

# Montana Warriors Forward (MWF) Stakeholder Coalition Meeting January 13, 2026



DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH &  
HUMAN SERVICES

# Agenda

- Introductions (In the chat)
- Program Overview
- MWF Partner Updates
  - VA (Federal and State)
  - MTNG
  - VNN
  - Safer Communities Montana
- Stakeholder Highlight – Check A Vet, Michael Carmichael; Dynamic Recovery, Jeramy Dickman
- Q&A

# Montana Warriors Forward Mission

- **Task** – Implement a suicide prevention program for Montana's Servicemembers, Veterans and their Families (SMVF) that addresses the root causes of suicide through identification and screening for risk, building protective factors and facilitating care transitions for those determined to be at risk and by providing safe storage and/or disposal of lethal means for individuals in crisis.
- **Purpose** – To reduce the number of suicides among the SMVF community in Montana and to build a network of protective factors to reduce suicide risk.
- **Endstate** – The suicide rate for SMVF in Montana lowered to below the state rate and a statewide network of providers and protectors established to keep it that way.

# Goals of the MWF Stakeholder's Coalition



BUILD A COALITION OF INDIVIDUALS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING SMVF IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.



SOLICIT IDEAS FOR EXPANDING THE PROGRAM'S REACH AND IMPACT.



ASSIST PEER COACHES WITH BUILDING SMVF SUPPORT UNITS IN UNDERSERVED COUNTIES AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES.

# MWF Priority Areas

Priority Area 1 –  
Identification and  
Screening

Priority Area 2 –  
Promote  
Connectedness and  
Improve Care  
Transitions

Priority Area 3 –  
Lethal Means Safety  
and Safety Planning

# Current Montana Warriors Forward Partners

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Montana DPHHS

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Montana Veteran's Affairs Division (MVAD)

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Montana National Guard

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Fort Harrison VA (VISN 19)

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Lewis and Clark Public Health (Helena)

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Riverstone Health (Billings)

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Veteran's Navigation Network (VNN)

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American Legion

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# HB 118 Grant

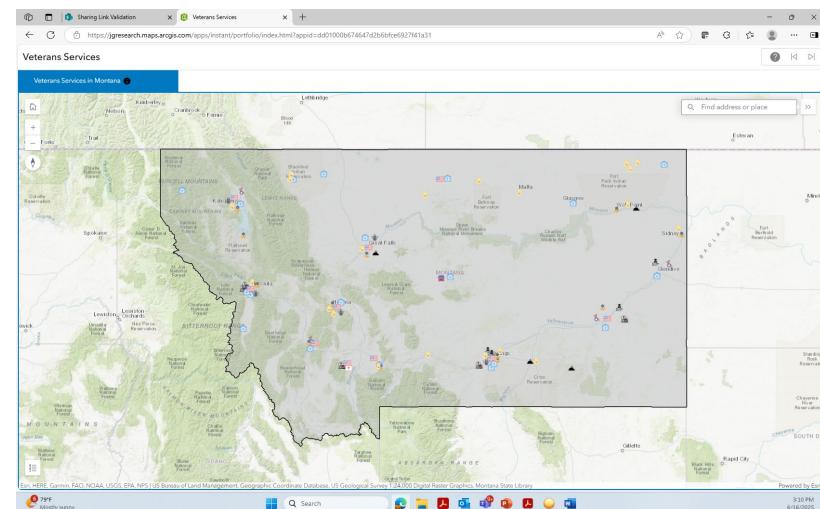
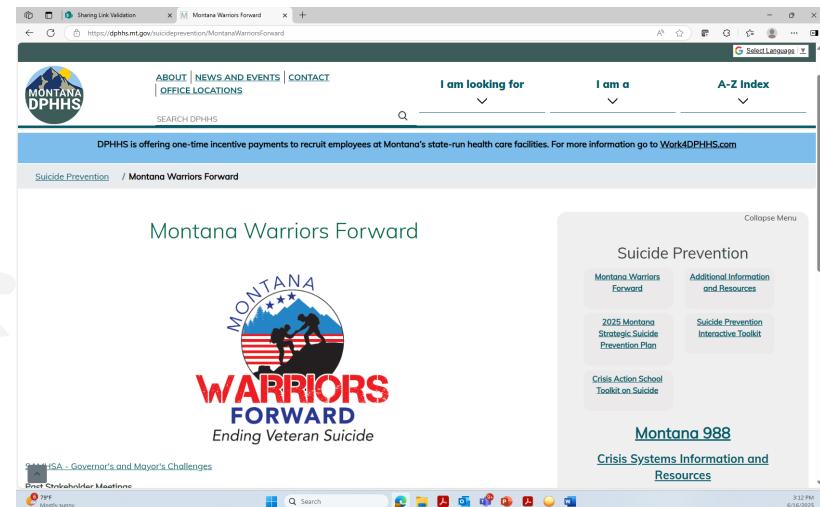
- Grants awarded (\$500K) to organizations conducting suicide prevention activities in line with evidence-based best practices.
- Past grantees have conducted work in all three of the MWF priority areas.
- Dynamic Recovery in Great Falls was awarded a grant this year, focused on veteran suicide prevention, providing training for healthcare providers, peers and on lethal means safe storage.

# Montana Safe Storage Initiative

- \$300K for the biennium allocated to MVAD for the safe storage of lethal means in HB2.
- MVAD and DPHHS sign an MOU transferring the funds and responsibility for executing the mission to DPHHS and MWF.
- Lewis and Clark County Public Health tasked with expanding the Safer Communities Montana (SCM) program statewide during 2026-2027.
- Three tasks: establish safe storage sites across Montana and connect them with 211 and 988; conduct safe storage training, IAW best practices; promote safe storage through media and engagement with stakeholders.

# MWF Webpage and Resource Map

- Links to partners and stakeholders
- Resources and toolkits for VSOs and peers.
- Interactive map of SMVF resources at: <https://jgresearch.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/portfolio/index.html?appid=dd01000b674647d2b6bfce6927f41a31>





# VETERAN'S CHALLENGE

For the last 40 years, Montana has ranked among the top five states in the U.S. for suicides per capita. Suicide has a devastating effect on the people and their communities in Montana. For Montana Veterans, this issue is a major concern.

The MT 988 Veteran's Challenge is a collaborative endeavor between Montana Veterans and MSU School of Art students. The project seeks to increase knowledge and awareness around the issues of suicide and suicide prevention.

The MT 988 Veteran's Challenge is part of a series of projects done by students and artists across Montana that deal with the issue of suicide and suicide prevention. The projects focus on learning, community engagement, and outreach.

#### SPONSORS INCLUDE:

**MSU VETERAN SERVICES | MSU DIVISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS  
MSU SCHOOL OF ART | MSU COLLEGE OF ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE  
ARTHUR M BLANK FAMILY FOUNDATION | MONTANA DPHHS**

If you or someone you know is in crisis - speak with a friend, parent, teacher, school counselor, call **988** or text "**MT**" to **741 741** where there are trained, caring, individuals available to help.



MT 988 Challenge  
Coin designed by MSU  
student Jessica Rietan.



Rick Gale, Veterans Alliance of Southwest Montana. displays the MT 988 Challenge Coins at Bozeman High.



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OUT-  
REACH

## mt 988 veteran's challenge coin project

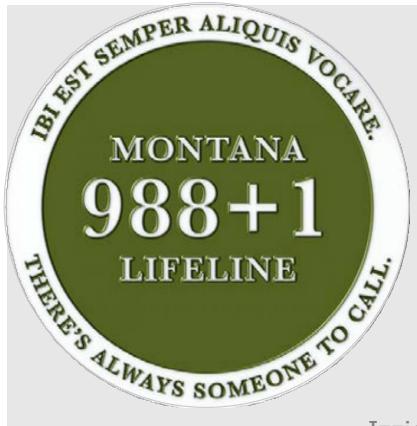
Some of the Veteran's Challenge coins designs.  
Each work is a personal expression created by a  
student designer and their Veteran partners.



Gracie Dusbabek



Josephine Brown



Izzie Milton



Halee Head



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# Way Forward

- Veterans Navigation Network Veteran and Community Expo (February 7 in Billings)
- Montana Safe Storage Initiative outreach
- Planning phase for SMVF event in Hamilton in May
- SB95 reengagement during 2027 legislative session
- RFP for 2027 HB118 initiatives (Listed on the State eMACS system. Will be posted in Spring 2027.)

# What you can do



Attend coalition meetings and provide feedback from the field.



Invite other stakeholders in your area to participate. (Please send me their contact information.)



Connect with 211 to update SMVF serving resources in your area.



Encourage peers in under-served areas to establish SMVF support units.



Be on the lookout for the HB118 Grant RFP, if your organization is/or would like to be working on one of the three priority areas.