

**To:** All Providers  
**From:** PerformCare  
**Date:** November 4, 2024  
**Subject:** VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guidelines/ Risk Management Decision Tree

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For November, PerformCare would like to share information related to the most current published clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) for the assessment and management of clients with chronic suicidal thinking. The Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) Clinical Practice Guidelines for Assessment and Management of Patients at Risk for Suicide Guidelines were published by the American Department of Veteran's Affairs and the Department of Defense in 2024. The guidelines include research as recent as March 2023. The American Psychiatric Association has not published CPGs since 2003. They are noted to be in revision and the APA has noted to reference the VA/DOD guidelines in the interim. While these guidelines were developed by the VA/DOD, they are applicable to the civilian population and provide information on the general public. They are not specific for use with a military population. To access these guidelines go to [https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/srb/VADoD-CPG-Suicide-Risk-Full-CPG-2024\\_Final\\_508.pdf](https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/srb/VADoD-CPG-Suicide-Risk-Full-CPG-2024_Final_508.pdf).

The VA/DOD CPGs are globally an excellent tool for current research, and standards of care for the assessment and management of chronic suicidal thinking. However, PerformCare would like to share a valuable resource embedded within the tool, which is both comprehensive and practical for provider use. The guidelines provide an algorithm, which serves as a step-by-step decision tree for managing clients with suicidal thoughts. VA/DOD describes this decision tree as a "clinical pathway" for making decisions. The decision tree is broken out into three modules for decision making and risk management. Module A includes a pathway for decision making for clients who are at acute risk. Module B is a stepwise approach for comprehensive clinical assessment of risk for suicide by a treatment provider. Lastly, Module C, is an algorithm for managing clients at acute risk. A full description of the decision tree is available for use within the guidelines or from the VA/DOD's pocket card. The pocket card is a valuable tool for clinicians to have a desk top reference. This can be found at [https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/srb/VADoD-CPG-Suicide-Risk-Pocket-Card-2024\\_Final\\_508.pdf](https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/srb/VADoD-CPG-Suicide-Risk-Pocket-Card-2024_Final_508.pdf). PerformCare recommends referencing and fully understanding the concepts underlying the decision tree and then utilizing the pocket guide as quick reference in their practice.

#### References

[https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/srb/VADoD-CPG-Suicide-Risk-Full-CPG-2024\\_Final\\_508.pdf](https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/srb/VADoD-CPG-Suicide-Risk-Full-CPG-2024_Final_508.pdf)

[https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/srb/VADoD-CPG-Suicide-Risk-Pocket-Card-2024\\_Final\\_508.pdf](https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/srb/VADoD-CPG-Suicide-Risk-Pocket-Card-2024_Final_508.pdf)