness and suicide prevention needs of citizens in our county.

Since effective crisis care requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach, bringing together community stakeholders from local, regional, and state levels and from both military and civilian sectors is important, especially when more than half of military veterans do not receive health care through the VA system and instead seek care in community settings (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs). SAMHSA and its SMVF Technical Assistance (TA) Center at Policy Research Associates, Inc. designed and developed the Crisis Intercept Mapping process for SMVF Suicide Prevention to help communities like Pickens County strengthen the delivery of evidence-based suicide prevention policies and practices.

The SMVF Crisis Intercept Map for Suicide Prevention is a tool that helps community stakeholders visualize how at-risk SMVF flow through the four key "intercept points" in the crisis care system which provide opportunities for diverting at-risk SMVF to appropriate and effective prevention and support services: First Contact, Acute Care, Care Transitions, and Ongoing Treatment and Recovery Support.

We believe that suicide is preventable and even one death by suicide is too many. We are striving to decrease the suicide rate through this coordinated approach. Additionally, by raising awareness through social media posts, newspaper articles, and Council resolutions, we are combatting the stigma attached to mental health issues. By normalizing discussion of mental health, we increase the likelihood that individuals will seek the help they need rather than suffering in silence. With each training offered, we increase the number of

educated individuals in the community that can recognize the warning signs and assist individuals by connecting them to the proper resources.

2. What is the significance of this project to your community as a whole? How does it relate in importance to the other problems in your community?

As stated above, Pickens County has the highest suicide death rate in the state, though we are the 14th most populous county. That we are leading the way in this unfortunate statistic is cause for concern and requires us to investigate possible causes as well as steps to reduce that rate. Through the course of this project, connections were made across the county, region, and state to link stakeholders and open channels of communication that continue to allow information, resources, and ideas to flow. The collaboration of the various stakeholders has proved beneficial beyond the bounds of the project. While the focus on SMVFs remains at the forefront of the task force, the benefits have spread into the larger population, through educational efforts to bring attention to the stigma of mental health issues and suicide.

Additionally, Pickens County, as a county included in the Appalachian Region that is heavily impacted by what the Appalachian Regional Commission labels “diseases of despair,” has been affected by the opioid crisis and experiences the effects of substance use disorder in our communities. The link between mental health and behavioral health issues and services is evident and the employees of our local Behavioral Health Services office and Mental Health Clinic work closely together and have strengthened ties in part due to the participation in this particular effort.

When endeavoring to prevent suicides, the task is as monumental as it is vital to public health. The task cannot be accomplished alone. Breaking out of the silos we set up in order to cross barriers between government offices, non-profits, medical care providers, and community groups involves networking. Building the relationships between the individual partners is critical to success. In the SCAC Institute of Government of class, Building Effective Intergovernmental Relations, Jon B. Pierce highlights the importance of the human aspect of intergovernmental relations, stating: “The human element is paramount,” and “relations between officials, elected as well as appointed, are not characterized by one-time, formal agreements; are continues, day to day.” The strengthening of relationships and communication between local, regional, and state level actors has greatly benefitted Pickens County as we work toward the goal of preventing suicides and will prove valuable going forward as other issues or projects are addressed in the future.

3. How much of the county’s population is benefited by the project? In what specific ways are different groups of citizens within the county better off than before?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 7,725 veterans in Pickens County (2015-2019). That is approximately 6% of our county population. However, that number does not include the active service members, reserve members, and family members that also call Pickens County home. We hope that though this project is aimed at SMVFs as the target group, the benefit is far reaching, as the civilian population also sees the information we share.

Furthermore, our county first responders, those in Fire, EMS, Emergency Services, and Sheriff’s Department, have also benefited from this CIM effort. Through involvement from Emergency Services and the Sheriff’s Office, additional focus has been brought to mental health of our first responders. Many times, these individuals are first on the scene of accidents and other tragic events. These incidents can take a toll on their mental health. Though they are not military, these first responders can experience PTSD and otherwise have

their work experience impact their mental health. By raising the awareness and promoting education, the county has also ensured these individuals are encouraged to access the care and resources they need. These physically and mentally taxing careers weight heavily on our first responders.

4. What degree of success did the project attain? What major objectives were achieved? Provide data where possible.

Through the CIM process, our group assessed the community crisis care systems and services available to Pickens County SMVF citizens. We developed a tailored crisis intercept map for our community hand-in-hand with an action plan to improve crisis care services. The map itself is a visual representation of the flow of care someone could receive as they enter the crisis care system. For example, when someone calls 911, Pickens County EMS may be their first contact. They will then receive acute care at a local emergency room, such as Baptist Easley Hospital. At Baptist Easley Hospital emergency room, patients are screened for suicidality using the Columbia scale. Additionally, it is part of the intake process to ask the question: "Have you or a member of your immediate family served in the military?" This allows individuals to self-identify as SMVF and allows them to be connected to additional resources. At that point the SMVF can be referred to an organization that specializes in care transitions, such as Upstate Warrior Solution. The final phase of the crisis care process is ensuring the individual receives ongoing treatment and recovery support from SCDMH, etc. There are multiple ways someone might enter the crisis care system, including being arrested. One example of the development of interagency protocols for crisis care coordination is that the Pickens County Sheriff's Office has a memorandum of understanding with Upstate Warrior Solution to refer veterans who come into the detention center for additional resources and support. Team members were educated throughout the process regarding how to implement best practices in SMVF suicide prevention.

We excelled at strengthening partnerships among military and civilian community stakeholders. An indicator of success for this project is the increased collaboration and communication between stakeholders in the community that continues after the initial mapping process concluded. This human relation aspect of the project is difficult to quantify. However, the active participation of the team membership during the Cim process and the continued participation in monthly virtual calls of approximately 10-12 team members during each scheduled meeting attests to the value these individuals find in collaborating to best provide services to citizens of Pickens County.

Pickens County identified the following goals in our action plan:

1. Identify and Screen: Increase military cultural competency among community members, first responders, health providers. Raise awareness.
2. Safety Planning: Increase number of high-risk SMVF receiving safety plans in crisis/emergency/acute care settings, state level support for safety planning through SC DVA.
3. Lethal Means: Increase lethal means safety awareness among Veterans, Firefighters, Emergency Services and Chaplains across the County, supplemented with additional resources for Veterans in crisis.
4. Supportive Contacts: Increase capacity and use of a rapid, supportive follow up protocol for high-risk SMVF after discharge from acute care settings, peer to peer connection of veterans/combat veterans. Integration with Combined Arms and Peer Pathfinders.

Activities to date:

- Integration of Pickens County team lead in the SC Governor's Challenge team (a statewide effort which began in 2020) January 2021

- Pickens County Sheriff's Office and Upstate Warrior Solution signed an MOU in February 2021
- Team Lead Guest Speaker for TATT Chat (Ten at the Top) – March 2021
- Blog post for UpstateVibe365 online regional blog for Ten at the Top – April 2021
- Article in the Pickens Courier – April 13th 2021
- Team Lead guest speaker at American Legion Post 11 – April 2021
- Council passed a Resolution for Mental Health Month in May 2021
- Article in the Sentinel-Progress – May 13th 2021
- Team Lead guest speaker at Pickens Rotary Club – June 2021
- SMVF CIM subpage created under Veterans Affairs on the County Website – July 2021
- Promotion of UWS Veteran Culture Inclusion Training free virtual event on 7/8/2021 to Pickens County Employers through Alliance Pickens
- Contacted SC AOP Mental Health Mobile Crisis brought info and informed County VA Officer Sherry Harris and staff about their mobile crisis care – August 2021
- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Firearms and Suicide Prevention fliers distributed to County VA Office – August 2021
- Resolution for Suicide Prevention Month passed by Council in September 2021
- Lime Green awareness ribbons displayed in the County Courtyard throughout September 2021 for Suicide Prevention Month and in coordination with NAMI Go Lime Green for Mental Health
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number displayed on all County informational televisions throughout the Administration Facility in September 2021
- Talk Saves Lives Suicide Prevention Webinar on September 15, 2021 through the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, open to the community
- Cooperated with NAMI on their Go Lime Green campaign at local middle & high school football games for mental health awareness, volunteering at the Pickens Middle game September 23, 2021
- Lunch and Learn: Mental Health Awareness event in collaboration with the SC National Guard on September 23, 2021
- SAMHSA's SMVF TA Center shared the Ten at the Top article as a reference in their email about the "Across the Intercepts" call series – December 2021 and January 2022
- Group tour of Mental Health America's Greenville call center January 26, 2022 and overview of capacity for implementation of 9-8-8 as well as awareness of funding needs.
- Pickens County Gun Lock and Safety Plan Pilot launched February 1, 2022 as a collaboration between Pickens County Veterans Affairs, Pickens County Sheriff's Office, Pickens County Emergency Services, and the Columbia VA Health Center.
- Reconvening of the Pickens County Behavioral Health Task Force in February 2022 with contacts made throughout the CIM process
- Beginning integration with Combined Arms platform through the SCDVA to bring Pickens County on board as a partner in the pilot program - March 2022
- Partnering with NAMI to bring "Ending the Silence" program to High School Junior ROTC classes – April 2022
- Mental Health First Aid Course by retired Marine Corp veteran – May 2022

Project Effort/Difficulty

1. What did your county have to do to accomplish its objectives? If your county worked with another local government or consultant, how was the work divided?

In January 2021, Pickens County was welcomed into the SAMHSA program and began a roughly six-month process that involved assembling a team of stakeholders and meeting virtually with the Technical Assistance Center staff for virtual modules of education, data gathering, mapping of resources, and identification of gaps. The Pickens County Team Lead assembled a team of stakeholders from local, regional, and state level organizations. The TA Center staff coordinated the virtual modules and compiled the data sent from our CIM partners into a Crisis Intercept Map showing the various intercepts in our crisis care system. The Team Lead coordinates continued monthly meetings to maintain momentum of the project.

Timeline:

1/14/21 – Orientation with TA Center and begin team building

2/22/21 – Virtual Module 1

3/19/21 – Virtual Module 2

Community Information Gathering Tool survey completed by participants

5/6/21 – Virtual Module 3 – Pickens County's CIM & formation of action plan

7/1/21 – Follow Up Call with Dr. Hogan and TA Center

8/24/21 to present – Team Lead instituted monthly virtual team meetings to maintain connections

Pickens County had the benefit of participating in the Crisis Intercept Mapping process at the same time as the state level South Carolina Governor's Challenge Team was building out their state-wide program to address SMVF suicides. The SC Governor's Challenge Group 1, the Upstate SC regional team, coordinated with the Pickens County team throughout the CIM process to enhance suicide prevention efforts.

2. What challenges occurred during the project? Were there any community concerns?

One of the challenges during this project was the coordination of such a varied group of community stakeholders. With a wide range of participants, each with demanding jobs and workloads, it was consistently a challenge to coordinate the schedules of the team meetings. One of the most impressive aspects has been the consistent participation, which is a testament to how much each team member sees this project as important and needed in our community.

The community has been generally supportive of our efforts to promote suicide prevention. One of the action items our team identified was the importance of lethal means safety. Properly securing firearms and medications is an important step in suicide prevention. As a county with citizenry that believe strongly in the right to bear arms, protected by the Second Amendment to the Constitution, our team felt strongly that we should recognize the prevalence of firearms in our county as well as the importance of empowering gun owners to be responsible with their weapons, especially if experiencing a time of crisis. With our free gun lock distribution program, we allow gun owners access to a tool that will allow them to safely store their firearms while still maintaining possession. Storing their weapon unloaded and locked adds additional time should someone reach for a weapon in a moment of crisis. In suicide prevention, it is beneficial to have time on your side. Team members have been concerned that the message of lethal means safety be presented in a way that is not perceived as threatening to the right to bear arms. Rather, the goal has been to provide a tool for safe and responsible storage that individuals can voluntarily request without any fear of being labeled.

3. What were the nature and extent of the county government's efforts to alleviate the problem(s)? How difficult was it to accomplish the project's goals and/or objectives?

Pickens County served as the connecting point for the various community partners, and several staff members served on the team. The County Council supported the effort to raise awareness of suicide prevention and promote mental health and passed resolutions to that effect. The County Administration, Veterans Affairs Office, Emergency Services Division, and Sheriff's Office collaborated to establish our free gun lock and safety plan pilot program, providing a resource to the community to keep weapons safely stored, especially during a time of crisis.

4. Was financing the project an obstacle? Were there any unusual factors inherent in financing the project?

Financing the project was not an obstacle. The cost of the program was covered through SAMHSA SMVF TA Center. Additional expenditures for supplies for special events, such as the training days, lunch and learns, and so forth have been graciously covered by the contingency fund as authorized by the County Administrator.

5. Did any agencies, citizen groups, or other organizations assist your county with this project? Did their participation pose any particular challenges or offer any unique contributions or benefits?

The Pickens County CIM Team involved partners from the following organizations and agencies:

- 1) American Legion Post 11
- 2) Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Mental Health Clinic
- 3) AnMed Health Cannon Hospital
- 4) Clemson University Office of Military and Veteran Engagement
- 5) Columbia VA Health Care System
- 6) Mental Health of America Greenville County
- 7) National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI SC - Anderson-Oconee-Pickens)
- 8) Pickens County Behavioral Health Services
- 9) Pickens County Emergency Services
- 10) Pickens County Sheriff's Office
- 11) Pickens County Veterans Affairs
- 12) Prisma Health Baptist Easley
- 13) Samaritan's Health Clinic
- 14) South Carolina Department of Mental Health & Office of Suicide Prevention
- 15) South Carolina Department of Veterans' Affairs
- 16) South Carolina Governor's Challenge Team to Prevent Suicide among SMVF
- 17) South Carolina National Guard
- 18) Upstate Warrior Solutions

Coordinating schedules of such a diverse group was a challenge. Each participant had demands on their time from their primary occupation, but thanks to the flexibility offered by virtual meetings and online survey responses, we had an outstanding level of participation from our group. The benefits of such a varied group substantially outweighed the minor inconvenience of coordinating schedules. The wide range of training, knowledge, and lived life experience enhanced our groups ability to cover all the bases for suicide prevention. The connections made between various stakeholders allowed for increased communication during and after the CIM process.

6. Are there any unresolved problems or other goals left to tackle?

There is much more work to be done to decrease the suicide rate in Pickens County. The Crisis Intercept Mapping initiative laid the groundwork, but the consistent implementation over time will be the key to measurable success. This will be an ongoing effort to continually maintain the interpersonal and intergovernmental relationships that facilitate the most efficient and effective crisis care between intercept points.

Additional opportunities for raising awareness and training will continue to be needed. The work of reducing the stigma around mental health issues and suicide is far from complete. However, with every training that allows our citizens to be informed of the warning signs, we increase the number of compassionate individuals in our community equipped to make a difference. With every awareness event promoting mental health, we increase the understanding that mental health issues are health issues and normalize the treatment and recovery. In the same way that someone shouldn't feel embarrassed if they need to see a doctor or take a medication for a physical health condition, someone shouldn't feel embarrassed if they need to see a doctor or take a medication for a mental health condition. As we continue to make it less taboo, we decrease the stigma and increase the odds that those who need mental health care will receive it.

Pickens County is just beginning the work for one of our action items as part of this project: the integration with the Combined Arms platform and the establishment of Peer Pathfinders as part of the Governor's Challenge for Suicide Prevention. These two aspects are led by the SCDVA. Pickens County has been chosen to be one of the first participants in the Combined Arms launch because of the CIM work. Additionally, Pickens County was a location of one of the Peer Pathfinder trainings. As a new program, mentors are being trained currently and mentees will be assigned in the coming weeks after the mentors are trained and ready.

It is the hope of the state level leadership at the SCDVA that the progress made in Pickens County can be leveraged and duplicated across the state in more counties, even without those counties taking on the challenge of participation in the SAMHSA Crisis Intercept Mapping process. This will be an ongoing effort but remains a goal of the Pickens County CIM Team and the SC Governor's Challenge Team.

Project Originality/Innovation

1. Justify the uniqueness of this project. What makes it different from other projects designed to achieve the same objective?

Pickens County, SC was one of 36 Crisis Intercept Mapping teams throughout the entire country at the time we began this process. Furthermore, Pickens County is the only County in SC to be part of the Crisis Intercept Mapping process to date, making our program unique in the state of South Carolina. This program allowed us a guided opportunity to assess and improve our community crisis care systems and services.

2. Do you know of any other similar programs in South Carolina? If so, how is your program different?

There is no other county in South Carolina with Crisis Intercept Mapping for SMVF Suicide Prevention. Similar programs include the SC Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide. This is another SAMHSA-based effort to prevent suicides. These two programs at the county level and state level have cooperated extremely well to make progress on this important public health issue and have found that the collaboration is mutually beneficial.

3. What innovations were required in accomplishing your objectives?

Crisis Intercept Mapping is a relatively new program through SAMHSA; it began in 2018. Pickens County was among the 4th cohort to participate. Pickens County was the first county in SC, and only county to date, to be selected for this program. Our team was exposed to a brand-new method of evaluating the crisis care system and mapping out the various connections between the intercept points. This process required increased communication and collaboration to achieve our objective of building relationships between stakeholders and adequately mapping the crisis care transitions between them.

Additionally, since more than half of military veterans do not receive health care through the VA system and instead seek care in community settings, increasing the understanding of military culture in civilian circles was something our team recognized as a need. We have since promoted military cultural competency training to increase the knowledge base.

Finally, we have endeavored to remove the assumption that to make a difference, specific degrees or credentials are needed. Quite the contrary! The more citizens who are informed and care, the more opportunities we have to reach someone in crisis. You don't have to have a military background or medical degree to be part of this effort to prevent suicides among service members, veterans, and their families. You just have to care!

4. Who provided the creativity and imagination in your project?

Secretary of Veterans' Affairs, Major General William Grimsley, reached out to Pickens County Administrator Ken Roper to encourage participation in the program. Noting the high suicide rate in our county, and due to his involvement with the Governor's Challenge team, Secretary Grimsley felt this would be a great opportunity to make a positive impact in the updates. Jessica Varney, Executive Assistant to the Administrator, was selected as the Team Lead by the Administrator to provide the administrative support needed for coordinating this effort, since the Pickens County Veterans Affairs Office is a small office of our Veterans Affairs Officer and two staff members. The skilled team at the SAMHSA SMVF TA Center provided excellent guidance as our team created the visual map of our local crisis systems and identified resources, gaps, and opportunities for implementing best practices at each intercept point. The continued communication and involvement of all the team stakeholders contributes to the ongoing success of the program.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
)
COUNTY OF PICKENS)

RESOLUTION # 2021-19

A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING SEPTEMBER 2021 AS NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH IN PICKENS COUNTY

WHEREAS, September is nationally recognized as Suicide Prevention Month and is intended to promote awareness of this often-stigmatized subject and educate the public about the suicide prevention resources available to the community; and

WHEREAS, every day in South Carolina, two people die by suicide, nine visit the Emergency Department and five are admitted to the hospital for intentional self-harm injuries; and

WHEREAS, Pickens County previously had the highest combined 5-year suicide rate per 100,000 population from 2013 – 2017 and from 2012-2016 according to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control; and

WHEREAS, Pickens County currently has the second highest combined 5-year suicide rate per 100,000 population from 2014-2018 in the state according to the most recent data from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control; and

WHEREAS, suicide affects all ages and is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-34, the fourth leading cause among people ages 34-54, and the fifth leading cause among people ages 45-54; and

WHEREAS, the suicide rate among our military population in South Carolina is higher than the suicide rate among our civilian population in South Carolina according to data from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Pickens County is actively involved in the Service Members, Veterans, and their families Crisis Intercept Mapping for Suicide Prevention project through SAMSHA and works collaboratively with the South Carolina Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide; and

WHEREAS, the South Carolina General Assembly recently passed and Governor Henry McMaster signed into law the Student Identification Card Suicide Prevention Act, requiring public schools serving seventh through twelfth grade and public and private institutions of higher learning to provide the phone number of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and an additional crisis resource of their choosing on school-issued student identification cards, highlighting the importance of keeping resources readily available, especially for young people for which suicide is a leading cause of death; and

WHEREAS, the National Alliance of Mental Health will be executing their campaign, “Go Lime Green: Mental Health Matters,” at upcoming middle and high school football games in Pickens County during Suicide Prevention Month in order to bring mental health awareness and suicide prevention education to South Carolina youth and the adults who support them; and

WHEREAS, suicide is preventable and suicide prevention is best achieved by a focus across the individual, relationship, family, community, and societal-levels and across all sectors, private and public; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that there never a single reason someone attempts or dies by suicide, but rather suicide and suicide prevention are extremely complex, requiring a comprehensive approach and engaging everyone in the battle to end suicide; and

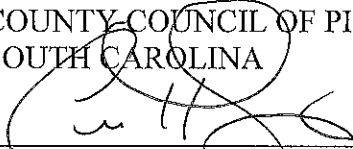
WHEREAS, as South Carolinians we believe our state motto, "Dum Spiro Spero," which is Latin for "While I Breathe, I Hope," and we are compelled to answer the call to continued and further action in the effort to share our hope in the fight against despair felt by those who are at risk of suicide; and

WHEREAS, Pickens County Council wishes to increase awareness of suicide as a preventable public health problem, normalize conversations about mental health and suicide to eliminate stigmas, and show support of and promote the suicide prevention efforts taking place at our local level, throughout our region, and across our state;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Pickens County Council recognizes September 2021 as National Suicide Prevention Month.

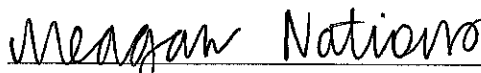
Passed and approved, this 16 day of August, 2021.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF PICKENS COUNTY,
SOUTH CAROLINA


Chris Bowers, Chairman of County Council
Pickens County, South Carolina

(SEAL)

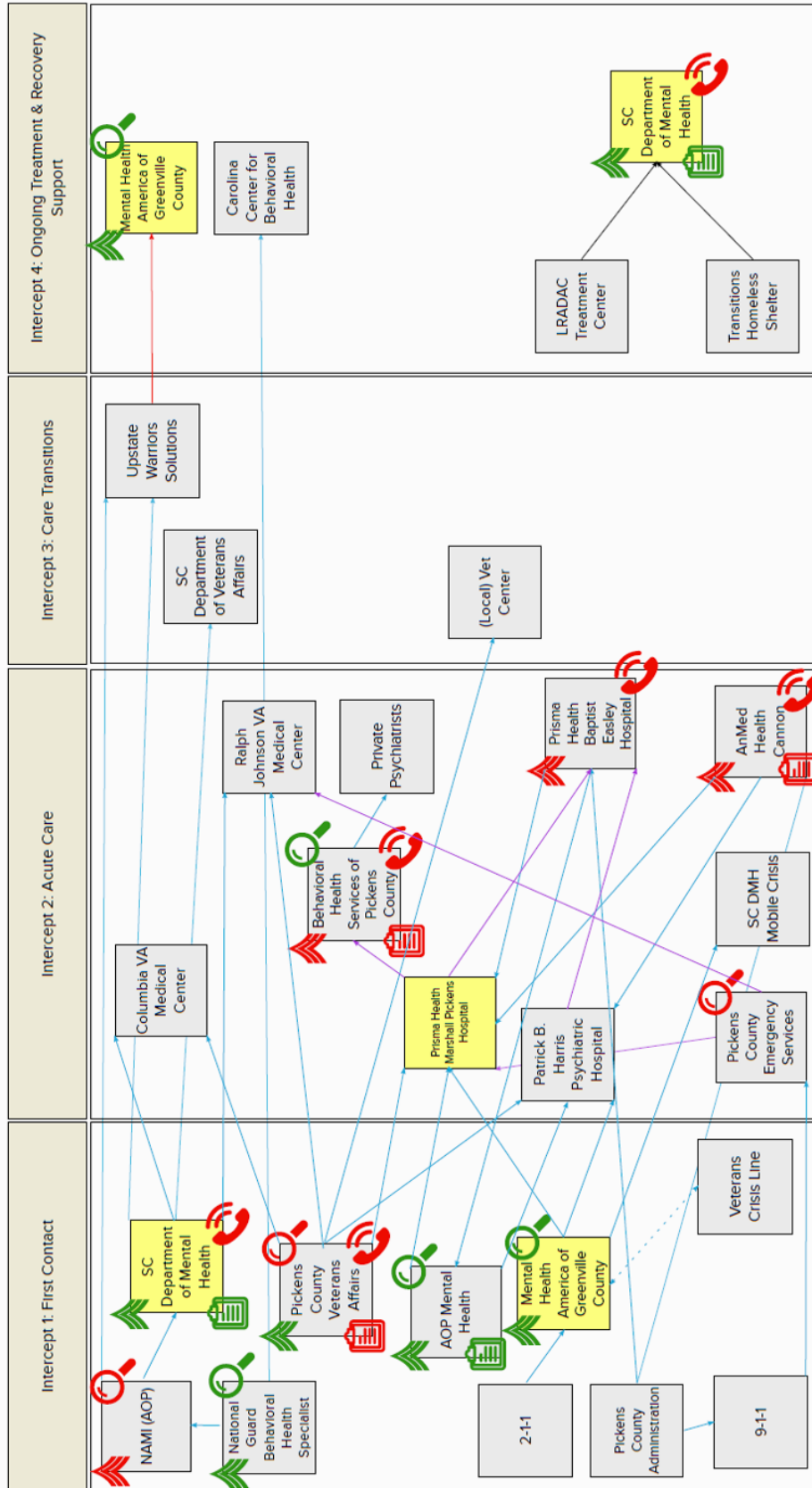
Attest:


Meagan Nations, Clerk of County Council
Pickens County, South Carolina



SAMHSA • SAMVFTA CENTER
 Service Members, Veterans, and their
 Families Technical Assistance Center

THE SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES CRISIS INTERCEPT MAP FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION



Pickens County SMVF Crisis Intercept Map Action Plan

IDENTIFY AND SCREEN	GOAL	ACTION	OUTPUT MEASURE	OUTCOME MEASURE
	<p>Increase military cultural competency among community members, first responders, health providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase military cultural competency training Connect with Military OneSource for military culture training Integrate with Governor's Challenge initiative (Ask the Question) Gun Lock and Safety Plan Pilot Offer MHFA classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of trainings offered # of places resources are shared Bring in other medical services to screen veteran status # of gun locks provided # of safety plans provided # of wallet cards distributed # of classes 	<p>1 - UWS Veteran Culture Inclusion Training free virtual event on 7/8/2021</p> <p>2 – shared on Facebook and on County website.</p> <p>In process through SCDVA</p>
SAFETY PLANNING	<p>Increase number of high-risk SMVF receiving safety plans in crisis/emergency/acute care settings, state level support for safety planning through SC DVA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer MHFA classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of gun locks provided # of safety plans provided # of wallet cards distributed # of classes 	<p>14 gun locks distributed as of 4/30/22</p> <p>Unknown number of safety plans</p> <p>Unknown number of wallet cards</p> <p>1 MHFA class 5/13/22</p>
LETHAL MEANS SAFETY	<p>Increase lethal means safety awareness among Veterans, Firefighters, Emergency Services and Chaplains across the County, supplemented with additional resources for Veterans in crisis and raise awareness to reduce stigma.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Talk Saves Lives webinars Working with gun stores to provide lethal means safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of webinars # of attendees # of participating gun shops 	<p>Change in lethal means safety awareness and awareness of resources. 1 webinar offered to date. 15 attendees.</p> <p>In discussion stage as of May 2022</p>
SUPPORTIVE CONTACTS	<p>Increase capacity and use of a rapid, supportive follow up protocol for high-risk SMVF after discharge from acute care settings, Peer to peer connection among combat Veterans needing assistance with those providing resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer Pathfinders through the SC Gov. Challenge and SCDVA Combined Arms integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of SMVF connected to a peer pathfinder Pickens County resources integrated into platform 	<p>Peer Pathfinder program still in building state per SCDVA</p> <p>Planning meeting in March 2022. Integration expected June 2022.</p>

Tuesday, May 12, 2021 • \$1.00

You just have to care

By Jessica Varney
For The Sentinel-Progress

PICKENS COUNTY

— On the afternoon of Dec. 10, Pickens County received an email from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) inviting our County to be part of a process known as Crisis Intercept Mapping for Suicide Prevention among Service

Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF). Pickens County was selected as one of 10 sites from across the country to participate in SAMHSA's SMVF TA Center's Crisis Intercept Mapping project this spring and is the first county in South Carolina to be chosen.



Varney

across the country to participate in SAMHSA's SMVF TA Center's Crisis Intercept Mapping project this spring and is the first county in South Carolina to be chosen.

See CARE | 5

Care

From page 1

According to the latest data from SCDHHC, Pickens County has the highest combined five-year suicide death rate per 100,000 population in the state.

This unfortunate distinction is something we want to change, and we are hopeful that this program will be a great tool to help prevent suicides among our SMVFs.

The Crisis Intercept Mapping process for SMVF Suicide Prevention will help our community identify the resources, gaps, and opportunities in our crisis care system and strengthen the delivery of evidence-based suicide prevention policies and practices during the time period surrounding an episode of acute care when the risk of suicide is higher.

Within a community crisis system, there are four key "intercept points" that provide opportunities for diverting at-risk SMVF to appropriate and effective prevention and support services: First Contact, Acute Care, Care Transitions, and Ongoing Treatment and Recovery Support.

Since most military veterans do not receive health care through the VA system and

instead seek care in community care settings, and many providers do not consider themselves culturally competent about military and veteran populations, cooperation among varied partners is key. This program seeks to strengthen the partnerships among military and civilian stakeholders for optimal crisis care coordination between various services.

There are many factors involved when a person dies by suicide. Data acquired from the South Carolina Violent Death Reporting System for 2003-2018 shows that in Pickens County a physical health problem was identified as the circumstance for 40.8% of the suicides among our military population, while a physical health problem was identified as the circumstance for 20.2% on our non-military population. A mental health problem was identified as the circumstance in 34.7% of military suicides and in 38.9% of non-military suicides.

Other circumstances identified include depressed mood, alcohol problem, intimate relationship issues, history of or current recipient of behavioral health treatment, non-alcohol related substance abuse, civil legal problem, or other crisis. In order to prevent suicides, it is also important to consider

the means by which a person died by suicide. Military suicide deaths occurred by firearm in 67.4% of cases, by poisoning in 16.3%, and by hanging in 10.2%, compared to non-military suicide deaths by firearm in 51.6% of cases, by poisoning in 25.4%, and by hanging in 17.1%.

Also, 28.6% of suicides with known military status disclosed intent within 30 days prior to injury. Knowing the warning signs and taking them seriously is important. Experts in the field of mental health recommend asking directly about suicide when you notice concerning behavior.

Studies show raising the question itself does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts. Implementing the elements of effective suicide prevention: screening, safety planning, lethal means safety, and supportive contacts, at each of the key intercept points is vital to making a difference and saving lives.

The Pickens County team consists of members in leadership at the local, regional, and state level and both military and civilian participants. Individuals on the team represent Prisma Health Baptist Hospital, Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Mental Health Clinic, Pickens County Behavioral Health,

Samaritan's Health Clinic, Pickens County Sheriff Office, Pickens County Emergency Services, Pickens County Veterans Affairs, American Legion Post 11, Upstate Warrior Solutions, Mental Health of America Greenville County, Clemson University, Easley First Baptist Church, National Alliance on Mental Illness, SC National Guard, South Carolina Department of Mental Health, and South Carolina Department of Veterans' Affairs. The Challenge Team to Prevent Suicide among SMVF is also supportive of this initiative, and several individuals serve on both teams, including the Governor's Challenge Team Lead, Jennifer Butler, who is also the Program Director for the SCDMH Office of Suicide Prevention.

The Pickens County Council passed Resolution #2020-12 in support of suicide prevention among SMVF in September 2020 and is supportive of this process, with our County Council Chairman Chris Bowlers serving on the team in a dual capacity since he is also a leader in the medical field. We are honored to have VA Secretary Grimsley, the first voice of encouragement for our County's involvement in the program, serving on our team. This passionate and enthusiastic

team of individuals is looking forward to reviewing the completed Crisis Intercept Map next month and collaboratively implementing our plan moving forward.

While the Crisis Intercept Map is focused on SMVF, I am hopeful the progress made through this initiative will make our County even more prepared to address the need for suicide prevention for all of our citizens.

My very involvement in the SMVF CIM for suicide prevention is a testament to the fact that everyone can be part of the solution to the problem of suicide. I'm just a person who cares, and lots of caring people are needed to bridge these gaps and reach the people who are hurting or lonely. I invite you to access the resources available online from the SCDMH Office of Suicide Prevention, SAMHSA, NAMI, or other trusted sources to educate yourself so that you can also be an advocate for suicide prevention.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing suicides. You don't have to be an expert. You just have to care.

Jessica Varney is the executive assistant to the administrator, Pickens County. Reach her at jessicav@co.pickens.sc.us.

PICKENS COUNTY

SOUTH CAROLINA

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KEN ROPER

CLERK TO COUNCIL

MEAGAN NATIONS

Ken Roper, Pickens County Administrator
Marion C. Owens Governmental Complex
222 McDaniel Ave, B-2
Pickens, SC 29671

May 5, 2022

South Carolina Association of Counties
PO Box 8207
Columbia, SC 29201

RE: J. Mitchell Graham Award

Dear Sir or Madam:

Pickens County's high suicide rate calls for a response from our county government. When our citizens are experiencing crisis and dying by suicide, we must evaluate what we can do to make a positive change in our community. The Pickens County Crisis Intercept Mapping for Suicide Prevention for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families was and continues to be an effective method of responding to this need in our county, especially among our military population who are already at an increased risk for suicide statistically.

The team collected information from community stakeholders, produced a visual map, evaluated the gaps in crisis care services, and formulated an action plan to increase awareness, educate the public, reduce the stigma around mental health and suicide, and increase lethal means safety has been a tremendous effort. The collaboration between local, regional, and state stakeholders during the SAMHSA-led program has offered Pickens County a unique opportunity to make a positive impact here at home while also providing a much-needed model which other counties can follow, even if they are not currently part of the SAMHSA program.

I highly recommend the Pickens County Crisis Intercept Mapping for Suicide Prevention for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families for the SCAC J. Mitchell Graham Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ken Roper".

Ken Roper



State of South Carolina
Department of Veterans' Affairs
1800 St. Julian Place, Suite 305, Columbia, South Carolina 29204
Phone: (803) 734-0200 • Fax (803) 734-4014

May 3, 2022

Paul A. Cain
President, South Carolina Association of Counties
Post Office Box 8207
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Paul,

I am writing to offer my strongest support for Pickens County as a candidate for the J. Mitchell Graham Award. The county's innovative and aggressive implementation of the Crisis Intercept Mapping for Suicide Prevention for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families initiative is the epitome of creative problem-solving and collaboration. This effort has already had a meaningful effect on the lives on Veterans and their family members in the county, and now serves as the model for expanding the program across the state.

When the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration selected Pickens County as the place to pilot this program, they chose wisely. The leaders of Pickens County have proved to be exceptional partners, routinely overcoming the inevitable friction inherent in any new endeavor. Keeping their eyes firmly on the objective of reducing self-harm, county leaders created and sustained an active collaboration of local, regional, and state stakeholders that collectively raised awareness of the challenge, offered educational training opportunities, and provided avenues for interagency communication and resource sharing. This collective effort now results in the best possible crisis care for her citizens. Prevention, intervention, and recovery are all addressed through Pickens' holistic approach.

Today, federal, state, and local organizations of all types view Pickens County as a model for successful intervention programs, and Veterans state-wide will benefit from the innovative and collaborative efforts of this exceptional county.

Sincerely,

William F. Grimsley
Major General (Ret), US Army
South Carolina Secretary of Veterans' Affairs