

**PRIDE IN ALL WHO SERVED:
PROVIDING AFFIRMATIVE CARE TO LGBT VETERANS**

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WHY DO YOU CHOSE TO WORK AT THE VA?

Make a difference in the life of a veteran.

Continue my service.

Patriotism is everywhere.

To be surrounded by others who love to care for veterans.

History comes to life.

The world becomes more global.

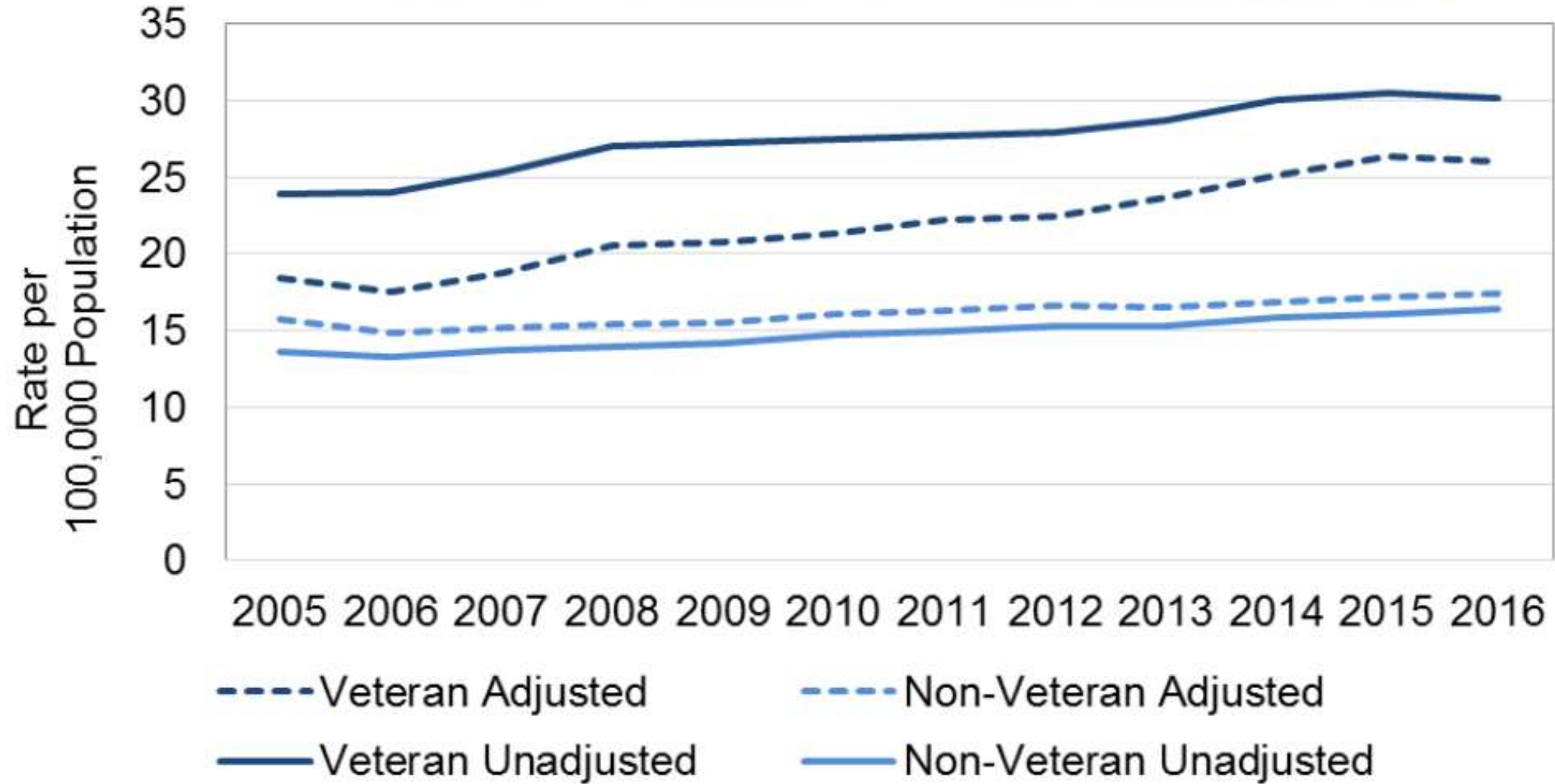
To be a part of providing quality health care.

To help heroes every day.

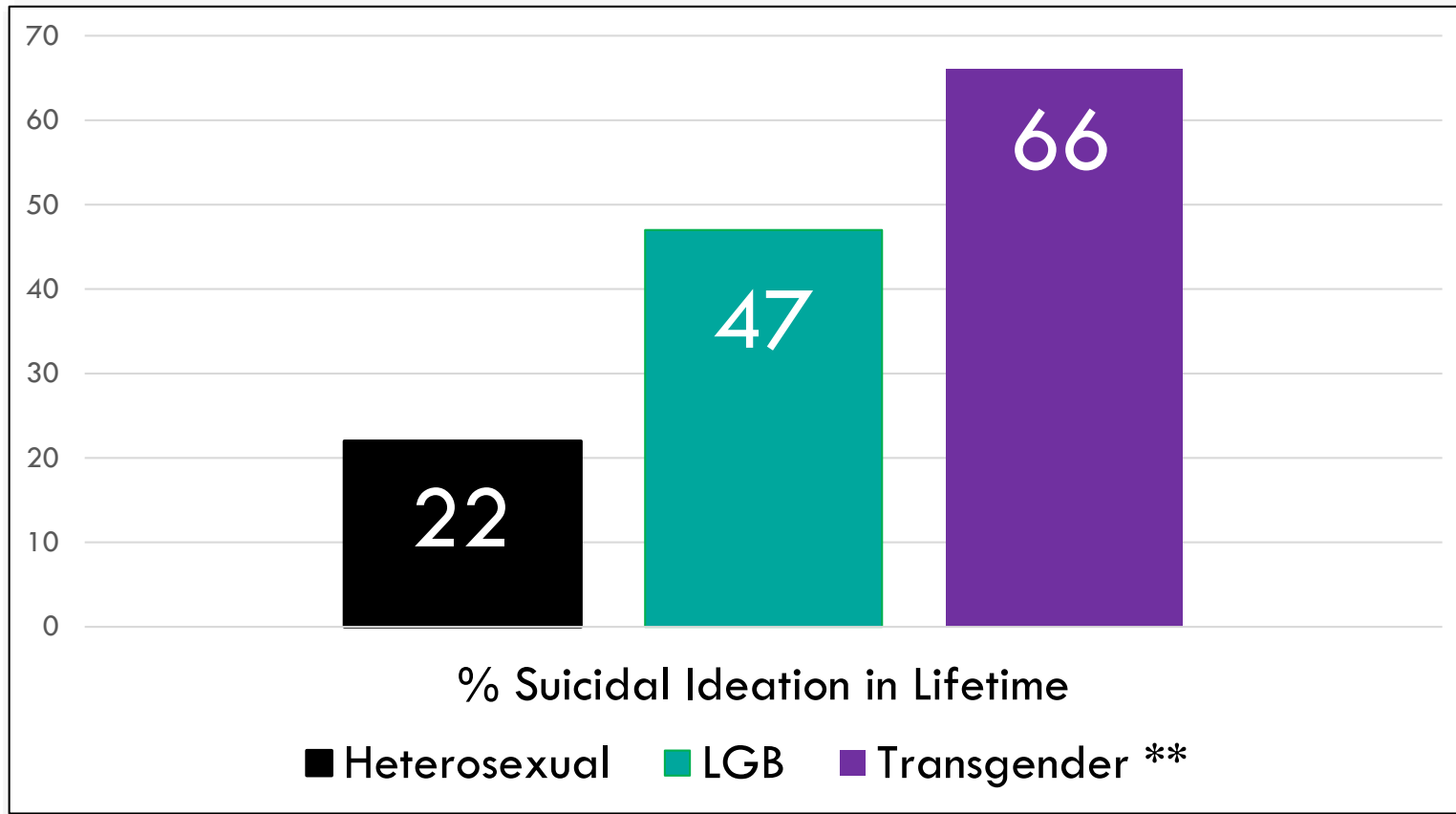
To serve those who served.

The benefits.

Figure 3: Suicide Rates, Unadjusted and Age- and Gender-Adjusted, Veteran and Non-Veteran Adults, 2005–2016



VETERAN SUICIDE RISK



Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) groups related by **sexual orientation**

Transgender (T) groups related by **gender identity**

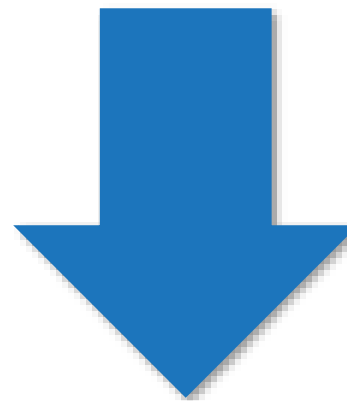
Who I love vs. **Who I am**

** Risk of suicidal behavior 20x higher for Transgender Veterans than for Veterans in general

HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES



- Discrimination
- Chronic Medical and Pain Conditions
- Exposure to Combat and Sexual Trauma
- Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
- Mental Health Illnesses
- Substance Abuse
- HIV & Other Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Suicidal Ideation and Attempts



- Overall Health Status
- Routine and Preventive Care
- Inclusion in Outreach Efforts
- Receive Access to Care

AFFIRMATIVE CARE

An approach to care that embraces a positive view of LGBT identities and relationships while addressing the negative influences that homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism have on the lives of LGBT individuals.

PROVIDING AFFIRMATIVE CARE

Originated at Hampton VA in January 2016

LGBT Health Education Support Group

- 10 weeks, 60 minutes, closed group

Over 150+ Veterans Served

- Topics Determined by Veterans (needs assessments and feedback)
- High Demand for the Group
- Use, Reuse, and Refer

Holistic Approach to Addressing LGBT Veteran Healthcare Needs

- Fills a Patient Service Gap – Manualized Group Materials
- Staff Training
- Creating a Welcoming Environment



GROUP FACILITATION MANUAL

10 Weeks of Content

1. Continuums of Identity; LGBT Terminology and Definitions
2. Coming Out; Emergence & Disclosure
3. Identity Models
4. Military Culture – Then & Now
5. VA Culture – The Changes Ahead
6. Affirmative Care; Whole Health
7. Sexual Health
8. Healthy Intimate Relationships
9. LGBT Families
10. Community Resources



Hampton VA (Originating Site)

Start Date: January 2016

- Model of LGBT Veteran Program and Services
- Comprehensive Group Facilitation Manual
- Consultation and Support for Other Facilities
- Train the Trainer
- Site Visits to All Dissemination Sites
- Assisting All Sites with Group Implementation, LGBT Program Development, and improving HEI Score

Tuscaloosa VA (Partner Site)

FY18 Seed Grant

- Rural Site (no visible LGBT services)
- Successfully Replicated Group and Expanded LGBT Program
- Strategic Partner for Diffusion
- Data Collection / Interpretation
- Program Evaluation
- Navigates Grant Processes and Avenues for Growth

FY19 Dissemination Sites

- Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (Alabama)
- Salisbury VA Medical Center (North Carolina)
- VA St. Louis Health Care System (Missouri)
- Fayetteville VA Medical Center (North Carolina)
- VA Loma Linda Healthcare System (California)
- Tomah VA Medical Center (Wisconsin)
- VA Western Colorado Health Care System (Colorado)

Affiliated Sites

- Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical (Indiana)
- Columbus Ambulatory Care Center (Ohio)
- VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (California)
- South Texas Veterans Health Care System (Texas)



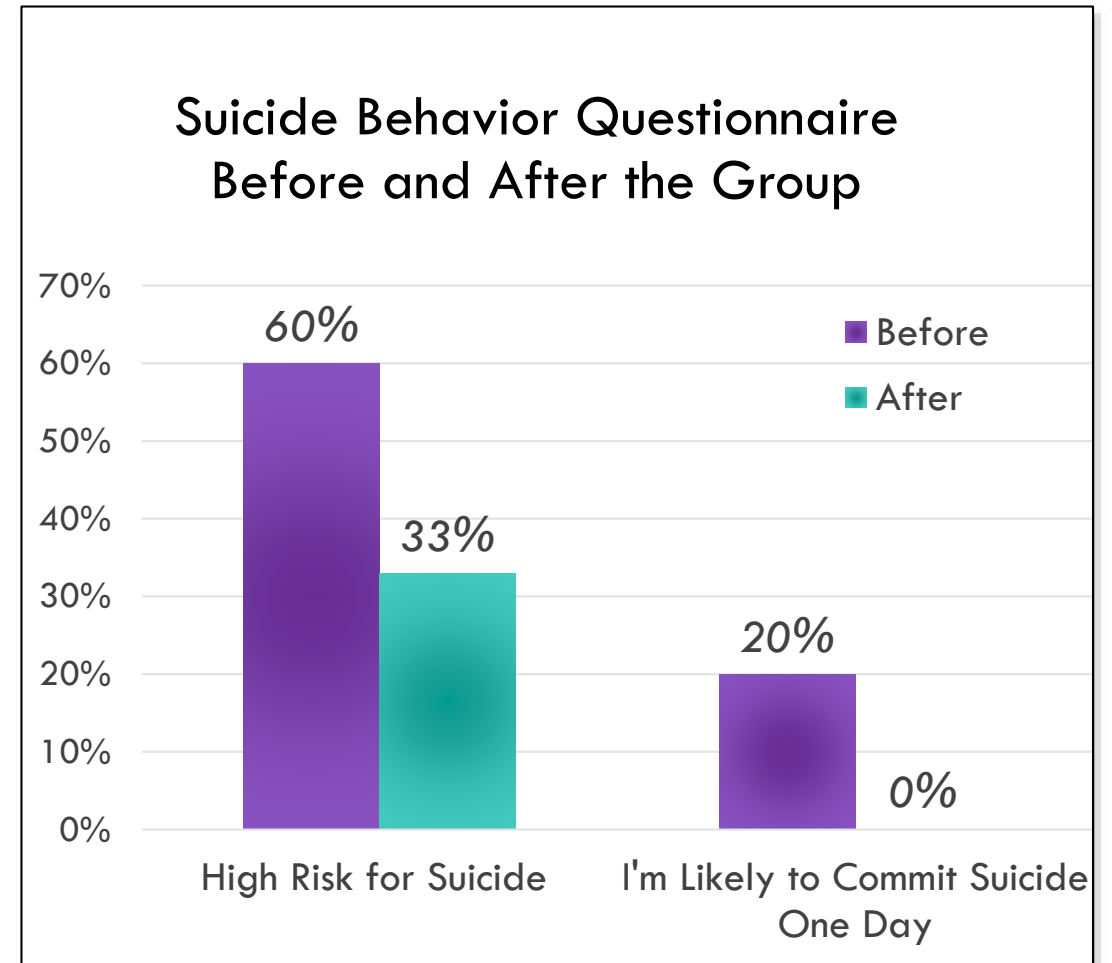
FY18 PROGRAM EVALUATION SUMMARY:

Reduced:

- Suicide Risk
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Internalized Stigma

Improved:

- Satisfaction with VA Services
- Perceptions of VA Staff Competence
- Identity Affirmation
- LGBT Community Involvement
- Problem-Focused Coping



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Dr. Michelle Hilgeman (Tuscaloosa VA)
Implementation and Evaluation Coordinator

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University Subject Matter Expert and Statistician

Hampton VA Facility Leadership

Enthusiastically supporting staff and continuously demonstrating that all Veterans deserve quality healthcare.

VHA Innovators Network

FY18 Seed & FY19 Grants funded by VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention & Office of Rural Health

LGBT Health Program (10P4Y), Patient Care Services

Advocating for progress on a national level while encouraging facility level efforts.





“My life has gotten better by coming.”

– 33 y.o. Transfemale, Combat Veteran

“I love this group! I feel better talking to my providers.”

– 29 y.o. Transfemale Veteran

“I still can’t believe this group is at the VA. Life changing!”

– 61 y.o. Transfemale Combat Veteran

“To have someone else say I’m HIV+ too let me know I was going to be okay.”

– 28 y.o. Gay Male Veteran

“Coming from the military, I felt like a number, like data. Here I feel like a person.”

– 35 y.o. Queer Male Veteran

“I feel like the VA is making great strides to take care of the LGBT community’s needs.”

– 23 y.o. Transmale Veteran

“I never thought I’d be comfortable with other people as myself. This has changed my life.”

– 31 y.o. Bisexual Male, Combat Veteran

“It’s about safety, it’s about health. The warmness in this group makes it possible to have the difficult talks.”

– 71 y.o. Pansexual Male, Combat Veteran

“The group gave me the confidence to come out. It provided a starting point and direction for my next steps in my journey.”