

**STAFF SERGEANT PARKER GORDON FOX SUICIDE PREVENTION GRANT  
PROGRAM**

**1. SUMMARY OF CONTENT:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive establishes policy for implementation of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program (SSG Fox SPGP). This directive delineates essential components and minimum requirements for the administration, monitoring, and oversight of the SSG Fox SPGP.

**2. RELATED ISSUES:** VHA Directive 1160.07, Suicide Prevention Program, dated May 24, 2021.

**3. POLICY OWNER:** VHA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (11MHSP) is responsible for the content of this directive. Questions may be referred to the Executive Director of Suicide Prevention, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP), at: [VHAOMHSPS ACTIONS@va.gov](mailto:VHAOMHSPS ACTIONS@va.gov).

**4. RESCISSIONS:** None.

**5. RECERTIFICATION:** This new VHA directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of August 2027. This VHA directive will continue to serve as national VHA policy until it is recertified or rescinded.

**6. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE:** This directive is effective upon publication.

**BY DIRECTION OF THE OFFICE OF THE  
UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH:**

/s/ Erica M. Scavella, M.D., FACP, FACHE  
Assistant Under Secretary for Health  
for Clinical Services/CMO

**DISTRIBUTION:** Emailed to the VHA Publications Distribution List on October 17, 2022.

**NOTE:** All references herein to VA and VHA documents incorporate by reference subsequent VA and VHA documents on the same or similar subject matter.

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## STAFF SERGEANT PARKER GORDON FOX SUICIDE PREVENTION GRANT PROGRAM

### 1. POLICY

It is Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy to implement the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program (SSG Fox SPGP) to issue grants to certain eligible entities to provide, or coordinate the provision of, suicide prevention services to eligible individuals and their families for the purpose of reducing Veteran suicide. This directive establishes VHA Central Office (VHACO) responsibilities concerning the oversight, monitoring and support of the SSG Fox SPGP. **AUTHORITY:** 38 U.S.C. § 1720F (Note); 38 C.F.R. part 78.

### 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health is responsible for ensuring overall compliance with this directive.

b. **Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services.** The Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services is responsible for supporting the implementation and oversight of this directive across VHA.

c. **Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations.** The Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations is responsible for:

(1) Communicating the contents of this directive to each of the Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs).

(2) Assisting VISN Directors to resolve implementation and compliance challenges in all VA medical facilities within that VISN.

(3) Providing oversight of VISNs to ensure compliance with this directive and its effectiveness.

(4) Consulting on program modifications submitted by the SSG Fox SPGP Director as deemed necessary by the Executive Director, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP).

d. **Executive Director, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.** The Executive Director, OMHSP is responsible for:

(1) Directing and overseeing the SSG Fox SPGP implementation and delivery across VHA.

(2) Providing the OMHSP Suicide Prevention Program (SPP) with sufficient resources to implement this directive.

(3) Aligning SSG Fox SPGP-related efforts between OMHSP and other VHA program offices through collaboration and consultation.

(4) Determining whether program modifications submitted by the SSG Fox SPGP Director require consultation by the Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations.

e. **Executive Director of Suicide Prevention, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Program.** The Executive Director of Suicide Prevention, OMHSP is responsible for:

(1) Supporting the Executive Director, OMHSP in providing oversight to SSG Fox SPGP implementation and delivery.

(2) Ensuring that the list of active SSG Fox SPGP grantees, grantee reports and other indicated implementation materials are available to all associated program offices and community partners. Indicated implementation materials may include the SSG Fox SPGP Grantee Program Guide, technical assistance and training available at:

<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/ssgfox-grants> and

<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACOMentalHealth/SitePages/1160.09.aspx>.

**NOTE:** The second link is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

(3) Providing oversight and guidance on memoranda of understanding and contracts between OMHSP and the Office of Business Oversight (OBO) and the VHA team leading the program evaluation for SSG Fox SPGP.

f. **Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program Director.** The SSG Fox SPGP Director is responsible for:

(1) Providing administrative oversight, communication, technical assistance and record-keeping of the entire grant cycle from application to termination of the SSG Fox SPGP as detailed in the SSG Fox SPGP Business Operations Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), available at

<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACOMentalHealth/SitePages/1160.09.aspx>.

**NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

(2) Developing regulations, policy, notices of funding opportunity (NOFO), and all materials associated with application, technical assistance, and full grant cycle for opportunities offered under the authority of this program.

(3) Reviewing, scoring and submitting recommendations for suicide prevention (SP) services grant awards to the Secretary, following the threshold, scoring, and selection criteria stated in 38 C.F.R. part 78.

(4) Submitting program modifications for consultation with the Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations, when indicated.

(5) Leading the provision of subject matter expertise, consultation and training to VA staff and external stakeholders (e.g., grantees, applicants, community partners of VA) as it relates to SSG Fox SPGP.

**g. Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program Grants Managers.** SSG Fox SPGP Grants Managers, under the guidance of the SSG Fox SPGP Director, are responsible for:

(1) Providing grantees with technical assistance to promote compliance with 38 U.S.C. § 1720F (Note), 38 C.F.R. part 78, the signed grant agreements, related applicable laws, rules, regulations, the SSG Fox SPGP Grantee Program Guide and associated analysis of collected data. **NOTE:** *The SSG Fox SPGP Grantee Program Guide is available at <https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACOMentalHealth/SitePages/1160.09.aspx> which is an internal VA website that is not available to the public and also <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/ssgfox-grants/>.*

(2) Reviewing participant satisfaction surveys and providing feedback based upon those surveys to grantees, as appropriate. **NOTE:** *Surveys are distributed by grantees to all participants enrolled in SSG Fox SPGP services and are reviewed by the SSG Fox SPGP on a monthly basis.*

(3) Responding to grantees' questions and requests to modify a SP services grant for any proposed significant change that alters the SP services grant program and corrective action plans, as applicable.

(4) Educating community partners about SSG Fox SPGP, SSG Fox SPGP participants, and SSG Fox SPGP services and resources, along with the statutes and regulations governing SSG Fox SPGP.

(5) Collaborating with VISN and VA medical facility Directors to ensure awareness of the SSG Fox SPGP and the care coordination expectations between grantees and VA.

(6) Collaborating with grantees and VHA staff at the local VA medical facility, VISN and VHA program office to facilitate compliance with serious incident reporting as specified in VA Directive 0321, Serious Incident Reports, dated June 6, 2012, and the Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations Guide to VHA Issue Briefs, available at: [https://vssc.med.va.gov/IBTracker/Docs/Guide%20to%20Issue%20Briefs%20\(Updated%204-6-22\).pdf](https://vssc.med.va.gov/IBTracker/Docs/Guide%20to%20Issue%20Briefs%20(Updated%204-6-22).pdf). **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

**h. Veterans Integrated Service Network Director.** The VISN Director or designee (e.g., VISN Chief Mental Health Officer, VISN SP lead) is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring that VISN staff and regional and state level community stakeholders have awareness of current grantees in the VISN and future grant opportunities.

(2) Providing oversight and guidance to VA medical facility leadership with implementation of clinical coordination processes between VA and grantees.

i. **VA Medical Facility Director.** The VA medical facility Director is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring that VA medical facility staff and local community stakeholders have awareness of current grantees within the catchment area and future grant opportunities.

(2) Implementing local procedures to support effective coordination of referrals from grantees to VHA for enrollment and when clinical services are indicated. This includes ensuring local process updates in relation to VHA mental health eligibility criteria changes as indicated by law and VHA Directive 1601A.02(3), Eligibility Determination, dated July 6, 2020.

(3) Ensuring that contact information for key staff and programs are current and accessible to grantees via public-facing VA medical facility websites, to include at minimum Enrollment/Eligibility, Mental Health and Emergency Department/Urgent Care.

### 3. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As part of the initial designation and annual re-designation, the SSG Fox SPGP employees who are involved in decisions on grant awards are required to comply with the provisions of the Confidential Filer regulation via timely completion of the financial disclosure report assigned by the Office of General Counsel, to ensure that there is no actual or apparent conflict of interest between the employee and the grantee. See 5 C.F.R. part 2634 subpart I.

### 4. PROGRAM EVALUATION

a. **Program Evaluation Goals.** The efficacy of the SSG Fox SPGP and the services provided by grantees are monitored by the SSG Fox SPGP Evaluation team which is a collaboration between OMHSP Program Evaluation Centers, a designated VHA evaluation partner team, contractors and SSG Fox SPGP staff. The goals of the SSG Fox SPGP Evaluation Team include but are not limited to:

(1) Developing demographic and geo-spatial analysis to support selection and distribution of grants.

(2) Monitoring SP services provided by grantees to determine their effectiveness in improving mental health status and well-being and in reducing suicide risk and suicide deaths of participants.

(3) Determining program and grantee effectiveness using validated tools, such as suicide and mental health screenings.

(4) Examining utilization and impact of SSG Fox SPGP on vulnerable Veteran groups along the lines of available data (e.g., race or ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, geographic location).

(5) Advising on evaluation, workflow processes, implementation tools and data methodologies.

(6) Identifying risks to program implementation and provide recommendations to the Secretary to minimize risks.

## 5. TRAINING

There are no formal training requirements associated with this directive.

## 6. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

All records regardless of format (e.g., paper, electronic, electronic systems) created by this directive must be managed as required by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) approved records schedules found in VHA Records Control Schedule 10-1. Questions regarding any aspect of records management should be addressed to the appropriate Records Officer.

## 7. BACKGROUND

a. On October 17, 2020, the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Improvement Act of 2019, Public Law (P.L.) 116 – 171 was signed into law. Section 201 of this law, codified as a note to 38 U.S.C. § 1720F, authorized the Secretary of VA to establish a 3-year community-based grant program that will furnish resources to selected community organizations that provide or coordinate the provision of SP services for eligible individuals and their families.

b. A top VA priority is preventing suicide among all Veterans, including those who do not, and may never, seek care within the VA health care system. The National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report (2021) indicates that many Veterans who die by suicide have not received care from VA prior to their deaths. VA recognizes the critical importance communities play in ending suicide. The SSG Fox SPGP strengthens local community capacity to conduct outreach to Veterans and families, provide them with SP services, and connect them to resources within the community and VA to prevent Veteran suicide. Through the SSG Fox SPGP, VA aims to reduce and prevent Veteran suicide and improve the mental health status and wellbeing of eligible individuals and their families.

c. In alignment with VA's National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide (2018-2028), the SSG Fox SPGP will assist in further implementing a public health approach that blends community-based interventions for SP with evidence-based clinical strategies through community efforts. The SSG Fox SPGP also supports and aligns with the priority goals and cross-cutting implementation principles in the White House strategy for Reducing Military and Veteran Suicide (2021).

d. For additional information on how the SSG Fox SPGP is implemented and procedural details for grantees, the SSG Fox SPGP Grantee Program Guide is available at <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/ssgfox-grants> and

<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACOMentalHealth/SitePages/1160.09.aspx>.

**NOTE:** The second link is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

## 8. DEFINITIONS

a. **Eligible Entity.** For purposes of this directive, an eligible entity is one of the following:

(1) An incorporated private institution or foundation that:

(a) Has no part of the net earnings of which incurr to the benefit of any member, founder, contributor, or individual, and

(b) Has a governing board that would be responsible for the operation of the SSG Fox SPGP services provided.

(2) A corporation wholly owned and controlled by an organization meeting the requirements of clauses (a) and (b) above.

(3) An Indian tribe, which includes Alaska Native villages.

(4) A community-based organization that can effectively network with local civic organizations, regional health systems, and other settings where eligible individuals and their families are likely to have contact.

(5) A State or local government.

b. **Eligible Individual.** For purposes of this directive, an eligible individual is one of the following:

(1) A person who served in the active military, naval or space service and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.

(2) A former member of the Armed Forces, including reserve components, who:

(a) While serving in the active military, naval, air or space service, was discharged or released therefrom under a condition that is not honorable but not a dishonorable discharge or a discharge by court-martial.

(b) Is not enrolled in VA health care and either:

1. Served in the Armed Forces for a period of more than 100 cumulative days and was deployed in a theater of combat operations, in support of a contingency operation, or in an area at a time during which hostilities were occurring in that area during such service, including by controlling an unmanned aerial vehicle from a location other than such theater or area; or

2. While serving in the Armed Forces, was the victim of a physical assault of a sexual nature, a battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment.



(3) Any individual who is a Veteran or member of the Armed Forces, including a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, who:

(a) Served on active duty in a theater of combat operations or an area at a time during which hostilities occurred in that area.

(b) Provided direct emergency medical or mental health care, or mortuary services to the casualties of combat operations or hostilities, but who at the time was located outside the theater of combat operations or area of hostilities.

(c) Engaged in combat with an enemy of the United States or against an opposing military force in a theater of combat operations or an area at a time during which hostilities occurred in that area by remotely controlling an unmanned aerial vehicle, notwithstanding whether the physical location of such veteran or member during such combat was within such theater of combat operations or area.

(d) Served on active service in response to a national emergency or major disaster declared by the President or in the National Guard of a State under orders of the chief executive of that State in response to a disaster or civil disorder in such State.

c. **At Risk of Suicide.** For the purposes of this directive, at risk of suicide means exposure to, or the existence of, any of the following factors, to any degree, that increase the risk of suicidal ideation and/or behaviors: (1) health risk factors, including mental health challenges, substance use disorder, serious or chronic health conditions or pain, and traumatic brain injury, (2) environmental factors, including prolonged stress, stressful life events, unemployment, homelessness, recent loss, and legal or financial challenges, and (3) historical risk factors, including previous suicide attempts, family history of suicide, and history of abuse, neglect, or trauma, including military sexual trauma. ***NOTE: At risk for suicide for SSG Fox SPGP service eligibility is not equivalent to criteria for VHA's High Risk for Suicide-Patient Record Flags as included in VHA Directive 2008-036, Use of Patient Record Flags to Identify Patients at High Risk for Suicide, dated July 18, 2008. SSG Fox SPGP determination of risk of suicide is made using a VA-determined screening tool and includes the presence of recent suicidal ideation or behaviors.***

d. **Grantee.** For the purposes of this directive, a grantee is an eligible entity that is awarded a SP services grant under 38 C.F.R. part 78.

e. **Participant.** For the purposes of this directive, a participant is an eligible individual or their family member who is receiving SP services for which they are eligible from a grantee.

f. **Suicide Prevention Services.** For the purposes of this directive, and as further described in 38 C.F.R. part 78 and the SSG Fox SPGP Grantee Program Guide, SP services include any of the following services a SSG Fox SPGP grantee may provide to address the needs of a participant:

(1) Outreach.

- (2) Baseline mental health screening.
- (3) Education.
- (4) Clinical services for emergency treatment.
- (5) Case management services.
- (6) Peer support services.
- (7) Assistance in obtaining VA benefits.
- (8) Assistance in obtaining and coordinating other public benefits and assistance with emergent needs.
- (9) Nontraditional and innovative approaches and treatment practices.
- (10) Other services.

## 9. REFERENCES

- a. P.L. 116 – 117 § 201.
- b. 38 U.S.C. §§ 101, 1720F, 1720D, 1720I, 1712A.
- c. 2 C.F.R. part 200.
- d. 5 C.F.R. subpart 2634 subpart I.
- e. 38 C.F.R. part 78.
- f. VA Directive 0321, Serious Incident Reports, dated June 6, 2012.
- g. VHA Directive 1160.07, Suicide Prevention Program, dated May 24, 2021.
- h. VHA Directive 1601A.02(3) Eligibility Determination, dated July 6, 2020.
- i. VHA Directive 2008-036, Use of Patient Record Flags to Identify Patients at High Risk for Suicide, dated July 18, 2008.
- j. Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations Guide to VHA Issue Briefs: [https://vssc.med.va.gov/IBTracker/Docs/Guide%20to%20Issue%20Briefs%20\(Updated%204-6-22\).pdf](https://vssc.med.va.gov/IBTracker/Docs/Guide%20to%20Issue%20Briefs%20(Updated%204-6-22).pdf). **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*
- k. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration. 2018 – 2028 Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention National Strategy for Prevention of Veteran Suicide (2018): [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/docs/Office-of-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-Prevention-National-Strategy-for-Preventing-Veterans-Suicide.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/docs/Office-of-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-Prevention-National-Strategy-for-Preventing-Veterans-Suicide.pdf).

l. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration. National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report (2021): <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2021/2021-National-Veteran-Suicide-Prevention-Annual-Report-FINAL-9-8-21.pdf>.

m. The White House, Biden-Harris Administration. Reducing Military and Veteran Suicide: Advancing a Comprehensive, Cross-Sector, Evidence-Informed Public Health Strategy. (2021): <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Military-and-Veteran-Suicide-Prevention-Strategy.pdf>.