

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2174

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the
Veterans Crisis Line.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 30, 2017

Mr. YOUNG (for himself and Mr. DONNELLY) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a
study on the Veterans Crisis Line.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Crisis Line
5 Study Act of 2017”.

6 **SEC. 2. STUDY ON EFFICACY OF VETERANS CRISIS LINE.**

7 (a) STUDY.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall
8 conduct a study on the outcomes and the efficacy of the
9 Veterans Crisis Line during the five-year period beginning

1 January 1, 2014, based on an analysis of national suicide
2 data and data collected from the Veterans Crisis Line.

3 (b) MATTERS INCLUDED.—The study under sub-
4 section (a) shall address the following:

5 (1) The efficacy of the Veterans Crisis Line in
6 leading veterans to sustained mental health regi-
7 mens, by determining—

8 (A) the number of veterans who, after con-
9 tacting the Veterans Crisis Line and being re-
10 ferred to a suicide prevention specialist, begin
11 and continue mental health care furnished by
12 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

13 (B) the number of veterans who, after con-
14 tacting the Veterans Crisis Line and being re-
15 ferred to a suicide prevention specialist, ei-
16 ther—

17 (i) begin mental health care furnished
18 by the Secretary but do not continue such
19 care; or

20 (ii) do not begin such care.

21 (2) The visibility of the Veterans Crisis Line,
22 by determining—

23 (A) the number of veterans who contact
24 the Veterans Crisis Line and have not pre-

1 viously received hospital care or medical serv-
2 ices furnished by the Secretary; and

3 (B) the number of veterans who contact
4 the Veterans Crisis Line and have previously
5 received hospital care or medical services fur-
6 nished by the Secretary.

7 (3) The role of the Veterans Crisis Line as part
8 of the mental health care services of the Depart-
9 ment, by determining, of the veterans who are en-
10 rolled in the health care system established under
11 section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code, who
12 contact the Veterans Crisis Line, the number who
13 are under the care of a mental health care provider
14 of the Department at the time of such contact.

15 (4) Whether receiving sustained mental health
16 care affects suicidality and whether veterans pre-
17 viously receiving mental health care furnished by the
18 Secretary use the Veterans Crisis Line in times of
19 crisis, with respect to the veterans described in para-
20 graph (3), by determining the time frame between
21 receiving such care and the time of such contact.

22 (5) The effectiveness of the Veterans Crisis
23 Line in assisting veterans at risk for suicide when
24 the Veterans Crisis Line is contacted by a non-vet-
25 eran, by determining, of the number of non-veterans

1 who contact the Veterans Crisis Line looking for
2 support in assisting a veteran, how many of such in-
3 dividuals receive support in having a veteran begin
4 to receive mental health care furnished by the Sec-
5 retary.

6 (6) The overall efficacy of the Veterans Crisis
7 Line in preventing suicides and whether the number
8 of contacts affects the efficacy, by determining—

9 (A) the number of veterans who contact
10 the Veterans Crisis Line who ultimately commit
11 or attempt suicide; and

12 (B) of such veterans, how many times did
13 a veteran contact the Veterans Crisis Line prior
14 to committing or attempting suicide.

15 (7) The long-term efficacy of the Veterans Cri-
16 sis Line in preventing repeated suicide attempts and
17 whether the efficacy is temporary, by determining, of
18 the number of veterans who contacted the Veterans
19 Crisis Line and did not commit or attempt suicide
20 during the following six-month period, the number
21 who contacted the Veterans Crisis Line in crisis at
22 a later time and thereafter did commit or attempt
23 suicide.

24 (8) Whether referral to mental health care af-
25 fects the risk of suicide, by determining—

1 (A) the number of veterans who contact
2 the Veterans Crisis Line who are not referred
3 to, or do not continue receiving, mental health
4 care who commit suicide; and

5 (B) the number of veterans described in
6 paragraph (1)(A) who commit or attempt sui-
7 cide.

8 (9) The efficacy of the Veterans Crisis Line to
9 promote continued mental health care in those vet-
10 erans who are at high risk for suicide whose suicide
11 was prevented, by determining, of the number of vet-
12 erans who contacted the Veterans Crisis Line and
13 did not commit or attempt suicide soon thereafter,
14 the number that begin and continue to receive men-
15 tal health care furnished by the Secretary.

16 (c) DATA COLLECTION PRACTICES.—During the por-
17 tion of the five-year period of study under subsection (a)
18 after the date of the enactment of this Act, data shall be
19 collected in the same manner that it had been collected
20 during the portion of the period of the study before such
21 date of enactment. Data collection shall not be construed
22 as being extended, contracted, or modified in any way due
23 to the enactment of this Act.

24 (d) SUBMISSION.—Not later than March 1, 2020, the
25 Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Af-

1 fairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Af-
2 fairs of the House of Representatives the study conducted
3 under subsection (a).

4 (e) VETERANS CRISIS LINE DEFINED.—In this sec-
5 tion, the term “Veterans Crisis Line” means the toll-free
6 hotline for veterans established under section 1720F(h) of
7 title 38, United States Code.

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