



DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

QUARTERLY CONNECTION



JOINING YOUR FIGHT | CONNECT TO PROTECT

News and Announcements

Holiday Message to the Force Encourages Connection and Lethal Means Safety

The Honorable Ashish S. Vazirani released a [Support to the Force During the Holiday Season message](#) wishing Service members, civilian employees, and their families a happy and safe holiday season. The memo, which can be found on DSPO.mil, encouraged the workforce to connect with loved ones and look out for their community. This includes reaching out for help if needed and encouraging others to seek help when they are struggling. It also encouraged the military community to promote lethal means safety during the holiday season.

The Annual Report on Suicide in the Military Is Available Now

The Department released the [DoD Annual Report on Suicide in the Military \(ARSM\)](#) for Calendar Year 2023 (CY23) in November. The ARSM is the official source on suicide rates and counts for Service members and their family members and outlines current and ongoing suicide prevention efforts across the Department. The ARSM also includes the 2023 Department of Defense Suicide Event Report, which provides context to the rates and numbers reported.

The Department tragically lost more Service members to suicide in 2023 compared to 2022. However, fewer military family members died by suicide compared to the previous year reported. Firearms remained at the forefront of Service member and family member suicide deaths, reinforcing DoD's commitment to implementing lethal means safety strategies throughout the Department. Findings presented in this report help the Department assess trends, identify insights, and provide further guidance to DSPO on its suicide crisis response and postvention strategies. The Department is committed to combatting suicide in the Total Force.



Winter 2024

Director's Corner



Dr. Liz Clark, Director

Happy holidays! During this festive and busy season, please take time to connect with family, friends, and our communities. Connections enrich our lives and offer a support system during challenging times.

Although many of us enjoy this time of year, we must acknowledge that we may not recognize those who may be struggling. Please encourage loved ones, friends, and colleagues to seek help through Military OneSource, chaplains or faith leaders, Behavioral Health and employee assistance programs. If you or someone you know is in crisis, please reach out to the Veterans and Military Crisis Line or the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

DSPO looks forward to continuing our sacred mission of preventing suicide in the new year, and I look forward to connecting with you all in 2025.





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New Resource

Holiday Lethal Means Safety Flyer

The holidays are a great time to connect with loved ones. They are also a time to protect those loved ones by practicing and promoting lethal means safety practices. DSPO's new resource, [the 2024 Holidays and Lethal Means Safety Flyer](#) found on DSPO.MIL, encourages healthy and protective behaviors among Service members, family members, and the greater military community.

The flyer encourages securing lethal means from suicide in your home, recycling unused medications, and securing household poisons to help prevent harmful outcomes. It also acknowledges that although it is a busy and joyful time for many people, the holidays can be a time of stress and anxiety for others. It asks members of the military community to be aware of the mental health struggles in others and to practice lethal means safety.



DSPO Outreach Events

DSPO attended the **2024 Midwest Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Summit** in Columbus, Ohio, from October 17 – 18, 2024. The symposium connected suicide prevention organizations throughout the Midwest and focused specifically on helping higher-risk groups, veterans, and first responders. Our team reached out to symposium attendees, explained DSPO's mission, and distributed resources and promotional items.

On October 28, 2024, at the **Arizona Suicide Prevention Coalition HOPE Conference**, Dr. Clark presented with Dr. Jerry Reed, Zero Suicide International and Suicide Prevention Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) member, about the implementation of the SPRIRC recommendations and progress on the enabling actions approved by the Secretary of Defense.



Photo by Dr. Mary Crenshaw at Hall of Remembrance during the 2024 Snowball Express.

Additionally, DSPO staff attended the **Air Force Wounded Warrior (AFW2) Care Fair** held on November 18 at the National Harbor. DSPO staffed a table at the fair and promoted our resources, mission, and outreach and education events.

Finally, DSPO hosted a booth and promoted family resources at the **Snowball Express Resource Room** in Orlando, Florida, from December 7-8, 2024. This annual event honored fallen Service members and first responders while brightening their children's holiday season.

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