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## **Lethal Means Counseling for Military-Affiliated Women Must Be Evidence-Informed: New Research From Cohen Veterans Network Institute for Quality (CVN-IQ) Published in *PLOS One***

*Supported by Face the Fight®*, new systematic review analyzes literature on military-affiliated women’s views on firearm safe storage in suicide prevention

**STAMFORD, Conn., April 14, 2026** – New research from the Cohen Veterans Network Institute for Quality (CVN-IQ), titled *Perspectives of military-affiliated women on lethal means safety: A systematic review*, has been published in the peer-reviewed journal [PLOS One](#). The analysis, supported by a grant from Face the Fight®, highlights the unique views of military-affiliated women on lethal means safety and its critical role in suicide prevention. CVN-IQ is the research division of Cohen Veterans Network (CVN), a global not-for-profit integrated network of mental health clinics for post-9/11 veterans, service members, and their families.

U.S. women veterans face suicide rates 92 percent higher than those of their civilian counterparts. In 2022, rates of firearm suicide were 144 percent higher for veteran women than their non-veteran peers. Despite these trends, most lethal means research is gender-neutral, and clinical guidance lacks gender-informed strategies.

This systematic review synthesized existing literature to explore the perspectives of military-affiliated women on lethal means safety addressing a significant gap in the literature. Three themes on firearm ownership and access emerged: women weigh safety considerations when making decisions about firearm ownership, access, and storage; military experiences and identity alter women’s perspectives on firearms; and relationship dynamics impact firearm access and storage decisions. Additional themes relating to lethal means safety counseling (LMSC) were also identified: lethal means safety interventions are generally perceived as effective and acceptable, though barriers to care remain; trust, caring, and established relationships are critical aspects of accepting LMSC; and spouses are key stakeholders in household firearm safety, though relationship dynamics influence their inclusion in care. The findings emphasize that lethal means safety counseling for military-affiliated women must be trauma-sensitive and gender-informed.

“Military-affiliated women have distinct experiences and perspectives that must be considered when addressing lethal means safety,” said Dr. David Linkh, Director of CVN-IQ. “This research provides critical insights that can help inform more effective suicide prevention efforts by making them more evidence-informed and inclusive.”

Through its data-driven insights, CVN-IQ is advancing the field of military mental health by shaping evidence-based practices and informing innovative approaches to care. This research further reinforces



the network’s commitment to improving mental health outcomes for veterans, service members, and their families.

“At Face the Fight, we believe the data must guide the work, especially with a complex and wicked problem like veteran suicide,” said Dr. David Rozek, Senior Scientific Advisor for Face the Fight. “This is especially critical in areas like lethal means safety, where the right interventions can create time and space during a crisis to help save a life. CVN-IQ’s research highlights the unique perspectives of military-affiliated women and points to important opportunities to strengthen and tailor suicide prevention efforts moving forward.”

Since its inception in 2016, CVN has treated more than 100,000 clients and provided over 898,000 clinical sessions. Women account for 32 percent of the network’s active duty and veteran clients, more than double the national proportion of female veterans. The network treats a wide variety of mental health concerns, including depression, anxiety, military transition challenges, anger, PTSD, grief and loss, family issues, relationship problems, and children’s behavioral problems. Care is available in-person and via CVN Telehealth face-to-face video therapy through the network’s 24 Cohen Clinics, serving clients across 21 states and internationally.

#### **ABOUT COHEN VETERANS NETWORK**

Cohen Veterans Network (CVN) is a 501(c)(3) global 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 at [cohenveteransnetwork.org](http://cohenveteransnetwork.org).

#### **ABOUT FACE THE FIGHT®**

Face the Fight® is a life-saving initiative uniting more than 250 cross-sector partners to dramatically reduce veteran suicide by 2032. Founded by USAA, Reach Resilience, and the Humana Foundation, the movement breaks stigma, expands access to proven solutions, and builds a culture where seeking help is a sign of strength, ensuring every veteran and their loved ones are supported and never left to fight alone. Learn more at [WeFaceTheFight.org](http://WeFaceTheFight.org).

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