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**UCHealth launches innovative community collaborative
 to reduce veteran suicide in El Paso County**

*Program offers direct access to care, crisis support
 and behavioral health services – all at no cost to veterans and their family members.*

**Colorado Springs, Colo.**  (June 15, 2022) – UCHealth has been chosen to lead a grant-funded veteran suicide-prevention program in El Paso County that can serve up to 700 veterans and their family members per year. The program is in partnership with the Colorado Behavioral Health Administration.

Services for the program – called Next Chapter – will be provided at no cost and range from therapy and counseling to finding employment and access to housing support. The program launched last week and is now serving clients.

“If we can provide veterans with the help they need by providing stabilizing services, we can avoid crisis situations,” said Damian McCabe, the director of behavioral health-military affairs for UCHealth.

“There can be risk factors for suicide when a person transitions from military life,” said McCabe, who leads a UCHealth team of clinicians who are also veterans. “There are many challenges facing veterans, and this program is aimed at supporting them and empowering them to move forward, and to let them know there is help and there are resources available and that they can move into their next chapter of life.”

While UCHealth will provide a lot of the specialized services, it also will be contracting with therapists in the community who understand and are knowledgeable about military life. Other key partners include Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center – the first stop for those seeking services – and Colorado Springs NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) in support of family members.

A unique feature of the program is that all veterans and their family members are eligible for services. There are no exclusions based on discharge status or when or where a veteran may have served – from those newly transitioning from the military after a few years of service to those who made the military their career.

The origin for Next Chapter was [Colorado Senate Bill 129](https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb21-129), which called for the creation of a program specifically to address suicide among veterans in El Paso County. In 2020, an average of one veteran died by suicide each week in the county.

The Colorado Behavioral Health Administration awarded UCHealth the contract for the program in May with an initial pilot program period through June 2025. A public health “call to action” campaign about the program will launch by July 1 and will include several different TV spots, online messaging, podcasts, direct mailing, and community advertising on public transit and other gathering spaces in El Paso County. All actors in the promotional pieces are area veterans who understand the need for such a program and wanted to help publicize it.

To access services, veterans and their family members can make an appointment through the program website – [www.NextChapterCo.org](http://www.NextChapterCo.org) – or by calling 1-888-719-VETS.

“This is a no-cost, stigma free program. Come ask. Let us help you,” McCabe said. “People don’t get help because they think they can’t afford it. We’re going to take that barrier away.”

If you are a veteran in crisis, help is available now: Call 1-800-273-8255, then press 1. Or text 838255 for online chat support.

**About UCHealth**

UCHealth is an innovative, nonprofit health system that delivers the highest quality medical care with an excellent patient experience. [UCHealth](http://www.uchealth.org/) includes 28,000 employees, 12 acute-care full-service hospitals and hundreds of physicians across Colorado, southern Wyoming and western Nebraska. With [University of Colorado Hospital](https://www.uchealth.org/locations/uchealth-university-of-colorado-hospital-uch/) on the [CU Anschutz Medical Campus](https://www.cuanschutz.edu/) as its academic anchor and the only adult academic medical center in the region, UCHealth is dedicated to providing unmatched patient care in the Rocky Mountain West. Offering more than 150 clinic locations, UCHealth pushes the boundaries of medicine, providing advanced treatments and clinical trials and improving health through innovation.