



What is Postvention and Why Does it Matter?

Overview

Postvention involves policies, programs, practices, and support implemented after a suicide death to reduce further suicide risk and promote healing. It helps individuals and communities affected by suicide loss cope with grief, associated trauma, and practical challenges, while reducing future suicide risk among those affected. Postvention supports healing and strengthens connection to care.

Understanding the Suicide Prevention Continuum of Care

- **Prevention:** Actions taken before a crisis to reduce suicide risk (e.g., education, stigma reduction, access to care)
- **Intervention:** Actions taken during an immediate suicide crisis
- **Postvention:** Support provided after a suicide, focused on survivors of suicide loss and communities

Postvention is part of the suicide prevention continuum and the basis of a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy.

Why Postvention Matters

A suicide death affects spouses, children, parents, friends, coworkers, military units, and entire communities. Its impact extends beyond those who were close to the individual. Simply being exposed to the loss can be distressing and disruptive. Without support, survivors may experience isolation, complicated grief, and increased mental health risks. Postvention aims to reduce stigma, promote healthy grieving, and connect individuals to helping resources and community support.

"Postvention is Prevention."

What Survivors of Suicide Loss May Experience

Suicide grief often includes:

- Shock and disbelief
- Guilt, anger, and confusion
- Shame, stigma, and isolation
- Desire to understand why
- Societal and cultural beliefs
- Questioning meaning or purpose
- Physical and mental health symptoms

Connecting with others who understand suicide loss can make a meaningful difference.

Effective Postvention Includes

- Conducting active outreach where support is initiated and not left to individuals to seek out
- Providing or connecting to resources on grief, coping, and available support options
- Offering active guidance on navigating military systems, processes, and benefits
- Connecting individuals to peer, chaplain, and mental health support resources
- Ongoing follow-up for those at risk

Postvention supports healthy grieving, strengthens connection to care, and reduces suicide contagion and prolonged distress.



DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

Why Postvention Is Especially Important for Military Families

Military families may face additional challenges while grieving, including:

- Geographic separation from extended support systems
- Command involvement and casualty response processes
- Complex benefits and administrative requirements
- Military culture expectations and stigma that shape how grief is expressed and willingness to seek support

Toolkit for Military Suicide Loss

The Defense Suicide Prevention Office's *Postvention Toolkit for a Military Suicide Loss* emphasizes compassionate, coordinated, and proactive support to promote healing and reduce further harm.

The Toolkit provides structured guidance to:

- Support leaders and units in responding effectively
- Ensure families receive coordinated, timely care
- Promote healing while reducing the risk of further harm

Postvention efforts focus on supporting and caring for those left behind as they navigate loss. Strategic postvention planning efforts ensure that support systems are in place to promote healing, strengthen resilience, and reduce future risk.

 Explore the *Postvention Toolkit for a Military Suicide Loss* and available DSPO resources to support your unit, your people, and your community at www.dspo.mil/Home/Tools/Resource-Library.



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Military
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