

# Risk Assessment for C&P Exams

This resource will provide you with information and guidance on completing the Risk Assessment tab and responding to Veterans in crisis.



## Getting Started

The safety and wellbeing of the Veterans we serve is our number one priority. At times, you will encounter Veterans who are struggling mentally, emotionally or dealing with difficult life situations. When performing Compensation and Pension (C&P) examinations, the Veteran may disclose situations that require additional documentation on the Risk Assessment tab. These situations include:

- Suicidal ideation
- Homicidal ideation
- Domestic violence or intimate partner violence
- Child or vulnerable adult abuse

The VA does not require you to actively elicit responses from a Veteran about these situations. However, a Veteran may choose to disclose any of these situations during an exam, regardless of the specialty. As a person with direct Veteran contact, it is essential you are prepared to handle any such disclosure. It is your responsibility to assist the Veteran through careful documentation of the situation, and to ensure the Veteran is aware of the support systems available to them. When determining if something disclosed should be documented on the Risk Assessment tab, err on the side of caution and safety for the Veteran.

As you complete the Risk Assessment tab, the DBQ will provide you with specific guidance based on the situation indicated. This includes information you must provide to the Veteran before they leave your appointment. When describing the situation the Veteran disclosed, it is important to be as detailed as possible.

For most situations indicated on the Risk Assessment tab, you are required to call Optum Serve and speak with a behavioral health specialist from our clinical operations team. They are specifically trained to help address any questions you may have regarding the Risk Assessment tab. They also will ensure the VA is properly notified of any critical situations. Additionally, you must always follow your local and state

mandatory reporting guidelines.

## Suicidal Ideation

As an examiner, it is important to note that Veterans die by suicide at a higher rate than the general population. Veterans undergoing any transition, including the disability examination process, may be at a higher risk for suicide.

If during the examination process the Veteran discloses suicidal ideation, you must determine the Veteran's level of risk based on the essential features present. The VA has provided specific guidance on how to determine a Veteran's risk level, which is detailed below. The required actions that must be completed are different depending on the risk level assigned. When describing the situation, document the evidence that led to your risk level assessment.

### Determining Level of Risk for Suicide for VA C&P Examinations & Required Actions

#### Low Acute Risk:

Essential Features:

- No current suicidal intent AND
- No specific and current suicidal plan AND
- No recent preparatory behaviors AND
- Collective high confidence (e.g., patient, care provider, family member) in the ability of the patient to independently maintain safety.

Individuals may have suicidal ideation, but it will be with little or no intent or specific current plan. If a plan is present, the plan is general and/or vague, and without any associated preparatory behaviors (e.g., "I'd shoot myself if things got bad enough, but I don't have a gun"). These patients will be capable of engaging appropriate coping strategies, and willing and able to utilize a safety plan in a crisis situation.

#### Required Action for Low Acute Risk:

- Provide the Veteran with the Veterans Crisis Line information 988 or VeteransCrisisLine.net or text 838255.
- Encourage the Veteran to address these concerns with their primary care provider.

## Risk Assessment

**Mental Health Emergency:** If the Veteran experiences a mental health emergency during the interview, please terminate the interview. You must contact the Veterans Crisis Line at 988. Stay on the Crisis Line until help can link the Veteran to emergency care. If needed, activate local emergency services. After the situation has stabilized, call LHI to report the event at (888) 852-1988 ext. 89280.

**Medical Emergency:** Dial 911 and seek immediate assistance using local resources.

### Resources

**VA Crisis Line:** Free Confidential 24/7 Support, even if they are not registered with the VA or enrolled in VA health care.

-Call: 988

-Online Chat: [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net)

-Text: 838255

-For TTY users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 1-800-273-8255

#### LHI Clinical Operations

-Call: (888) 852-1988 ext. 89280

**Risk Assessment:** During the exam, the Veteran may disclose situations that require additional documentation. These situations include:

-Suicidal Ideation

-Homicidal Ideation

-Domestic or Intimate Partner Violence

-Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse

You are **not** required to actively elicit responses from the Veteran on these situations, unless clinically indicated. If the Veteran discloses any of these situations during the course of the exam, you must document them below.

Based on today's exam, are any of the following situations present (check all that apply):

Suicidal Ideation

Homicidal Ideation

Domestic Violence or Intimate Partner Violence

Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse

None

Is the Veteran homeless?

Yes

No

## Intermediate Acute Risk:

### Essential Features:

- Suicidal ideation to die by suicide.
- Ability to maintain safety, independent of external support/help.

These individuals may present similarly to those at high acute risk, sharing many of the features. The only difference may be lack of intent, based upon an identified reason for living (e.g., children), and the ability to abide by a safety plan and maintain their own safety. Preparatory behaviors are likely to be absent.

### Required Action for Intermediate Acute Risk:

- Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 988 to report the Veteran's Intermediate Acute Risk.
- Inform the Veteran that levels of Intermediate Acute Risk must be reported to the Veterans Crisis Line for potential VA follow-up, given that the C&P exam is not treatment. This is a VA requirement.
- Provide the Veteran with the Veterans Crisis Line information 988 or VeteransCrisisLine.net or text 838255.
- Contact Optum Serve at (888) 852-1988, ext. 89280 and request to speak to a behavioral health specialist.

## High Acute Risk

### Essential Features:

- Suicidal ideation with intent to die by suicide.
- Inability to maintain safety, independent of external support/help.

### Common Warning Signs:

- A plan for suicide.
- Recent attempt and/or ongoing preparatory behaviors.
- Acute major mental illness (e.g., major depressive episode, acute mania, acute psychosis, recent/current drug relapse).
- Exacerbation of personality disorder (e.g., increased borderline symptomatology).

### Intermediate Acute Risk

#### Essential Features:

- Suicidal ideation to die by suicide
- Ability to maintain safety, independent of external support/help

These individuals may present similarly to those at high acute risk, sharing many of the features. The only difference may be lack of intent, based upon an identified reason for living (e.g., children), and ability to abide by a safety plan and maintain their own safety. Preparatory behaviors are likely to be absent.

#### Action Required:

- Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 988 to report the Veteran's Intermediate Acute Risk.
- Inform the Veteran that levels of Intermediate Acute Risk must be reported to the Veterans Crisis Line for potential VA follow up, given that the C&P exam is not treatment. This is a VA requirement.
- Provide the Veteran with the Veterans Crisis Line information 988 or VeteransCrisisLine.net or text 838255.
- Contact LHI at (888) 852-1988, ext. 89280 and request to speak to a behavior health specialist.

Did you report the Veteran's Intermediate Acute Risk to the Veterans Crisis Line?

- Yes  
 No

Please describe and include:

- Describe in detail the evidence that led to your Intermediate Acute Risk assessment.
- Details of case resolution, including how you know the Veteran is safe

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## Required Action for High Acute Risk:

- Maintain direct observational control of the Veteran and limit access to lethal means.
- Call 911 to get immediate transfer with an escort to an Urgent/Emergency Care setting for Hospitalization. The Veteran **cannot** transfer themselves or be transferred by a family member or friend.
- Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 988 to report the Veteran's High Acute Risk.
- Inform the Veteran that levels of High Acute Risk must be reported to the Veterans Crisis Line for potential VA follow-up, given that the C&P exam is not treatment. This is a VA requirement.
- Provide the Veteran with the Veterans Crisis Line information 988 or VeteransCrisisLine.net or text 838255.
- Contact Optum Serve at (888) 852-1988, ext. 89280 and request to speak to a behavioral health specialist. You may be requested to complete the Unusual Incident Report located in the Knowledge Center.

## Homicidal Ideation

You may encounter a Veteran who discloses homicidal ideation. In these situations, it is critical to determine if the homicidal ideation is current, with active intent or a plan to harm or endanger an individual(s). When assessing homicidal ideation, err on the side of caution and safety for the Veteran, Service member, individual(s) involved and the public. If you encounter a Veteran who is experiencing current homicidal ideation, take the following actions:

- Call local authorities/911 to get immediate transfer of the Veteran to emergency services.
- Perform a warm hand-off to local authorities/emergency services.
- Provide the Veteran with the Veteran Crisis Line information 988 or VeteransCrisisLine.net or text 838255.
- Follow all state and local mandatory reporting guidelines.
- Contact Optum Serve at (888) 852-1988, ext. 89280 and request to speak to a behavioral health specialist. You may be requested to complete the Unusual Incident Report located in the Knowledge Center.

## Domestic or Intimate Partner Violence

During your exam, a Veteran may disclose a situation regarding domestic or intimate partner violence. It is important to be familiar with your local and state mandatory reporting guidelines regarding these situations. If a Veteran discloses a situation of domestic or intimate partner violence that warrants reporting based on your local and state guidelines, take the following actions:

- Provide the Veteran with the VA Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Assistance Program information: [https://www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV/VETERANS\\_PARTNERS/Index.asp](https://www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV/VETERANS_PARTNERS/Index.asp)
- Provide the Veteran with the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE or TTY 1-800-787-3224.
- Follow all state and local mandatory reporting guidelines.
- Contact Optum Serve at (888) 852-1988, ext. 89280 and request to speak to a behavioral health specialist.

## **Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse**

During your exam you may encounter a situation involving child or vulnerable adult abuse. It is important to be familiar with your local and state mandatory reporting guidelines regarding these situations. If you encounter a situation that involves child or vulnerable adult abuse that warrants reporting based on your local and state guidelines, take the following actions:

- Follow all state and local mandatory reporting guidelines, including contacting local authorities/protective services.
- Contact Optum Serve at (888) 852-1988, ext. 89280 and request to speak to a behavioral health specialist.

## **Additional Assistance**

For additional assistance, please call (888) 852-1988 ext. 89280 and request to speak with a behavioral health specialist.