



Listening Program-Escalation Protocol

Purpose

Ensure veteran safety and appropriate support while maintaining the program's non-clinical boundaries.

Boundaries & Ethics

No clinical assessments or treatment, no promises of outcomes, maintain respect and cultural sensitivity.

Guiding Principles

- **Safety First:** If there is any indication of imminent risk to self or others, stop the conversation and escalate immediately.
- **Respect & Dignity:** Acknowledge emotions and avoid judgment or interrogation.
- **Minimum Necessary Disclosure:** Share only the information required to keep the veteran safe.
- **Non-Clinical Role:** Provide informational referrals only; do not assess, diagnose, or give advice.
- **Consent When Possible:** When not emergent, explain the reason for escalation and seek the veteran's agreement.

Risk Recognition

- **Direct statements** about self-harm, harm to others, or inability to stay safe.
- **Indirect indicators:** overwhelming distress, hopelessness, withdrawal, substance misuse combined with despair.
- **Contextual triggers:** recent traumatic events, loss, or escalating anger that could lead to harm.

If **any** of the above present, proceed to the **next steps**.

Step-by-Step Escalation

1. Identify & Reflect

- "I'm hearing that you're feeling [overwhelmed/hopeless/angry]. Thank you for trusting me with that."



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2. Clarify Safety (without clinical probing)

- “Are you feeling safe right now?”
- If *no* or *unsure* → **Treat as Imminent or Acute** (Decision Path A & B).

3. Explain Your Role & Next Step

- “I’m a volunteer listener—not a therapist—but I can help connect you right now.”

Decision Path-Choose the Appropriate Path

A. Imminent Danger (Now / Very Soon)

1. **Pause & Acknowledge:** “Thank you for telling me. Your safety matters.”
2. **Call Emergency Services (911)** or follow your site’s emergency protocol.
3. **Notify Family Care Coordinator** as soon as possible.
4. **Stay with the veteran (in person or on the line)** until help arrives or a warm handoff is completed.

B. Acute Distress (No Immediate Danger, but needs urgent support)

1. Offer a Warm Handoff to the **Veterans Crisis Line (dial 988, then press 1)** or text **838255**.
 - **Warm Handoff Script** - “With your permission, let’s call the Veterans Crisis Line together at **988, press 1**. I’ll stay on the line to help you connect.”
2. Contact the **Family Care Coordinator** to log and support next steps.
3. Encourage follow-up with **Qualified Listeners** at **720-600-0860** for resource navigation (VA/community).

C. Non-Urgent Need for Additional Support

1. Provide the **Qualified Listeners number: 720-600-0860** for information about VA or community resources.
2. Offer scheduling for a future listening session if the veteran wants.
3. Document minimally and notify the coordinator.



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Roles & Responsibilities

Volunteer Listener: recognize signs, escalate, notify coordinator. Coordinator: log, support.
Qualified Listeners: resource navigation.

Coordinator Notification

Immediately after the situation is stable, contact the **Family Care Coordinator** with a concise summary:

- Date/time, listener name
- Veteran information & mission number
- Trigger (e.g., 'expressed hopelessness', 'mentioned self-harm')
- Decision Path decided (A,B, or C)
If applicable, the following
- Action taken (911 called, 988 warm handoff, referral to Qualified Listeners)
- Outcome (help arrived, call completed, veteran agreed to follow-up)