



## Defense Suicide Prevention Office Video Transcript

### Spotlight on Suicide Prevention: Air Force Reserve Command at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas

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're joined by our friends from the Air Force Reserve Command at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas. 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. We'll start with the 502nd Air Base Wing and Joint Base San Antonio. The group hosted 11 events and 5 podcasts to promote suicide prevention education, resources, community building, de-stigmatization, and help seeking behavior, with over 32,359 participants from across Joint Base San Antonio.

The 960th Cyberspace Wing hosted the "Sword and Shield" podcast, which is available on social media and podcast applications. Episodes covered topics from spiritual resilience, healthy communication, forgiveness, and sobriety. They also hosted a 40,000-mile walk/run challenge to promote suicide prevention through awareness and education. Joint Base San Antonio also hosted a "We Care Day," where over 30,000 people were greeted with signs displaying positive messages, as well as a "Lethal Means Safety Course", which 300 people attended. They also reported they will begin utilizing the Go SLO Model introduced into their training. Please share details about your program, what your team accomplished, and what works best to encourage participation and engagement.

Frances Martinez:

Good afternoon. My name is Frances Martinez, director of Psychological Health at the 960th Cyberspace Wing at Joint Base San Antonio. We are an Air Force Reserve Wing on a host installation at Joint Base San Antonio under the 502nd Air Base Wing. To make a lot of our programs really successful and get full participation and engagement, we utilize our host installation along with community partners and our military mission partners and encourage their attendance as well.

Every year we've hosted an annual mental health and resiliency fair. This year, we had over 1,500 people in attendance, both in-person and virtually. We encourage our local installation, so Army and Air Force, along with our Navy counterparts to be in attendance. So, it's a more robust engagement.

This year, we had several local community resource providers share what treatment looks like out in the community to immerse these individuals with these skills, in order for them to build their own personal resilience. We also utilize our military outreach programs, like the Military and Family Readiness Centers, the Armed Forces Wellness Center, the chaplain services, so people can really understand what is available to them.



Danette Blagburn:

Awesome. Thank you so much for that answer, Ms. Martinez. So a next question, what inspired you to build your program this way? And why do you feel it has had a positive impact in preventing suicide?

Frances Martinez:

Absolutely. We struggle in our wing alone with being geographically separated from most of our units. How can we really engage at my level with 1,300 members and their families with being so far apart? We host these events both in-person and virtually to encourage full participation. When I came on as a director of Psychological Health here, it was in the midst of COVID, 2020, and so there was so much disconnection with our members because everything was shut down. Most people were teleworking, and how do you really engage with people and get people connected?

Our goal was to build these connections with our podcast, with hosting virtual sessions, everything to keep people engaged and de-stigmatize mental health. I think in the military alone, we see everyone's afraid to lose their security clearance. They don't want to go to mental health, because they fear they're going to lose their job. This is a way for us to really take that down a notch, de-stigmatize and demystify those beliefs that people have ingrained in them for the past decade or two decades. And so, it's really important for us to really hone in on our members' strengths and encourage those help-seeking behaviors.

Danette Blagburn:

Great, thank you. I think it's so important to build a connectedness and then, when you mentioned during COVID, opening things up to not just in person 'cause you couldn't, and virtual. So, thank you for sharing that. The last thing, do you think your program has implications outside of your installation, either across other Services or for suicide prevention efforts in the civilian community?

Frances Martinez:

Absolutely. So we actually open our programs to everyone across all of Air Force Reserve Command, so that's Nationwide, worldwide. Whenever we have these types of events, we share with our local community agencies, with our community action teams, community advisory board. So everyone has knowledge that these services are available to them. One thing I can share, we recently had a couples' workshop virtually for 12 weeks. We had 51 couples sign up. We've had people in Guam, Hawaii, and Korea all attend. So this is going beyond us here at JVSA and local to the 960 Cyberspace Wing. We had that support from Air Force Reserve Command, along with the local installation, to really spread awareness, to have people engaged, and to really meet the needs of our Service members and their families.

Also, utilizing our community partners, so it's not just our military partnerships, but who's local in your community. So we utilize the Steven Cohen Clinic, a couple of the local psychiatric facilities to come out and share what their services are that they provide to our military members and their families. In addition they come and support our local events. We have a 40,000-mile challenge every year for suicide prevention month, and the encouragement to spread awareness. Why 40,000 miles? Because we know about 40,000 people die by suicide in the United States alone every year. So we want to make something super impactful and meaningful and spread that awareness with our local community and beyond.



Danette Blagburn:

Thank you for sharing with us all the ways you're working to make our military safe from suicide. 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 one 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.