



# How To Host a Screening of the Film *MERITxZOE*

A comedy drama written and directed  
by Kyle Hausmann-Stokes

## BACKGROUND

Gun suicide claims the lives of more than 24,000 people in America every year. That means one life is ended too soon by gun suicide every 21 minutes. These deaths can be prevented. Policies and practices that focus on disrupting access to firearms in times of crisis have been proven to reduce firearm suicides.

We must address this public health crisis to reduce gun violence in this country. An average of 4,600 veterans die by firearm suicide every year—nearly 13 deaths a day.

## OVERVIEW

MERITxZOE is a short impact film about veterans, purpose, and mental health. The comedy drama centers on Merit and Zoe, two female veterans and best friends from the Army. The two are at odds but inexorably connected. In this film, we see how their words and actions have profound impact on each other's lives—and how something as simple as talk therapy can make the difference between life and death.

MERITxZOE is written and directed by Kyle Hausmann-Stokes, a member of the Everytown Veterans Advisory Council and an Army combat veteran who knows post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) firsthand. He has lost three battle buddies to suicide and has been creating films about the veteran experience for a decade.

Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund is proud to be one of three impact partners on this film alongside [The Mission Continues](#) and the [Bob Woodruff Foundation](#) to raise awareness of gun safety measures that can help prevent veteran suicide.

The story is **personal**. The characters are inspired by **real people**. The voice is **authentic**.

### \*\*\*DISCLAIMER\*\*\*

MERITxZOE is intended for mature audiences. There are scenes that could potentially activate past trauma for viewers, including for survivors of gun violence or those with PTSD. We encourage hosts to watch the film beforehand to become familiar with the content, and ask that you take these factors into consideration as you choose a location and audience for your screening.

## PLANNING A SCREENING

Your overarching planning timeline might look something like this:

1. Set a goal for the event. Identify helpers. Make a recruitment plan. What will successful participation look like? [Sample Goal and Recruitment Plan](#)
2. Private Vimeo link\* for streaming (do not share or publish anywhere)\*\*:  
<https://vimeo.com/738134459/c8f023919a>
  - a. If you encounter any difficulties viewing this link or have film screening questions that are not answered by this document, please contact Laura Abbasi (labbasi@everytown.org) for assistance.

\*FOR ONE-TIME IN-PERSON screenings only\*

\*\*REUPLOADING this film to social media and any video platform is PROHIBITED.\*\*

## **SAMPLE SCREENING EVENT AGENDA**

### **1. Welcome and introduction** (3-5 min.)

- It's ideal to have a local survivor of gun suicide or a veteran volunteer do this

### **2. Key grounding information about the intersection of guns and suicide** (3 min.)

- Gun suicide claims the lives of nearly 25,000 people in America every year. That's one life every 21 minutes. These deaths can be prevented. Policies and practices that focus on disrupting access to firearms in times of crisis have been proven to reduce firearm suicides.
- Insert local information (<https://everystat.org/state-pdfs> )
- We must address this public health crisis to reduce gun violence in this country.

### **3. Trauma-Informed**

- Acknowledgement of any other survivors of suicide loss in the room. This can be done by inviting people to say the name aloud of someone they know or love who was taken by suicide with a gun, if they are comfortable participating.
- Disclaimer: Because we know the prevalence of suicide and struggling with mental health, we want to make sure that everyone here knows that you are not alone and there are resources to support you and the people you care about.
- Help is available. If you or someone you know needs to speak with a trained mental health counselor, please contact the suicide and crisis lifeline by dialing 9-8-8 or visiting [988lifeline.org](http://988lifeline.org).

### **4. Introduce and show film** (15 min.)

### **5. Group discussion** (30 min.)

- Question 1: The film's writer-director is not only a combat veteran, but also a member of the Everytown Veteran Advisory Council, and he's been very adamant about the fact that this film is meant to be an "impact film." What are your thoughts on the impact of this film? How did it resonate with you?
- Question 2: This film has been praised by veterans for the distinct lack of stereotypes about veteran status, race, gender, sexuality, etc. Did you find this to be true? How can this serve an example of how we approach gun violence prevention and suicide intervention?
- Question 3: How does the anecdotal story presented in the film, serve to motivate us to more deeply engage in suicide prevention? What more can we do?

### **6. Wrap-Up**

- Thank the audience for attending
- Local call to action for next steps on suicide prevention

- For example: Raise awareness about [988](#) on social media; Help us get the word out about [Be SMART](#), etc.
- If anyone wants to stick around and decompress, provide space for that
- If you or someone else at the screening event has been personally affected by gun violence and would like to get connected to other survivors, please consider joining SurvivorsConnect. SurvivorsConnect is the Everytown Survivor Network peer support and support groups program. Learn more and be matched with a SurvivorsConnect volunteer [here](#).

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- **A Continuum of Gun Access Interventions for Preventing Gun Suicide**  
<https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-access-interventions-continuum/>
- **Those Who Serve: Addressing Suicide Among Military Veterans**  
<https://everytownresearch.org/report/those-who-serve-addressing-firearm-suicide-among-military-veterans/>