



Kate Sullivan: (203) 569 - 0293

kate.sullivan@cohenveteransnetwork.org

Cohen Veterans Network (CVN) to Address Military & Veteran Suicide Risk Through Enhanced Clinical Assessments with Support from USAA

CVN Advances the Mental Health Field via New Research on Clinician Decision Making

Stamford, Conn., Feb. 16, 2023 – Cohen Veterans Network (CVN), a not-for-profit philanthropic organization that serves post-9/11 veterans, service members and military families through a nationwide system of mental health clinics, has received a \$300,000 grant from USAA to evaluate and explore opportunities to enhance clinical suicide risk stratification, a process by which mental health providers determine an individual’s level of suicide risk and identify the appropriate level of care.

While there are sustained efforts around suicide prevention, military and veteran suicides remain at high levels and are a concern for policymakers and mental health care providers across the U.S. In 2020, the veteran suicide rate was nearly twice the rate of non-veteran US adults, according to data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention [Annual Report](#).

“Despite the strong emphasis placed on suicide risk assessment in training and clinical practice, significant gaps in knowledge persist,” said Cohen Veterans Network Chief Clinical Officer Dr. Tracy Neal-Walden. “We need to better understand how clinicians make risk stratification decisions and, importantly, the accuracy of those decisions. By improving upon the process, we have an opportunity to reduce suicide risk among veterans and service members.”

To evaluate the process of suicide risk stratification, CVN researchers will develop a series of vignettes, or clinical scenarios, to be utilized by clinicians across CVN’s network of 23 clinics in conjunction with validated assessment tools developed by the VA. The vignettes will serve to better understand clinician decision-making and accuracy in identifying suicide risk. Researchers will then collect and analyze data from clinicians through their ratings of the vignettes and participation in structured interviews. Based on their findings, the research team will provide lessons learned and recommendations related to training, and process improvement and will offer the materials to other clinicians and networks as a training tool.

“The work that Cohen Veterans Network is doing is critical to the understanding of and prevention of veteran suicide,” said Justin Schmitt, AVP of Corporate Responsibility at USAA. “We recognize the breadth of challenges to find solutions to reduce veteran suicide and are behind the CVN team as they enhance their programming to better address suicide risk and care.”

The research project is being led by the [Cohen Veterans Network Institute for Quality \(CVN-IQ\)](#). The institute, which launched last year, uses research, innovation, and collaboration with other military and veteran service agencies, mental health industry leaders and academic partners to improve treatment



outcomes for veterans, service members and their families while enhancing their quality of life.

“Understanding and managing suicide risk is a key component of CVN care,” says CVN-IQ Director Dr. David Linkh. “Improving risk stratification decision-making will enhance patient safety and resource utilization. I look forward to sharing our findings to help advance the field.”

CVN provides high-quality, accessible mental health services to post-9/11 veterans, active-duty service members and military family members through its 23 Cohen Clinics across the country. Treatment is available for a wide variety of mental health challenges including depression, anxiety, adjustment issues, anger, PTSD, grief and loss, family issues, transition challenges and relationship problems. CVN has treated 50,000 clients since its inception in 2016. Care is available in person or via CVN Telehealth, face-to-face video therapy.

ABOUT COHEN VETERANS NETWORK

Cohen Veterans Network (CVN) is a 501(c)(3) national not-for-profit philanthropic organization for post-9/11 veterans, active duty service members and their families. CVN focuses on improving mental health outcomes, operating a network of outpatient mental health clinics in high-need communities, in which trained clinicians deliver holistic evidence-based care to treat mental health conditions. It was established in 2016 by philanthropist Steven A. Cohen with a commitment of \$275 million to build the network. Learn more about CVN [here](#).

-end-