



## DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

# QUARTERLY CONNECTION



Summer 2025

### Director's Corner

**Ms. Heidi Boyd**

DSPO Acting Director

Summer is here! Along with warmer weather and longer days, many military families are in the middle of Permanent Change of Station (PCS) season. This can be a period of heightened stress and challenges for Service members and their families. DSPO is committed to reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors to save lives, reduce suicide, and support a healthy and mission-ready Total Force. I look forward to supporting this mission.

DSPO achieved a milestone in July with publication of Directive-Type Memorandum (DTM) 25-004, which implements the Department's first-ever coordinated, comprehensive, and tiered DOD Suicide Postvention Response System for a suicide death of a Service member, suicide clusters, and suicide contagions. It also establishes, for the first time, a standardized DOD definition of the term suicide cluster and supporting Congressional notification procedures for suicide clusters.

Research indicates that up to 135 individuals are exposed to a suicide death and that as many as 60 individuals are affected by each suicide. The DOD Suicide Postvention Response System, designed to promote an immediate and sustained military community-based recovery response focused on the deceased Service member's teammates, leaders, family, and friends, is essential to reducing risk and promoting healing following a suicide death.

### News and Announcements

#### Brandon Act Creates New Route for Mental Health Evaluation

The Brandon Act, signed into law in December 2021, creates an additional path for Service members to request a mental health evaluation. While Service members continue to be able to independently request a mental health evaluation through a primary care or specialty mental health provider, the Act enables warfighters to request a confidential evaluation by contacting their commanding officer or supervisor (grade E-6 or above). Service members are not required to provide a reason for the referral. When requested, the supervisor or commanding officer must refer the Service member for a mental health evaluation as soon as it is feasible.

Regardless of which referral route is taken, mental health providers will conduct a mental health evaluation to help determine a Service member's medical readiness for service, risk of self-harm, and further need for mental health care. The Brandon Act aims to reduce the stigma associated with asking for help and to ensure Service members receive timely mental health care. Please read the Military Health System [fact sheet](#) for more information about the Brandon Act, or visit the Health.mil Brandon Act [Frequently Asked Questions page](#).

#### New Working Group Invites Survivors to Help Shape Suicide Prevention Policy

DSPO is standing up a new Suicide-Centered Lived Experience Working Group and invites Service members and family members who have experienced suicide ideation, survived a suicide attempt, are survivors of suicide loss, or provided care to someone with direct suicide experience, to contribute their voices. Participants will leverage the perspectives and expertise of individuals with suicide-centered lived experiences to inform its prevention and postvention





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policies and programs. To apply and learn more, download the [application](#) and email it to: [osd.mc-alex.ousd-p-r.mbx.dspo@mail.mil](mailto:osd.mc-alex.ousd-p-r.mbx.dspo@mail.mil).

### DSPO Joins Forces with TAPS to Support Military Families

DSPO staff hosted an information table and engaged with attendees at the 31st Annual TAPS National Seminar and Good Grief Camp. Held at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington from May 22 to 26, the seminar included activities and workshops for those working through the loss of a loved one.

The event provided resources and support to 850 adults and 300 children of Service members. DSPO staff distributed promotional items with crisis resources, including DSPO fact sheets. These fact sheets are available at [DSPO.mil](https://www.dspo.mil).



### Access Vital Suicide Prevention, Crisis Response, and Postvention Resources

The DOD offers a variety of suicide prevention resources for the military community at [DSPO.mil](https://www.dspo.mil), [militaryonesource.mil](https://militaryonesource.mil), and the Real Warriors Campaign (RWC) at [Health.mil](https://www.health.mil). These articles, podcasts, infographics, and other resources address the common stressors of military life. They cover a wide range of topics to empower Service members, spouses, children, and civilian employees to take charge of their mental health and well-being.

Visit [DSPO.mil](https://www.dspo.mil) to find the Healthy Relationships infographic, developed in partnership with Military OneSource. It highlights available resources for building connections with family and friends. DSPO's podcast series and videos include interviews with partner organizations and non-government agencies that share information on suicide prevention programs.

Military Community and Family Policy's [Military OneSource](https://militaryonesource.mil) website provides information and programs, including free non-medical counseling, guidance on military spouse education and training opportunities, and parenting resources. Helpful relocation tips and detailed information about the Exceptional Family Member Program are also available.

Finally, [RWC](https://www.health.mil) at [Health.mil](https://www.health.mil) aims to reduce stigma and educate the community on optimizing health. It offers articles on establishing good sleep hygiene, reducing stress levels, maintaining proper nutrition, and more mental health and wellness-specific content.



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