



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 14 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

SUBJECT: Standardized Department of Defense Suicide Data and Reporting

The purpose of this correspondence is to direct the immediate adoption of a revised, standardized suicide reporting methodology as recommended in the Department of Defense Task Force Report on Suicide by Members of the Armed Forces released in August 2010. Attachments 1 and 2 provide the revised rate calculation methodology and associated amplifying information and supersede the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel Readiness memorandum issued on June 18, 2006.

The revised methodology is the result of a collaborative effort across the Department. Representatives from the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System, the Defense Manpower Data Center, the National Center for Telehealth and Technology, and senior representatives from all of the Military Services contributed their expertise.

My point of contact for this effort is the Director of the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, Ms. Jacqueline Garrick, (703)-614-8838.


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Acting

Attachments:
As stated

ATTACHMENT 1

DOD COMPONENT SUICIDE RATE CALCULATIONS

Notes:

The suicide rate is a measure of suicide frequency amongst different components of the military.

Component strength population will be obtained from the Defense Manpower Data Center, the primary source for Service and Component population data, to ensure consistent inclusion/exclusion criteria of Service members.

Rates will be calculated with suicide case and Component population information from the most recently completed calendar year.

For the Army and Air Force, a combined National Guard / Reserve rate may be calculated to meet the minimum threshold.

Method:

Suicide rates will be calculated for the Department of Defense (DoD), Active, National Guard, and Reserve Components. The Active Component suicide rate includes active members and Cadets/Midshipmen at the designated military academies. The Reserve rate includes Reserve members regardless of duty status at the time of death. The National Guard rate includes National Guard members regardless of active status at the time of death. **When the individual Component number of suicides is below 20, rates for that Component will not be calculated. The calculation for each rate is described separately below.**

DoD Suicide Rate =

$$\frac{\text{Sum of all Active Component, National Guard, and Reserve suicides that occurred during the CY}}{\text{Average Active Component Population} + \text{Average National Guard Population} + \text{Average Reserve Population}} \times 100,000$$

Active Component Suicide Rate =

$$\frac{\text{Sum of all Active Component suicides that occurred during the CY}}{\text{Average Active Component Population}} \times 100,000$$

Average Active Component Population =

$$\frac{\text{Sum Army monthly Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Air Force monthly Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Navy monthly Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Marine Corps monthly Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Army Cadet Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Air Force Cadet Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Navy Midshipmen Populations for CY}}{12}$$

National Guard Suicide Rate =

$$\frac{\text{Sum of all National Guard suicides that occurred during the CY}}{\text{Average National Guard Population}} \times 100,000$$

Average National Guard Population =

$$\frac{\text{Sum Army National Guard monthly Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Air National Guard monthly Populations for CY}}{12}$$

Reserve Suicide Rate Calculation =

$$\frac{\text{Sum of all Reserve suicides that occurred during the CY}}{\text{Average Reserve Population}} \times 100,000$$

Average Reserve Population =

$$\frac{\text{Sum Army Reserve monthly Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Navy Reserve monthly Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Marine Corps Reserve monthly Populations for CY}}{12} + \frac{\text{Sum Air Force Reserve monthly Populations for CY}}{12}$$

ATTACHMENT 2

SUICIDE RATE CALCULATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1) Tracking and Reporting Rules

- a. Active Component and Reserve/National Guard on Active Duty suicide numbers are reported on a weekly basis by the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) with inputs from the Service suicide prevention programs. The weekly suicide report produced by AFMES will not change.
- b. On a quarterly basis, each Service will report suicide deaths of Active Component, Selected Reserve and Reserves not on Active Duty to AFMES no later than 90 days after the end of the quarter. Selective Reserves are Drilling and Training National Guard/Reservists, Individual Mobilization Augmentees and Full Time Support Active Guard/Reserve.
- c. DoD quarterly reports, which summarize quarterly inputs from the Services, will be produced for public dissemination.
- d. Since there are delays in suicide determination by civilian coroners and medical examiners, which largely Component Suicide Rate Calculations will be published 3 months after the preceding Calendar Year. For example, 2014 rates will be published in April 2015.
- e. Suicides involving National Guard and Reserve Service member decedents while on Active Duty, actively drilling, or in a civilian status will be included in the respective National Guard and Reserve Suicide Rates.
- f. When calculating Service Component rates, rates will not be calculated when the number of suicides are small (i.e., less than 20)¹. Instead, a raw number will be reported.

2) Standardization for Public Dissemination

- a. This memo issues a DoD-wide policy instruction that ensures standardization of component rate calculations and reporting within the Services and Department of Defense (DoD). All suicide data must be reported in accordance with the most current version of Public Affairs Guidance on Suicide Prevention Messaging. AFMES is the official DoD-wide entity that is responsible for confirming Active Duty suicides.
- b. A determination of a pending suicide case is made after AFMES reviews investigative reports (if available) and/or circumstance text completed by the Defense Casualty Information Processing Service or a case manager. If little or no information is provided, AFMES Medical Examiners or other personnel are contacted to obtain additional information. If a Service member died in a civilian jurisdiction, the local coroner's office is contacted to obtain further information. If a discrepancy occurs between AFMES and the Services, information will be shared and reliability of the source will be identified to determine whether to confirm the suicide.
- c. A confirmed suicide for members of the Active Component and Reserve/National Guard members on Active Duty is determined by the AFMES Medical Examiner autopsy report.

¹Arias E, Anderson RN, Hsiang-Ching K, Murphy SL, Kochanek KD. Deaths: Final data for 2001. National vital statistics reports; vol 52 no 3. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003.

For civilian cases, autopsy and toxicology reports are requested from local authorities. Death certificates are used when no autopsy has been performed. Reconciliation between AFMES and the Services is conducted using autopsy reports as the primary means to determine cause and manner of death. Selected Reserve, not on Active Duty, suicides will be counted and reported when a death certificate indicating suicide as the manner of death is received by the Service.

- d. Component strength figures will be obtained from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) to ensure consistent inclusion/exclusion criteria of Service members. This allows comparison of suicide rates among Service components. Population data will be obtained from DMDC monthly with month-end strength. Each component population for the 12 months of the prior calendar year will be averaged to obtain the average Component population during the calendar year. This population data will be used to calculate the calendar year annual rate.
- e. National Guard and Reserve Suicide Rates will include only the Selected Reserve and will not include the Individual Ready Reserve and the Inactive National Guard.
- f. Service member suicides that occur within 120 days after being placed on the Temporary/Permanent Disability Retired List (TDRL/PDRL) status and the TDRL/PDRL population will not be included in either the numerator or denominator when calculating the component rates since these may be reported by the Department of Veterans Affairs.