



DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

QUARTERLY CONNECTION

News and Announcements

September Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit Empowers the Military Community

The Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) released the [Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit](#) on DSPO.mil to support suicide prevention efforts in September and year-round. The toolkit features a pledge, social media posts, campaign facts sheet, posters, and other materials to promote suicide prevention and postvention resources, programs, and the Department's campaign, "Joining Your Fight: Connect to Protect." Users can customize the tools to highlight local command or unit events or share them on social media to advance the Department's mission to end suicide within the military community.

Annual Ceremony Honors Twelve Suicide Prevention Programs Recognized for Excellence



On September 4, the Director of Defense Human Resources Activity, Mr. Jeffery R. Register, hosted the [2025 Suicide Prevention Recognition Ceremony](#) to honor suicide prevention programs across the Military Services that excelled in community engagement and resource development efforts from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024. These honorees were recognized for their innovative and impactful suicide prevention programs.

Dr. Merlynn Carson, Performing the Duties of the Deputy Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness, Mr. Register, and Ms. Heidi Boyd attended, spoke, and thanked the honorees for their hard work and dedication. Rear Admiral Shane C. Steiner presented Coast Guard units with their certificates from the Department of Homeland Security.



Fall 2025

Director's Corner

Ms. Heidi Boyd

DSPO Acting Director

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and the Department is dedicated to Total Force readiness, resilience, and wellness. Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness, the Honorable Mr. Anthony J. Tata, released a [Message to The Force](#) to reinforce support for suicide prevention and the well-being of the entire military community.

The message, available on DSPO.mil, outlines the Department's dedication to strengthening resiliency through leadership, peer-to-peer support, and access to crisis resources. The message encourages help-seeking behaviors and encourages supportive environments and connections.

DSPO advances the Department's goals by promoting policies and resources that support Service members and their families. To prevent suicide, the Department focuses on crisis intervention, immediate post-intervention support, and long-term postvention tools. Embracing the full suicide prevention continuum helps achieve the best outcome.

The Department pursues its goals through policy development, resource creation and promotion, outreach engagement, and collaboration with partner organizations. During Suicide Prevention Awareness Month this September and beyond, use the Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit, promote the Brandon Act, and stand together to save lives.





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The 2025 Honorees are:

- Army: Fort Campbell, Kentucky
- Army National Guard: North Dakota Army National Guard
- Army Reserve: 84th Training Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky
- Marine Corps: Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort, South Carolina
- Marine Corps Reserve: Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 775, California
- Navy: Navy Information Operations Command, Texas
- Navy Reserve: Electronic Attack Squadron 209, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington
- Air Force: Eglin Air Force Base, Florida
- Air Force Reserve: Dobbins Air Force Base, Georgia
- Space Force: Patrick Space Force Base, Florida
- Coast Guard: Sector Northern New England, Maine
- Coast Guard Reserve: Port Security Unit 309, Ohio

Suicide Prevention Organizations Engage and Inform Department Personnel at Pentagon Event



On September 10, DSPO hosted a suicide prevention and mental health informational tabling event at the Pentagon. DSPO and partner organizations engaged with over 850 attendees, distributed promotional materials and crisis resources, answered questions, and fostered connections with Department employees on World Suicide Prevention Awareness Day. These efforts contribute to the resilience and readiness of the Total Force and encourage the greater military community to seek help in times of crisis.

New DSPO Podcasts Advance Vital Prevention and Postvention Information



DSPO has two new podcasts that address prevention and postvention. Discussion topics include the transition from Active Duty status to civilian life, the importance of connections, and how suicide survivors can offer what they learned from their experience to help shape support strategies to help further the Department's mission. In "[Suicide Prevention and Postvention: Every Rank. Every Role. Every Day.](#)" Dr. Mary Crenshaw, DSPO Program Manager for Postvention and Lived Experience, discusses postvention as a critical step in the suicide prevention continuum with Dr. T.J. Owens, Suicide Prevention and Response Section Head, Behavioral Programs, Marine and Family Program Division. Dr. Owens explains how postvention support includes leaders, chaplains, and partner organizations coming together during times of crisis, the importance of peer-to-peer support, and how to manage the transition between Active Duty service and civilian status.

Dr. Alicia Matteson, Senior DSPO Advisor, Psychological Health, and Dr. Carla Stumpf Patton, Vice President, Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), talk about the power of suicide survivors' lived experience in "[Voices for Prevention: Real Talk on Suicide-Centered Lived Experience.](#)" They discuss the importance of DSPO's Suicide-Centered Lived Experience Working Group and Dr. Stumpf Patton's own lived experience and how she turned her experience into action with TAPS, including developing a postvention model.





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Real Warriors Campaign Spotlights Resources



Established in 2009, the [Real Warriors Campaign](#) (RWC) is a public health campaign designed to decrease stigma, increase psychological health literacy, and open doors to accessing care by encouraging psychological health help-seeking among Active Duty Service members, veterans, and their families. The Department offers a wide range of mental health resources, including options for self-referral, and the RWC is here to help those seeking support better understand those resources.

The RWC offers evidence-based tips for supporting and maintaining resilient mental health (e.g., tips to improve [sleep](#), manage stress, etc.). The RWC also provides psychoeducational materials addressing a variety of concerns, e.g., stress, relationship concerns, suicidal ideation, alcohol misuse, and posttraumatic stress disorder. To access these materials and many others, visit the [RWC website](#) and follow RWC on social media.

For additional assistance, contact the [Psychological Health Resource Center](#) 24/7 to speak with trained health resource consultants by calling 866-966-1020 or using the [live chat](#) feature.

New Directive-Type Memorandum Establishes the Department's First Enterprise-Wide Postvention Suicide Response

The Department published a Directive-Type Memorandum ([DTM](#)) [25-004](#) in July, which formalizes the first Department-wide Suicide Prevention Response System to support Total Force readiness. It defines a suicide cluster for the Department and outlines immediate, coordinated actions following a reported suicide.

Key components of the response system include:

- Activating a Suicide Response Team
- Conducting an Epidemiological Aid Team investigation to evaluate the contagion risk and available response resources
- Providing epidemiological consultation if a suicide contagion is identified

Postvention response addresses survivors' increased risk of mental health issues by promoting recovery resources and strategies, and by focusing on helping the community heal after a suicide. This consistent public-health approach enables the Department to initiate postvention support, response activities, and training initiatives efficiently.

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