



Defense Suicide Prevention Office Video Transcript

Spotlight on Suicide Prevention: U.S. Army Reserve Deployment Support Command in Alabama

Renee Johnson:

Thank you for joining us for a spotlight on suicide prevention, a new series of videos hosted by the Department of Defense to highlight the suicide prevention achievements of our local programs. Today, we are joined by our friends from the U.S. Army Reserve Deployment Support Command in Alabama. They are an example of what suicide prevention looks like at organizational levels in our Reserve community. Their efforts to raise awareness and prevent suicide are inspiring and innovative.

Let's learn about our guests and their work to keep our Service members safe from suicide. The U.S. Army Reserve Deployment Support Command's goal is to remain ready today and tomorrow by ensuring the Command's community is taken care of physically, spiritually, mentally, and financially. The suicide prevention program manager fostered connections with 15 new community partners who devoted time, efforts, and resources to engage with soldiers, leaders, and families during Battle Assembly weekends. As an example, soldiers were presented with the opportunity to engage in the on-site enrollment clinic for Veterans Administration Healthcare, which facilitates access to amazing resources, such as emergency housing vouchers, employment opportunities, and medical and mental health services in the Whole Health initiative.

Thank you for joining us today. Can you please take a moment to introduce yourself and your title?

Dr. Sherry Havard:

Hello. My name is Dr. Sherry Havard. I have been serving as the United States Army Reserve Deployment Support Command suicide prevention program manager for the last four years. My responsibilities as the program manager include coordinating and integrating efforts to reduce suicidal behavior, something that I'm very passionate about.

Renee Johnson:

Let's learn more about your efforts and shine a light on your amazing accomplishments. Please share details about your program, what your team accomplished, and what works best to encourage participation and engagement.

Dr. Sherry Havard:

In one year, a series of impactful events have taken place at the DSC. We really stress the importance of resilience while also fostering relationships. We've been able to build relationships with a total of 15 new community partners, and every year, we look to partner with additional members in the community. The emphasis is often placed on finding social support, coping strategies, helping individuals discover their purpose in life, a sense of responsibility, connecting back to their spiritual roots. The partnership has included collaboration with well-known local organizations such as the University of Alabama VITA Project, the University of Alabama at Birmingham Arts in Medicine



Department, Birmingham VA Medical Center, Walgreens District 499 and 504, and a local crisis center that soldiers can utilize after hours and on weekends for additional support and counseling, along with several other organizations in the area.

Renee Johnson:

What inspired you to build your program this way, and why do you feel that your initiative has had such a positive impact in preventing suicide?

Dr. Sherry Havard:

I've learned that effective suicide prevention requires a comprehension approach. It requires a combination of efforts that work together to address different aspects of the problem. We must ask ourselves what causes individuals to struggle with their mental health? Oftentimes, that includes relationship issues, financial issues, trauma, stress, and once we find out those issues, what resources can we provide to assist individuals during their time of need? Collaboration with community agency outside of the military installations has allowed our soldiers to see and understand the number of individuals that are passionate about mental health, saving lives, and getting individuals back to a healthy state, mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Renee Johnson:

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

Dr. Sherry Havard:

At the DSC, we're constantly looking for ways to improve and advance our program, which requires us to learn from experts in the field, not just experts in the United States Army Active Duty component, but also with the National Guard, with the Air Force, with the Navy. We're constantly traveling to different conferences, just to learn what additional available resources can our soldiers and leaders' access. We're always looking for ways to improve our training, ways to get our leaders to buy into the program even more, which has allowed us to build upon our efforts in the suicide prevention program at the Deployment Support Command.

Renee Johnson:

Thank you all for sharing with us the ways you've worked to make our Army safe from suicide. I am confident I can say this on behalf of the audience, we've learned so much about the ways that we can lead the fight and help eliminate and reduce suicide across the entire Department of Defense and the Army.

Dr. Sherry Havard:

I just want to add, as a professional who is dedicated, committed, and passionate about my work in saving lives in the military as well as in the civilian sector, I take great pride in the work that I do. By contributing to the well-being of others, I believe I'm making a positive contribution that has a greater impact in our community. And it's truly an honor just to work with a number of leaders, not just within



the DSC, but outside the DSC that has been very passionate about saving lives and mental health in general.

Renee Johnson:

Our guests were honored at the 2024 Department of Defense Suicide Prevention Recognition Ceremony in September for their campaigns and initiatives to prevent suicide. This recognition 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 for this video with others. If you found it on social media, please consider sharing it on your timeline for your friends and connections to discover. To access more videos and resources at the Department of Defense Suicide Prevention Office Video Library, visit us online at DSPO.mil.

If you are a Service member in crisis, please 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 the VeteransCrisisLine.net 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.