

# THE CONNECTED VETERAN

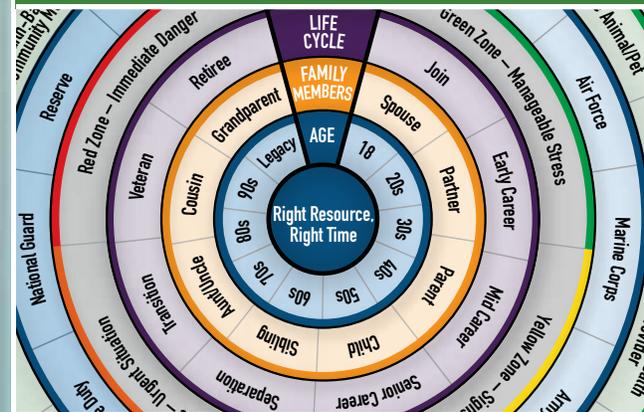
A Publication for Service Members, Veterans, Family Members & Community Helpers



Complimentary Copy



How 7 Arizona Veterans Overcame Obstacles



Be Connected® Ecosystem of Support



Resource Guide for Veterans & Helpers



866-4AZ-VETS

# Thank You

## FOR YOUR SERVICE!

Whether you are still serving, haven't worn the uniform for decades or are a family member, we want you to know that you and your family are not alone.

Arizona has come together to ensure service members, Veterans, families and communities can connect to the resources and support needed, no matter what phase of life you are in and what challenges and opportunities are coming your way.

In 2017, we created the **Be Connected**® program, which serves the entire state of Arizona. If there is one thing you take away from reading this magazine, we hope it's this: **Program 866-4AZ-VETS (429-8387) into your phone to contact Be Connected for resources, benefits information and more.** This can be for you, a family member or someone you are helping.

Our Be Connected team is standing by to assist (pages 10-11) and we also have additional ways to connect to help and support, as well as how to be a community helper for those around you (pages 13-14). Please reach out anytime, anywhere across Arizona.

Sincerely,



Col (ret) Wanda Wright, MBA, MPA, MA  
Director  
Arizona Department  
of Veterans' Services



Michael Fisher  
Director  
VA Desert Pacific  
Healthcare Network



Thomas Winkel, MA, LPC, NCC  
Director  
Arizona Coalition  
for Military Families

### Be Connected Leadership Partners



• Phoenix • Tucson • Prescott  
• Phoenix Regional Office



Special thanks to the Office of Governor Doug Ducey, the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family and the Arizona Center for Rural Health for their partnership and support for Be Connected.



The *Connected Veteran* is a publication of the Be Connected® program supporting the employment, benefit, health and wellness needs of Arizona's service members, veterans and their families. This publication was made possible in part through funding from the Arizona Center for Rural Health and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona.

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES**  
Arizona Coalition for Military Families  
c/o Technical Assistance Partnership of Arizona  
2929 N. Central Avenue, Suite 1550  
Phoenix, Arizona 85012  
(602) 753-8802  
[www.ArizonaCoalition.org](http://www.ArizonaCoalition.org)  
[www.BeConnectedAZ.org](http://www.BeConnectedAZ.org)

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Editor-in-Chief: **Nicola Winkel, MPA**

Be sure to follow the Arizona Coalition for Military Families and the Be Connected program on social media @ArizonaCoalition and @BeConnectedAZ for resources, training, news and events.



Be Connected is a program operated by the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, in partnership with the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Office of Governor Doug Ducey, the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), TriWest Healthcare Alliance and many other public and private sector partners across Arizona. The Be Connected program is nationally recognized for an upstream approach to suicide prevention and a collective impact model.

#### COVER PHOTO CREDITS

(clockwise from left)  
1st Sgt. Robin Brown;  
Cpl. Uriel Avendano; Ashley Schulte;  
Airman 1st Class Jacob Wongwai

# VA



- Phoenix • Tucson • Prescott
- Phoenix Regional Office

[www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov)

As VA Directors whose responsibilities include providing benefits and health care to more than half a million of Arizona's service members, Veterans and their families, now or in the future, we recognize the importance of VA and community partnership to ensure the best care and support for all.

**Be Connected is a nationally recognized statewide partnership** that engages, equips and connects our community in support of all who serve. This unprecedented collaboration between federal, state, and community

# Meet Arizona's VA Leadership

organizations includes hundreds of organizations and thousands of people across Arizona who provide a myriad of resources in communities statewide.

We are joined by our thousands of VA employees statewide in a commitment to work together with our state and local partners in support of all who serve and their families. We encourage you and your family to contact Be Connected if the team can help in any way, including with facilitating connection to your VA health care and other benefits.



Alyshia Smith, DNP, RN, NEA-BC

Director  
Phoenix VA  
Health Care System



Jennifer Gutowski, MHA FACHE

Director  
Southern AZ VA  
Health Care System



Jean J. Gurga, MA, OTR/L

Director  
Northern AZ VA  
Health Care System



Chris Norton

Director  
Phoenix VA  
Regional Office

# Connecting Arizona's Veterans

Be Connected is an open door for all service members, veterans & their families

## Why do we need Be Connected?

Arizona is home to more than **500,000 service members, veterans and their families**. They live, work, attend school, recreate and serve in every community across our state. They also may access services and support through different systems and providers to address a range of needs including employment, benefits, health care, education, housing and more. For example, some veterans choose to access health care at the VA while others choose to use community providers. All this adds up to a complex landscape of resources and support. **Be Connected is here to help with personalized support to connect to the right resources at the right time.**



Be Connected can help with connection to resources to address a range of topics.

## How does Be Connected help?

We have a statewide team that is ready and willing to help connect you or a loved one to the right resource at the right time (meet some of them on pages 10-11). You can access our team by calling **866-4AZ-VETS** (429-8387) or visiting [www.BeConnectedAZ.org](http://www.BeConnectedAZ.org). Be Connected also maps resources statewide (2,400+ and counting) across more than 200 possible criteria for resource matching, and Be Connected offers training to everyone in our community so you can be an open door for someone else who needs help and support. This includes more than **5,000 people trained in Military/Veteran Resource Navigation** and many more trained in military/veteran culture and specialty training, like becoming an Arizona Veteran Supportive Employer.

## Who uses Be Connected?

Everyone! Service members, veterans, family members and helpers from every community across Arizona use Be Connected. In three years of operation, our Be Connected team has provided more than **40,000 support line and navigator encounters**. These encounters range from help finding a phone number for a particular resource to navigating complex situations and systems of care.

## Why is earlier intervention important?

A recent report by the Arizona Department of Health Services showed that **Arizona veterans are at more than double the risk of suicide than the general population**. Be Connected uses an **upstream model of suicide prevention** where the goal is to address issues earlier in the stress continuum (green, yellow and light orange) rather than waiting until a crisis occurs (red zone).

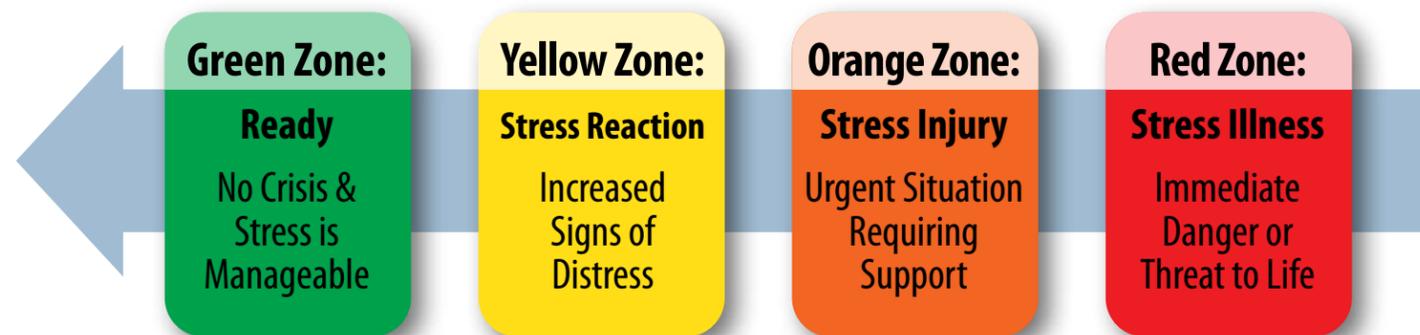
## Does upstream prevention work?

Be Connected is modeled off of a highly effective program within the Arizona National Guard. From 2008 – 2010, the Arizona National Guard had the highest rate of suicide in the history of the organization. This was the height of the post-9/11 deployments, and there were many challenges facing Guard members and their families. The Arizona Coalition for Military Families partnered with the Guard to create the Be Resilient program. **For the three years that program operated (2011 – 2013), there were zero suicides and an increase in use of supportive services** within the Arizona National Guard. Be Connected seeks to provide this level of support across Arizona's entire military and veteran population, and the program includes an ongoing focus on data and evaluation, including two years of grant funding from the CDC and CDC Foundation for program evaluation.

## Are other states doing similar work?

There are state teams across the country focused on similar efforts. Since 2009, the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, and now the Be Connected program, have served as a **national model for how the public and private sector can work together to serve our military and veteran community**. Our Arizona models for state-level collective impact and upstream veteran suicide prevention have been nationally recognized as best practices by entities such as the Office of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, National Guard Bureau, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the White House over the past decade.

The goal is upstream prevention through earlier intervention in the stress continuum.



## SERVING AS A NATIONAL LEADER

When it comes to the community partnering to serve veterans, Arizona leads the nation. **Be Connected** serves as a national model for how states connect the military, government and community in support of all who serve.

*The New York Times*  
September 2019

### Be Connected

“represents a rare – and quiet – spot of bipartisan cooperation”

in the national focus on how to address veteran suicide.

# Career Navigation

CONNECTING TO MEANINGFUL CAREERS  
& OPPORTUNITIES

Looking for a new career path? Are you unemployed or underemployed? Would you like to develop your skills and knowledge to increase your income potential?

Our **Be Connected: Career Navigation** team is here to help match you, your spouse and your family members to the right career opportunity. We have helped service members, veterans and family members just like you make a career change, rejoin the workforce and find their next opportunity to serve. For more information on the full range of Career Navigation services we offer at no cost, please visit [www.ArizonaCoalition.org/CareerNavigation](http://www.ArizonaCoalition.org/CareerNavigation) or contact our team at 866-4AZ-VETS (429-8387).

## Be Connected: Career Navigation Services

- 🔗 Career counseling
- 🔗 Interview preparation
- 🔗 Resume coaching
- 🔗 Matching to Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers
- 🔗 SkillBridge placement  
(for transitioning service members)

**Did you know there are 200+ Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers (AVSE)?** These are public and private sector employers that have made an extra effort to train and equip their organization to recruit, hire, retain and grow military-affiliated employees. View the AVSEs online: [www.BeConnectedAZ.org/employers](http://www.BeConnectedAZ.org/employers)



AVSEs gather for a recognition event just before the COVID-19 shut down (photo by Ashley Schulte).

Special thanks to Boeing for their partnership on the **Total Navigation** pilot program, which focuses on providing wraparound support to Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve component service members and their family members for career transition or dual career opportunities.



Career Navigation is provided in partnership and coordination with the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family, Arizona Commerce Authority, Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity and the Arizona@Work state workforce system. The Arizona SkillBridge program connects transitioning service members and Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers statewide via a Memorandum of Understanding between Luke Air Force Base, Ft. Huachuca, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, Arizona Department of Economic Security and the Arizona Coalition for Military Families.

# Partners in Progress

TRUE PARTNERSHIP IN SUPPORT OF ALL WHO SERVE

Here are four partners that have been instrumental in the development and advancement of Arizona's Be Connected program.



**The Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family (GOYFF)** works to strengthen the health and safety of Arizona's communities. Over the last decade, GOYFF has been instrumental in Arizona's statewide effort to serve military members, veterans & their families, including support of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, the Be Connected program and Career Navigation. [www.GOYFF.AZ.gov](http://www.GOYFF.AZ.gov)

“Be Connected is a human to human approach to help prevent suicide. It's access to services and support that individuals and their families need right now. It's just a privilege to be part of this partnership and to continue to grow this program together.”

- Maria Fuentes, Director



**TriWest Healthcare Alliance** currently partners with the VA to provide health care to veterans in the local community. As an Arizona-based company, TriWest has been a partner of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families for over a decade and a partner in Be Connected since the launch in 2017. [www.TriWest.com](http://www.TriWest.com)

“Arizona is not only a service area for us, it's also our home base of operations. The level of partnership among all of the stakeholders and the care and concern they have for effectively serving our military, veteran and family population is notable. Be Connected brings it all together and is a replicable program that serves as a national model.”

- Dave McIntyre, President & CEO



**The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)**, Arizona's Medicaid program, provides physical and behavioral health care services for more than 2 million Arizonans. The state's Suicide Prevention Specialist, a key AHCCCS staff member, is an integral partner in the development and implementation of the Be Connected program and state suicide prevention efforts. [www.AZAHCCCS.gov](http://www.AZAHCCCS.gov)

“For the 2 million Arizonans served by Medicaid, including many veterans and families, AHCCCS works to ensure that the health care services offered by the program address the needs of the whole person – both physical and behavioral – including streamlined care coordination that improves overall health outcomes. We are happy to be able to partner with the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services and the Arizona Coalition for Military Families to expand the reach of the Be Connected program.”

- Jami Snyder, Director



**Arizona State University (ASU)** is recognized by U.S. News & World Report as the country's most innovative school. For the past three years, ASU has played an important role in program evaluation for Be Connected and continues to advance our collective understanding of the impact of upstream suicide prevention efforts. [www.ASU.edu](http://www.ASU.edu)

“Arizona is a sandbox for innovation and our focus on serving our military and veteran community is no exception. With extensive recognition on the national and state level, Be Connected shows what can be accomplished with the public and private sector working together. ASU will continue to partner in advancing our collective knowledge on how best to reach and serve this community and how upstream prevention can reduce the rate of veteran suicide.”

- Drew Trojanowski, Vice President

# Real People, Real Success

## HOW BE CONNECTED HELPED THESE ARIZONANS THRIVE

The Be Connected team is here to connect service members, veterans, family members and community helpers anywhere in Arizona to information, support and resources. Here are a few examples of how Be Connected helps.

### Making Repairs

#### *Helping a veteran get where they needed to go*

A VA social worker called the Be Connected support line looking for help for a veteran in a rural community who had gone blind and needed to relocate their motorhome to Phoenix. The motorhome was in disrepair and needed a lot of work. The support line was able to connect the veteran to Be Connected partner organizations to help fund the repairs and to a local Veteran Service Organization to coordinate transport of the motorhome, helping the veteran get to where they needed to be.

### Essential Pet Care

#### *Pet care allows for access to needed treatment*

A veteran reached out because he needed help caring for a pet. The Be Connected support line team was able to connect the veteran to a volunteer in his community to help with the pet care. As the volunteer and veteran talked further, it emerged that the veteran was delaying entering a month-long substance abuse treatment program because he didn't have anyone to watch the pet. The volunteer offered to watch the pet and as a result the veteran was able to get the treatment he needed.

### Camaraderie Re-established

#### *Helping veterans build connection*

A veteran called the Be Connected support line looking for transportation resources. It turned out both the veteran and the support line team member were Marines. As they began to talk a little more, the veteran caller opened up about being lonely and that he wished he had stayed in so he would still be connected to the Marines he served with. The support line team member gave some suggestions for ways to find and connect to veterans the caller had served with, and a few days later the veteran called back to share that he reconnected with three of his fellow Marines and that helped to alleviate his feelings of loneliness.

### Safe at Home

#### *Helping a veteran connect to housing, food and benefits*

An elderly, widowed veteran in northwest Arizona was experiencing homelessness and struggling to find housing. She had three dogs and could not locate a rental that would allow her pets. A Be Connected navigator was able to help the veteran find a landlord that would allow all three dogs. The navigator then helped get the veteran a landline in her new home, as well as arranging for food stamps and assisting her with a pension claim. The veteran told the navigator's supervisor that, "I was at the end. If it wasn't for the navigator, I wouldn't be here."

### Working Together to Extend Support

#### *Trusted helpers make a difference*

A veteran in northeastern Arizona called an Arizona@Work employment team member expressing he had the intent to die by suicide. The veteran said he only trusted that person and the local Be Connected navigator. The Arizona@Work team member and Be Connected navigator worked together to help the veteran and were able to deescalate the situation and get him the resources and support needed, preventing suicide.

### Coordinating Care

#### *Integrating support for a common goal*

A veteran was referred to Be Connected for several needs, the most important of which was a malfunctioning air conditioning unit. The veteran had a fiduciary who handled his finances, however the fiduciary was not responding to calls from the veteran, the veteran's sister or Be Connected. The Be Connected support line team member reached out to his mental health case manager who helped switch the veteran to a new fiduciary. That fiduciary was able to help purchase the new air conditioning unit needed for his room. While this veteran has a lot of support in place, coordinating those supports was essential to ensure his needs were met. The veteran's sister later called the support line to express how thankful she was for all of the help Be Connected provided the veteran.

### Making the Transition Easier

#### *Lightening the load for an active duty service member*

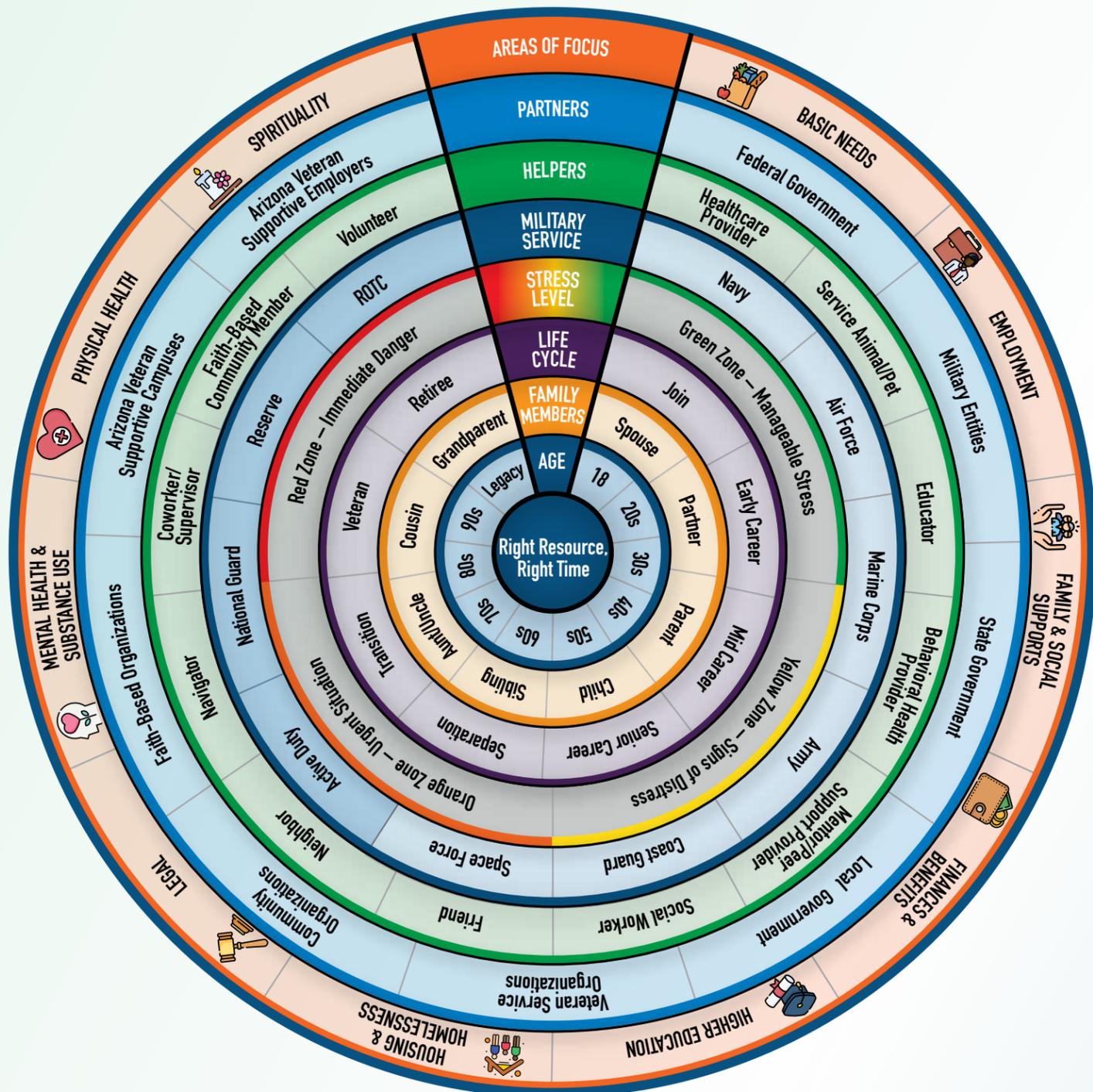
An active duty service member entered the Be Connected: Career Navigation program as he prepared to transition out of the military and into the civilian workforce. This can be a challenging time under the best of circumstances. He shared what a difference it makes to have the Career Navigation team behind you during these uncertain times: "Keep up the good work! These programs and activities that you guys provide mean a lot. I honestly feel VERY nervous about this transition (especially in the middle of this pandemic/global economic crash), just like a lot of other vets going through this right now. But with an organization like yours, it makes the load of worry a bit less. Thank you very much."



Contact the Be Connected team anytime, anywhere across Arizona at 866-4AZ-VETS (429-8387).



# Be Connected Ecosystem of Support



## *The Right Resource at the Right Time*

Because every person, family and situation is unique, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to resources and support. That's why the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, a nationally-recognized public/private partnership, brings the military, government and community together to build support for all who serve. Collectively, we serve our entire military, veteran and family community, including all ages, stages of military life, family affiliations and areas of need.

Our mission is to connect every Arizona service member, veteran and their family members to support and resources for wellness, employment, benefits and more! We achieve this mission in partnership with a unified network of people, organizations and communities that make up the Be Connected Ecosystem of Support.

This ecosystem includes dozens of systems, hundreds of organizations and thousands of people across the state so that we can offer customized support for the many diverse needs that exist. We work with our partners to find the custom combination of resources to address each person and family's specific needs, with the goal of addressing issues early, or upstream, before these problems and concerns can escalate into a crisis.

**Areas of Focus** – Be Connected focuses on all of the social determinants of health, by connecting service members, veterans & family members to support and resources.

**Partners** – We deliver services and support through our unified, statewide, interconnected partner network, enabling us to maximize our collective impact.

**Helpers** – Helpers play a key role in engaging and connecting people and families to the resources and support they need, when they need it.

**Military Service** – We're here for all service members and veterans—regardless of branch, component, length/era of service and discharge status.

**Stress Level** – Our upstream approach means support is available across the stress levels, with a goal of earlier intervention.

**Life Cycle** – Be Connected offers resources throughout the military life cycle, from the start of service to separation and beyond.

**Family Members** – Every family member matters to Be Connected and our team is here for you with support and connection to resources.

**Age** – As your needs change and evolve throughout your life, Be Connected is here for you. Reach out to our team today for personalized support.

Our team is here for you. Call 866-4AZ-VETS (866-429-8387) or visit [www.ConnectVeterans.org](http://www.ConnectVeterans.org) to get connected.

# Helping Rural Arizona Veterans and Families



More than a quarter of Arizona veterans and their families live in rural communities. Be Connected is partnering around the state to strengthen access to care and connection to resources for our veteran community.



## Rural Arizona Connects

Rural Arizona Connects focuses on health care and mental health services for rural veterans and their families, who may live a significant distance from health care facilities. The Arizona Center for Rural Health and the Arizona Coalition for Military

Families partner to strengthen access and coordination of care in targeted rural communities, with a goal of upstream suicide prevention. With support from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona's Mobilize AZ initiative, the project forms partnerships with Critical Access Hospitals, Rural Health Clinics and other community organizations, as well as conducts outreach to veterans and families in rural communities. [www.CRH.Arizona.edu/rural-az-connects](http://www.CRH.Arizona.edu/rural-az-connects)



## Be Connected: Door-to-Door

A lack of reliable transportation can be a barrier for veterans and family members in rural communities. Based on a need identified by the VA, the Be Connected team developed a volunteer driver program. Be Connected Door-to-Door is launching in northern Arizona with support from the NARBHA Institute and the Maricopa Association of Governments. Due to COVID-19, initially the program will focus on no-contact delivery of essential items like food boxes with the eventual goal of providing transportation to

connect veterans and family members to medical appointments, the grocery store, pharmacy, recreational activities and more. [www.ArizonaCoalition.org/transportation](http://www.ArizonaCoalition.org/transportation)



## Together With Veterans

Together With Veterans (TWV) is a national VA project focused on engaging and equipping rural communities to focus on veteran suicide prevention through a five-phase process. This year, the Weaver Mountains community outside of Prescott became a TWV community. A Be Connected team member is part of the steering committee for the Weaver Mountains team and Arizona Coalition for Military Families Project Director Nicola Winkel serves on the national Advisory Board for TWV.

[www.TogetherWithVeterans.org](http://www.TogetherWithVeterans.org)

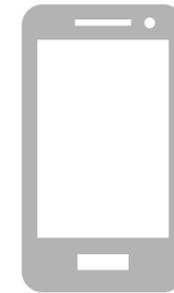


# How to Get Help

Our team is here for you. We have been working with Arizona's military and veteran community for over a decade, solving problems, connecting systems and focusing on the right resources at the right time. Contact the Be Connected team anytime, anywhere across Arizona.

Cut out this helpful guide and keep it nearby should you, your family or neighbor need a hand.

## Call

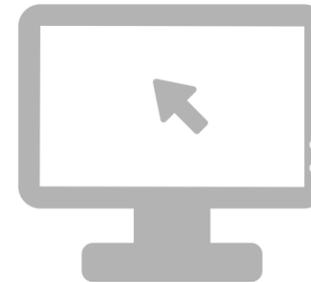


The best way to contact **Be Connected** is to call **866-4AZ-VETS** (429-8387).

Our **Arizona-based, highly trained team** will answer. If all of the team members are on calls, messages are returned within one business day.

You can also **connect to crisis 24/7 with one touch** through the Be Connected support line or the National Veterans Crisis Line at **800-273-8255, option 1**.

## Click



Search our network of **resources**, including **career opportunities** and **programs** in your part of Arizona at:

[www.BeConnectedAZ.org](http://www.BeConnectedAZ.org)

## Connect



Once you reach out to **Be Connected**, a member of our team will **listen**, help to **identify areas of need** and provide personalized support to **navigate and connect** to the right resources at the right time.

Services provided by the Be Connected Team are offered at no cost to you.

# How to Give Help



If you're interested in getting more involved in helping service members, veterans and their families in your community, we have a variety of opportunities for you. Every single person in our community can make a difference, and Be Connected is here to support you as a helper.

You can play an important role in helping Arizona service members, veterans and their families.

**Program 866-4AZ-VETS (429-8387) into your phone**, and share the contact with anyone in Arizona who needs support and connection to resources.



## Share

Equip yourself to be an open door and a community helper. There are many options for online learning from **Be Connected** and our partner organizations.

**[www.BeConnectedAZ.org/learn](http://www.BeConnectedAZ.org/learn)**



## Learn

Organizations are invited to become **Be Connected** partner organizations and Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers. Be a part of supporting all who serve!

**[www.ArizonaCoalition.org/partner](http://www.ArizonaCoalition.org/partner)**



## Engage

Services provided by the Be Connected Team are offered at no cost to you or your organization.



Cut out this helpful guide and keep it nearby should you, your family or neighbor need a hand.



**866-4AZ-VETS | [www.BeConnectedAZ.org](http://www.BeConnectedAZ.org)**

# Follow Us!

## @BeConnectedAZ



# RESOURCES *for* VETERANS

## 866-4AZ-VETS



### EMPLOYMENT



### BENEFITS



### WELLNESS *and more*

The Be Connected team is here to connect you  
and your family to the resources you need.



**beconnected**  
service members • veterans • families • communities

[www.BeConnectedAZ.org](http://www.BeConnectedAZ.org)