

Legislation for Death and Dying

The United States government has enacted several pieces of legislation to support the well-being of service members and veterans, including women. These laws address various aspects of military life and post-service transition, including mental health services, suicide prevention, and end-of-life care.

Current Legislation

Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019: Signed into law in October 2020, this act aims to improve mental health care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It includes provisions for suicide prevention, mental health education, and research on innovative treatment options¹. This law acknowledges the unique needs of female veterans, who experience higher rates of mental health disorders and suicide than their male counterparts.

Deborah Sampson Act: Part of the larger Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, the Deborah Sampson Act addresses gender disparities in VA healthcare. It establishes a dedicated office for women's health, expands care for newborn children of veterans, and improves legal and support services for victims of sexual harassment and assault².

Previous Legislation

Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act: Signed into law in 2015, this act directed the VA to collaborate with non-profit mental health organizations to prevent veteran suicides. It also required an annual third-party evaluation of the VA's mental health care and suicide prevention programs³.

Women Veterans Access to Quality Care Act of 2015: This bill aimed to improve the quality of care for women veterans at VA medical facilities. It required the VA to establish standards for women's health care and ensure their facilities could meet these standards⁴.

Despite these efforts, more work remains to be done. The increasing number of female service members and veterans, coupled with their unique health care needs related to death and dying, calls for continued legislative action. Future policies should focus on improving mental health services, reducing suicide rates, and ensuring access to high-quality end-of-life care for all women who have served in the military.

Footnotes

1. Congress.gov, "S.785 - Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019" [↵](#)
2. Congress.gov, "H.R.7105 - Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020" [↵](#)
3. Congress.gov, "H.R.203 - Clay Hunt SAV Act" [↵](#)
4. Congress.gov, "S.471 - Women Veterans Access to Quality Care Act of 2015" [↵](#)



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