



# Defense Suicide Prevention Office Video Transcript

## Spotlight on Suicide Prevention: MacDill Air Force Base

Danette Blagburn:

Thank you for joining us for the Spotlight on Suicide Prevention, a new series of videos by the Department of Defense to highlight the suicide prevention achievements of our local programs. I'm Danette Blagburn, one of the senior policy analysts at Headquarters Air Force Integrated Resilience, and on behalf of Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Button, I am the backup suicide prevention program manager. Today we have MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. They are an example of what suicide prevention looks like at the local levels of our military communities. Their efforts to raise awareness and prevent suicide is inspiring and innovative. Let's learn about our guest and their work to keep our service members safe from suicide.

MacDill Air Force Base conducted 57 targeted prevention trainings, 17 certification courses, 8 major events and campaigns, and beta-tested 2 initiatives to establish a community culture that prioritizes suicide prevention and safety. A Postvention as Prevention module was created and included in all commander and senior enlisted trainings in the 6th Air Refueling Wing, 400 plus #MacDillRocks affirmation rocks were distributed with positive messages and resources. The third annual "Miles for Life" event took place in October, where 22 units competed for total miles by committing to enhancing connectedness and mitigating at-risk behaviors by writing a thank you to a colleague at the gratitude table, or by visiting on and off base partner tables and answering challenge questions. Time-based prevention was actively promoted during the "You've Got a Friend in Me" 30-mile Run/Walk challenge. The event required a run/walk partner or team to emphasize the importance of support systems.

So we'll go ahead and ask some questions. So, the first question I have, please share details about your program, what your team accomplished, and what works best to encourage participation in engagement.

Lisa Williams:

Hi, my name is Lisa Williams. I'm the director of Integrated Prevention and Response here at MacDill.

Kelcey Delano:

Hi, my name is Kelcey Delano. I am the integrated prevention chief at the Integrated Resilience Office at MacDill. Here at Team MacDill, we are committed to raising not only awareness, but we really focus on fostering community, providing supports and strategies in order to create a connection within that community. So, we have infused not only awareness, but education and action, which we implemented throughout the year through our collaborative partnerships, both on and off base, through resilience building, through consistent messaging of what campaigns we had and events we had going on as well as trainings, and providing a robust selection of trainings for individuals to really enhance their communication strategies and other strategies that we find folks are wanting to work on.

Lisa Williams:



We worked hard to be really intentional about the things that we did and ensuring that we were infusing throughout the year and not just during specific prevention months. So we do several Wingman Day type events or comprehensive fitness events where we focus on the domains of resilience, but also, again, enhancing that, not just awareness, but the education and then that action. What are you going to do when you leave today with what you've learned? So MacDill University is a really popular event that we do here on MacDill, and it's just what it sounds like. We offer a series of classes. We have guest speakers. We focus again on those four domains of resilience and folks get to select the classes that they're interested in taking. So the feedback has been terrific on that, and it allows for connections to others as well. So, it's not just those people that you work with, or you may come in contact with daily.

We do the "MacMazing Race" where we stole that idea from a TV show, and that's an opportunity in particular for our younger airmen to learn where resources are and specifically what they provide. So, they're teams, again, to build those connections and they're given clues and they have to follow those clues to get to the helping agency. They have roadblocks, they have challenges, and it's a timed event and we have had very good participation in that as well. And then we do the "Miles For Life Challenge," and this is again, very similar to "Relay for Life," but they're working for miles. And then we have helping agency tables, typically 12 to 14 different tables for helping agencies both on and off the installation.

So, that really enhances the community partnerships that we have in the Tampa Bay community. And again, they have to answer challenge questions. So, there's knowledge building. We have a gratitude table. We know that if you can really focus on gratitude, that's a really foundational resilience skill, and they get extra miles for completing some of those additional items. Then we have a traveling trophy at the end because there's always that additional motivation and competition. So, those are just a couple of examples of some of the events that we do.

Kelcey Delano:

At MacDill Air Force Base, we are unique in the sense that the community doesn't necessarily live on the installation because we don't have enough base housing to house all of the Active Duty military that we have due to the commands and the different support systems and missions that MacDill has. So, a lot of our folks live out in far communities and it's sometimes difficult to have those folks come back to the installation if we're offering different trainings and events. So, something MacDill has really focused on is how can we offer the trainings to really get that maximum impact and maximum participation? We include all of our trainings with virtual or face-to-face options. We do different time slots as well. That way, we can accommodate potential shift workers when they get on and off shifts so they don't have to come in and off hours when they're trying to rest up for the next shift.

We also offer virtually, especially for the spouses in the community, retirees, folks that don't necessarily have the time or bandwidth to come to the installation so that way, they can just get on their computer, access it from anywhere, and really harness what we have to offer and really improve the skills within the community.

Lisa Williams:

We also offer some basic things like self-assessments. We have a great e-checkup to go for well-being assessment. So, if you aren't inclined to take a class or come to a training, no matter how we're offering



it, there's still that opportunity to help build some knowledge and maybe a little bit of boost to resilience or your prevention skills as well.

Kelcey Delano:

To include certain applications as well, our office promotes a lot of different applications that are self-paced so that you can access from anywhere, your cellphone that enhance skills like mindfulness or really talk about things that we know are stressors at MacDill, like sleep. So, we really try to hit on an application that is free to everybody, where we're talking about sleep optimization. How can we improve our sleep? And we know that if we can enhance those skills and folks feel well rested, then we can really target some of the things that we're trying to look at at MacDill.

Danette Blagburn:

Awesome. Thank you so much for that answer. Next question I have for you, what inspired you to build your program this way and why do you feel it has had a positive impact in preventing suicide?

Lisa Williams:

So I think as Kelcey had mentioned, it's the idea of meeting people where they are. So, every installation probably feels like they're unique. MacDill Air Force Base certainly is. We have some really large mission partners, and we have a really geographically dispersed community. It's not uncommon for people to commute an hour plus to and from work every day, and we also have geographically separated units. So we really try and offer just a plethora of things that will meet their need. And so we were really intentional in looking at what our programs would look like. So, offering that education piece in different ways so that we're impacting our community the way that would suit them best, the way that would suit them best. We want to meet people where they are.

We also have Integrated Resilience Teams, which are our Safe Talk Trainers, our prevention implementers that we use for suicide prevention training, our SAPR Facilitators that do the sexual assault prevention training, our resilience trainers, and we amalgamate them so that there are teams in units that work as force multipliers, so we really try and make those connections.

The other piece that I think was really important is that in-unit piece. So, what one squadron might need in our Air Force unit may be very different than what our MARS-sent Marine Mission Partners might need. And so we are very intentional in walkabouts in those units and having those conversations, passing out the resources, but getting to know the people in those units and knowing what their unique needs are, and then working to meet what that need is as not just our Integrated Resilience Office, but as our Community Action team, and this is very much a group effort. Our staffing is not large enough to meet the needs of our community, and so having a really robust Community Action team of those helping agencies to also support has been absolutely instrumental and we're very intentional about those things. So, we do do some large installation wide events, but we really also look at what do specific units need, and then we work to meet that need.

Kelcey Delano:

Lisa also talked about our Integrated Resilience teams, and what I want to focus on with that as well is that those embedded assets are key. We, of course, from our office, offer a lot of those trainings. We do those walkabouts, but the embedded assets in the units that are trained in some sort of curriculum



that we offer really are the boots-on-the-ground folks that can enhance those skills within their unit. They have most likely those relationships established. They feel more comfortable with the people in their unit, so that way, they're able to provide resilience trainings when they have time based off their unique mission sets. And that's a key component to the inspiration of when we were designing the Integrated Resilience teams, is that the availability might be better than our availability. So, harness the resources you have in the unit, whether they got the training from another installation, they're here at MacDill, they can really enhance those skills that way.

Lisa Williams:

And they're unexpected messengers. We're expected messengers, but when it's their peers in their units and they aren't expected to necessarily message the things that we're talking about as the Community Action Team, I think that can be more relatable to our military members as well.

Kelcey Delano:

Also, how we design our programs is what we call stumbling on the goodness. We have a campaign called #MacDillRocks where we put positive messages, partners of our Community Action Team get together. We paint rocks, we put positive messaging on it. On the other side of the rock has information on what our office is, how to get resources, what we offer, and then they also compete for a drawing once they find the rock. If they post it on our social media page and share that they found it with us to share those positive messages with the community. But we call that sprinkling the goodness, positive messages like that. Talking about posting door hangers at the dorms where we have positive messaging and other offerings as well.

Then we also, in our prevention program where it impacts suicide and suicide prevention is teaching those risk factors and warning signs that are built into our curriculum. Also enhancing those coping skills. We also initiate the "Go Slow Campaign" at MacDill Air Force Base where we're handing out gun locks. We're going around talking to people about what that means, why it's important to securely lock a firearm and how that impacts suicide. We also talk about protective factors. How can we create communities, environments where people feel like they belong, sense of mission, sense of purpose, all the things that we know when people feel like they belong? It impacts suicide prevention programming.

Danette Blagburn:

Do you think your program has implications outside your installation, either across other Services or for suicide prevention efforts in the civilian community?

Kelcey Delano:

I know Lisa talked about how MacDill is unique. We do have 2 combatant commands on the installation, as well as 34 mission partners. We also have coalition members that are embedded in one of our combatant commands. So, we have members from all across the world that are at MacDill for a period of time. So, not only do we have our unique mission and mission set with our partners, but we also support the United States Coast Guard, and they have different hubs across the state of Florida that we provide support to.

Lisa Williams:



The uniform you wear is far less important to us. So, military civilian family members, we're welcoming of all of them with anything and everything that we do in our office. I think it's important to note as well though, the partnerships and really robust partnerships that we have with outside agencies, and we work to market the things that they offer. We don't want to be duplicative of what's available outside of the gates, and it's really important that I think Tampa Bay offers a lot, and so we work in conjunction with a lot of those agencies. They oftentimes participate in some of our events like "Miles for Life," but also providing information about the services they provide, because some of the things that they do are things that we simply can't do, and also, any events and education that they have. We also partner with them to have them come in as subject matter experts in particular during our prevention months, to provide that very niche information that wouldn't necessarily be in our wheelhouse. So, I think that's been very successful for us.

Kelcey Delano:

Absolutely. We are fortunate that the Tampa Bay community really supports the military community on the installation and off the installation, both by coming onto the installation to support our events and hosting events within the community that military members are encouraged to participate in. With those relationships, we as an Integrated Resilience Office get the unique opportunity to go out and support a lot of those events, talk about what we do with the resources that we do with folks that are a part of the military and folks that aren't. So, it's really a good opportunity to understand what we do, how that impacts the community and what's available to our service members for those that might not know what the Integrated Resilience Office offers.

Danette Blagburn:

Thank you MacDill Air Force Base for coming on and sharing a bit about your programs. I am confident I can say this on behalf of the audience, we've learned so much about the ways we can lead the fight to help eliminate suicide across the military. Our guests were honored at the 2024 Department of Defense Suicide Prevention Recognition Ceremony in September for their campaigns to prevent suicide, which took place at the Pentagon Hall of Heroes.

To those watching, we hope you enjoyed listening to what you've heard. Please help us spread the word by sharing the link to this video with others. If you found it on social media, share it on your timeline for your friends to discover. To access more videos and the resources and the Defense Suicide Prevention Office's video library, visit us online at [www.DSPO.mil](http://www.DSPO.mil).

If you are a Service member in crisis, remember, you are never alone. Dial 988 and press 1 for the Veterans and Military Crisis Line. You can also access the Crisis Line by texting 838255, or chat online at [veteranscrisisline.net](http://veteranscrisisline.net). Thank you.