



DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

QUARTERLY CONNECTION



Winter 2023/2024



News and Announcements

The Annual Report on Suicide in the Military is Available Now

The DoD Annual Report on Suicide in the Military (ARSM) Calendar Year 2022 (CY22) was released in late October and is available now on [DSPO.mil](https://dspo.mil). The report is the official source on suicide rates and counts for Service members and their dependents and outlines current and ongoing suicide prevention efforts across the Department. According to the report, while the count of suicide deaths went down in CY22, from 524 Service members in CY21 to 492 Service members in CY22, the overall rate of suicide deaths increased slightly compared to CY21. Additionally, the Active Component suicide rates have gradually increased since 2011. While the 2022 Active Component rate is slightly higher than in 2021, both years remain lower than 2020. Additionally, for the National Guard and the Reserve, there is no increasing or decreasing trend across 2011-2022. DSPO will use the report for further guidance on its robust suicide prevention plan, which includes fostering a supportive environment, improving the delivery of mental health care, addressing stigma and other barriers to care, revising suicide prevention training, and promoting a culture of lethal means safety.

Holding on to Hope During the Holidays

The holidays are a time to take care of ourselves and our loved ones. It is a good opportunity to prioritize our mental health and create a self-care plan. There are many resources designed for getting help, relaxing, and learning about implementing suicide prevention techniques and factors. [DSPO.mil](https://dspo.mil) has the [Relationship Resources Infographic](#) for working on relationship goals, and its [Mental Health is Health](#) podcast series, both providing excellent options for beginning the new year with strategies for improving mental health firmly in place. [Military OneSource](#) has Chill Drills, which is a helpful relaxation app, non-medical counseling services, and many resources to help with finances and relationships. [The Real Warriors Campaign](#) offers articles and videos with helpful advice on mental health issues, as well as information on where and how to seek

Director's Corner



Dr. Liz Clark, Director

As we leave 2023 behind, I want to thank everyone who contributed to this year's accomplishments. We educated our community on prevention resources and connected with Service members and families at the many events we hosted and attended this year. Our campaign theme, Joining Your Fight: Connect to Protect, is a call to action to stand with the military community in the fight to end suicide.

This holiday season, I want to encourage everyone to make connections and build supportive relationships, personally and within their community. You matter. Your colleagues, community, and your family matter. We are stronger together.

The new year brings a time of hope and possibilities. In 2024, let's continue our fight to end suicide.





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additional help. Finally, if you or someone you know is in crisis, please call the [Military and Veterans Crisis Line](#) at 988 and press one. Help is available 24/7, and you are never alone.

Continuing to Promote Lethal Means Safety

As part of the Department's wide-reaching efforts to prevent suicide, Secretary of Defense Austin has approved a suicide prevention campaign that is organized around five key areas of focus and enabling tasks. One of those key areas is educating the DoD community on lethal means safety. Lethal means safety means putting time and distance between suicidal thoughts and the means to act. Lethal means safety is accomplished by using gun locks and gun safes as well as recycling or safely securing unused medication. [DSPO.mil](#) has a variety of educational tools with tips on protecting loved ones, including [a Lethal Means Safety Suite of Tools](#) and a fact sheet about [Firearm Safety During a Permanent Change of Station](#).

Resource Spotlight

A.C.T. Fact Sheet for Parents and Caregivers

With as much as caregivers and parents know, which is a lot, some may want a little support when discussing suicide with adolescents. DSPO and the Department of Defense Education Activity produced the [third fact sheet](#) in our [Acknowledge, Care, Tell series](#) with the goal of helping parents and caregivers address suicide in a sensitive and informed way. The fact sheet also explains how to boost suicide prevention protective factors, start conversations, connect to resources, and busts myths about suicide. Suicide is a difficult topic, but an important conversation.

Family Advocacy Program Fireside Chat

In the latest DSPO [Fireside Chat](#), Military Community Advocacy Program Director Lolita Allen joined DSPO Director Liz Clark to discuss the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) mission and how the program prevents, addresses, and supports military families experiencing interpersonal violence. Ms. Allen talked about FAP's commitment to healthy and safe family environments through a coordinated community response system. Ms. Allen and Dr. Clark also discussed how the two offices share many of the same protective and risk factors including stigma and lethal means safety.

The 2023 Year-in-Review Highlights Video

The past year was a successful year for the DSPO mission and DSPO produced a [highlights video](#) that features last year's outreach events. Outreach and engagement are key components of DSPO's suicide prevention strategy. At Wounded Warrior events, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivor conferences, marathons, and our Suicide Prevention Recognition Ceremony, DSPO connected with the community throughout 2023.

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