



**NEWS RELEASE**  
Nevada Department of Veterans Services  
"SERVING NEVADA'S HEROES"

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**For Immediate Release/Photo Attached**

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**Nevada Department of Veterans Services Earns  
Fourth National 'Pillar of Excellence' Award**

(Reno, Nev.) – The [Nevada Department of Veterans Services](#) (NDVS) has been awarded its fourth 'Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award' from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for its suicide prevention initiative, "Operation Mission Ready (OMR)."

The OMR program destigmatizes mental health treatment through a unique and different approach. First responders augment mental health professionals, in presenting command-sponsored suicide prevention presentations. While mental health professionals are compassionate and knowledgeable, the NDVS team noticed these skilled professionals were not perceived by the intended audience as having a similar culture, or "shared warrior" experience. The first responders were perceived as being more "credible" and "relatable." This perception made a big difference in how the information was received.

OMR was launched in March 2019. Within the first six months of having first responders present suicide prevention presentations members of the Nevada National Guard, the number of those seeking mental health assistance increased by 38%.

"We are so very proud of our Veterans Services Department and their hardworking, talented team for continuing to demonstrate excellence and innovation in serving our service members, veterans and their families," said Nevada Governor Steve Sisolak. "Our goal is zero deaths by suicide and while we still have a long way to go, every incremental improvement gets us closer to where we need to be and this program is helping to move the mark."

Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary Donald Remy presented the award to NDVS and veterans affairs departments in three other states at the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) Conference held in Reno, Nevada September 13th – 16th, 2021. The award recognizes excellence and innovation by honoring outstanding state programs that support veterans within their states.

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NASDVA represents veterans' affairs departments or agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

"It is quite an honor to receive national recognition amongst your peers," said Kat Miller, NDVS Director. "This award speaks to the level of excellence demonstrated every single day by members of the NDVS team. I am grateful for their creativity, passion and continued dedication in serving Nevada's veterans and families."

### **About the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS)**

NDVS is dedicated to helping Nevada veterans obtain the services and benefits they have earned through military service. In addition to offering benefits counseling and assistance, which includes assistance with filing VA claims at no cost, NDVS manages the Northern and Southern Nevada State Veterans Homes and the Northern and Southern Veterans Memorial Cemeteries. To learn more about NDVS programs or services visit [www.veterans.nv.gov](http://www.veterans.nv.gov) and follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/NVDeptVeterans) @NVDeptVeterans and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NevadaDepartmentofVeteransServices) @NevadaDepartmentofVeteransServices

\*Photo Attached\*

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Caption (Left to Right) – Tom Palladino, NASDVA President; Fred Wagar, NDVS Deputy Director of Operations; Amy Garland, NDVS Deputy Director of Healthcare Services; Katherine Miller, NDVS Director; Donald Remy, VA Deputy Secretary