



Defense Suicide Prevention Office Video Transcript

Spotlight on Suicide Prevention: Space Force – Space Systems Command in California

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 are joined by friends from the U.S. Space Force and Space Systems Command in California. 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.

Space Systems Command accelerated change by establishing the first-ever prevention program for this new Space Force Field Command. The program created a "You Matter" media campaign to promote resources for military and civilian personnel experiencing seasonal depression. The command held 30 suicide prevention events ranging from gun lock distributions, resource education, and self-care techniques. The program also created a placement of the social-ecological model for suicide prevention to identify risk and protective factors for facilitated dialogues and hosted training for almost 12,000 military and civilian personnel.

We'll go ahead and ask some questions. Please share details about your program, what your team accomplished, and what works best to encourage participation and engagement.

Christine Hayes:

Okay, thank you. Hello, my name is Christine Hayes and I'm the integrated prevention program manager over at Space Systems Command, located at Los Angeles Air Force Base in California. Our mission when it comes to the suicide prevention program is to just ultimately just try to make sure that we are trying to reduce the number of suicide ideations, attempts, and completions amongst our guardians. When I say guardians, I'm saying that with a capital G. That includes all of our Active Duty folks, their DOD civilians, as well as their families. How we try to get in front of this is, we use this multi-faceted approach where it consists of, I'll talk about two main key components to it, and those are, I'm just making connections as well as through education. Building relationships is something that we try to educate our folks on.

That goes beyond just saying, hey, how are you doing when you see somebody walking down the hallway. It's actually taking the time to get to know that person beyond the workplace, trying to find out what their background is, who their family members are, what maybe some of their interests are outside of the workplace. Because by doing so, that actually shows that person that you do care. In combination with just making those connections, education is another key component to it.



When I talk about how we try to get that information out there, we are very creative in how we do so, whether it be having our teams go out into the units and having casual conversations there with people or creating a resource guide that's readily available to folks in the event that they need to be able to help someone that may be in need, or just maybe even hosting information fairs so that way all the stakeholders are present and they can educate people of what the services they have available to them. I found that by combining these two components together, it does complement each other, and it's also encouraged our guardians to participate in our preventive efforts.

Danette Blagburn:

Thank you so much, ma'am. Connecting and education are so important. When folks have the tools in their toolkit, it does definitely make a difference, so thank you for that. What inspired you to build your program this way, and why do you feel it has had a positive impact in preventing suicide?

Christine Hayes:

The inspiration for how we built the program the way that it is, for me, it actually came from something that my parents told me back when I was first starting out in my career. That was to, one, love what I do. Two, is to always remember that no matter what role I'm in, whether I'm the lowest person on the totem pole or the person in the big office making the decisions, to always remember that I am valued and to value everyone around me. The third thing that they told me was to know that I'm not going to have the answers to everything and that that's okay, but the key to get around to all of that is to know where to go to get those answers. I took that mindset and applied that philosophy to our program at Space Systems Command.

What I found was that just making it a point that making sure our guardians know that they are valued and that they do have the information needed in the event that someone were to go to them and say that they need assistance, has been very beneficial. It's something that, within our command, it's not something you just hear about, you can actually see it, you can feel it.

I'll give you a quick example of what I mean by that because recently, we were just asked to try to figure out a way how to co-locate certain response and prevention agencies together so that way it's a one-stop-shop where people can seek help or to respond in the event to prevent interpersonal violence or some form of self-harm. When that concept came about, SSC fully embraced it, and we were actually the first to go out to make sure that at all of our locations, we do have that one-stop shop available for folks. That's just a quick example to show how my inspiration was able to help our program be as successful as it is.

Danette Blagburn:

That's great. That's wonderful. It kind of ties back to what you were saying before about education and letting the airmen and guardians know that they have a place to find these resources. That's all. That's great, thank you. Last question I have for you. Do you think your program has implications outside your installation, either across other Services or for suicide prevention efforts in the civilian community?

Christine Hayes:

Oh yes, most definitely. I do believe that our program has had a positive influence in our outside agencies. We do work really closely with our helping agencies that are off base, as well as the schools,



as we know our lives, they're not contained within the four walls of the base, and so being able to build those strong relationships with those outside agencies has strengthened our prevention efforts. In addition to that, what I found was that the providers in the outside community they weren't very knowledgeable about the unique characteristics the different experiences that our guardians have, and so by educating them on what those unique characteristics are, they were able to tailor the type of support that they're providing to them. How I know it works is because I've heard various guardians tell me that they're very grateful to know that they do have these options to go off base and that they don't have to just go to the resources that are available on base. That's how I believe that what we are doing across the board is beneficial, both on and off base.

Danette Blagburn:

Thank you, ma'am. Thank you so much for sharing your programs that's going on at Space Systems Command and all the work that you're doing for the guardians. 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. 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. Thank you.