2020 Veteran Suicide Analysis

To better understand and report on changes in veteran suicide in the target area of Northeast Florida for the year 2020, The Fire Watch commissioned NLP Logix to perform an analysis of Florida veteran suicide data. NLP Logix reviewed the data and performed statistical analyses to identify areas where there are changes to veteran suicide rates. Data from this analysis included yearly summary data around veteran suicide including the following:

- Race
- Gender
- Age Group
- Mechanism of Suicide
- Census Tract of Residence (Rolls up to County)
  - Baker
  - Clay
  - Duval
  - Nassau
  - St. Johns
- Place of Death

In 2020, forty veterans took their lives in the five counties of Northeast Florida. This translates to a rate of 21.7 suicides per hundred thousand veterans. Comparing to the prior year, this represents a 48% decrease in the total number of suicides, and the lowest rate of suicide in the last 10 years. None of the individual counties experienced
an increase in the number of suicides from 2019. The number in Duval county dropped to 22, from 45 the prior year. Similarly, Clay County went from sixteen to five.

The mechanism for veteran suicides in Northeast Florida has consistently been heavily biased to firearms, with 78% of suicides from 2010-2019 being committed using a firearm. For 2020, 77.5% of suicides related to firearms. National trends indicate that firearms are the most frequently utilized mechanism of suicide for veterans, at a rate significantly higher than the general population. When compared to national trends, Northeast Florida has a slightly higher bias towards firearm-based suicide.

Suicide affected veterans in all age groups, from 20 to over 85. In 2020, the largest proportion of veteran suicides was in the 75-84 age group. In prior years, the highest proportion of suicides have occurred for veterans between
the ages of 65 and 74, followed by veterans between the ages of 45 and 54. Veteran suicides mostly occur in the home, with 85% of 2020 suicides occurring in the veteran’s home.

From 2010-2019, 92.2% of veteran suicides were committed by white veterans. In 2020, the rate of minority veteran suicides in the five county area increased from 7.8% to 10.0%. This increase is statistically significant. The rate of suicide for female veterans has not changed significantly from prior years. In 2020, 5% of veteran suicides were female.

The goal of The Fire Watch is to reduce the rate of veteran suicide from the 2019 rate by at least 25%. Overall, the five-county area has had a relatively stable rate of veteran suicide over the course of ten years. In 2020, a statistically significant decrease in this rate occurred. This decrease is promising, but insufficient to determine the success of the programs or the achievement of a systemic reduction in veteran suicides. To understand the impact of The Fire Watch, the veteran suicide rate will be tracked for years to come, with an expectation that a reduction lasting three or more years will identify a systemic reduction.