



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
DEPUTY CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER
CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR LEGISLATIVE
AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC
AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September 2016 marks the Department's annual observation of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Despite the resources we provide for mental health programs and suicide prevention, too many of our Service members continue to die by suicide. Two common factors that may lead to suicide are the Service members' reluctance either to reach out for help or engage in appropriate treatment based upon culture or perception. Suicide Prevention Awareness Month provides an opportunity for the Department to recommit to understanding and recognizing these risk factors, identifying those Service members and civilians who may be exhibiting the warning signs of suicide, and intervening in a caring manner.

In this spirit, the Department of Defense is collaborating with the Department of Veterans Affairs to launch the *BeThere* suicide prevention campaign. The campaign emphasizes that everyday interactions with others can have a significant impact on our well-being, as well as that of others. Making that personal connection may also help someone feel less isolated and open to safely talking about suicide risk.

I ask each of you to make a personal commitment to participate in the *BeThere* campaign during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and throughout the year. Take steps to be there for someone and for yourself. Whether it's getting coffee with a friend, or seeking help when feeling overwhelmed, embrace the *BeThere* spirit. Take the time to ask the question, "Are you okay?" Then, listen to the answer. Actively listening to someone can make the difference between life and death.

Be aware of available suicide prevention resources. Both the Military Crisis Line for Service members and their families and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for our civilian workforce provide confidential, toll-free assistance. Both resources can be accessed through an online chat room: the Military Crisis Line at www.militarycrisisline.net and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org. Twenty-four/seven assistance is

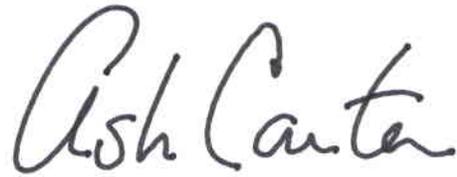


OSD011112-16/CMD014053-16

available by dialing (800) 273-8255; when prompted, Service members and their families should press 1.

The tragedy of suicide is complex and personal, but also preventable. We need your help in supporting our Service members, civilians, and their families, especially those who may be at risk for suicide. If you know someone who may be at risk or are at risk yourself, please take responsibility to seek help, offer help to others, and make time to *BeThere*.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the well-being of our Service members and their families.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ash Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.