



News and Announcements

Building a Stronger, More Connected Community This September



With September approaching, now is the perfect time to begin planning for Suicide Prevention Month. This year's campaign, "Joining Your Fight: Connect to Protect," continues to spotlight the power of connection, early support, and community in preventing suicide across the Department of War.

"Joining Your Fight: Connect to Protect" reinforces that suicide prevention is a shared responsibility, one built on trust, collaboration, and consistent, stigma-free communication. Installations, units, and partner organizations can access [DSPO's 2026 Suicide Prevention Month Communications Toolkit](#), including campaign graphics, talking points, fact sheets, and ready-to-use materials to help drive local engagement.

We encourage you to start thinking now about creative ways to bring this theme to life in your community, whether planning an event, highlighting available resources, or simply creating opportunities for people to connect. By preparing early, we can set the stage for a meaningful and unified Suicide Prevention Month that strengthens readiness and reinforces the message that connection protects lives. For more information about DoW's commitment to suicide prevention, visit www.dspo.mil.



SUMMER 2026



Director's Corner

Dr. Alicia Matteson
DSPO Acting Director

As our nation celebrates its 250th birthday, I am profoundly grateful for all Service members and their families—past and present—who have tirelessly defended our ideals of freedom and democracy. More than any rank or titles, I am most proud to be called a US veteran.

The theme of this Quarterly Connection is *service*. Just as the Department honors our service through an unwavering commitment to Total Force readiness and the well-being of our military community, your Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) team relentlessly promotes readiness through the prevention of suicide in our military community.

While Service members and their families protect our nation, we must work to protect them through a system and culture where connection and support are actively encouraged and always within reach. DSPO is honored to join you in partnership and service to our military community.

Are you or someone you know experiencing suicidal thoughts?

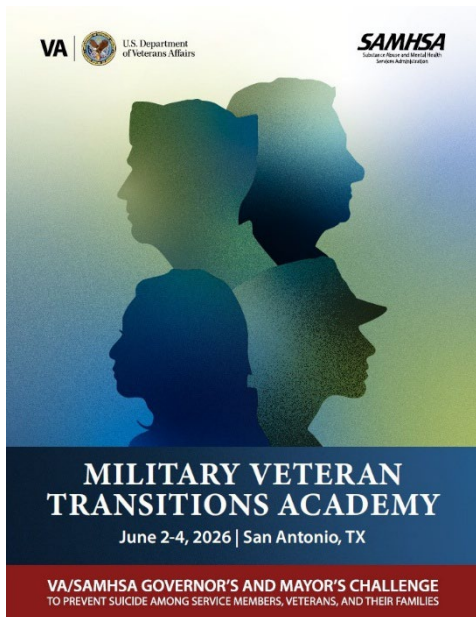
Reach out to a free, confidential counselor at the Veterans/Military Crisis Line: dial 988 then press 1, text 838255, or chat online by visiting <https://www.militarycrisisline.net/>.





DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

QUARTERLY CONNECTION



Suicide Prevention: From Service Member to Veteran

In June, DSPO participated in the inaugural Military Veteran Transition Academy, a new subset of the national [Governor's Challenge](#) initiative led by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)). The three-day Academy brought together state teams and federal partners to collaborate on strengthening support for service members as they transition into veteran status. DSPO participated as primary speakers, panelists, and contributed subject matter expertise during breakout sessions focused on developing state-level strategic plans, logic models, and implementation approaches for suicide prevention, postvention, and education.

A central theme of the event was the importance of federal-state collaboration, especially given that most transition and suicide prevention work happens at the state and community level. Discussions also focused on the “deadly gap,” the first year after separation when suicide risk is highest, underscoring the need for proactive, upstream prevention.

DSPO's engagement supports this mission by helping states build capacity to assist transitioning service members and recently separated veterans and their families. The Academy also highlighted emerging initiatives such as the [Project Patriot Pipeline](#), which aims to keep individuals connected to meaningful service opportunities, an important protective factor for well-being. The event reinforced the value of coordinated, whole-of-government efforts to support those moving from military to civilian life.

Strengthening National Prevention Through New Action Alliance

Dr. Matteson recently joined the [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) Executive Committee (EXCOM), representing DSPO as one of its newest members. She participated in the May 2026 EXCOM meeting at NFL Headquarters in New York City, where members welcomed new private-sector co-chair Chris Thomas, co-founder and CEO of The Defensive Line. The Action Alliance is the nation's public-private partnership charged with stewarding the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and uniting leaders to strengthen the national response to suicide.

Through this role, Dr. Matteson will help advance the Department's suicide prevention program by strengthening collaboration and enhancing partnerships. DSPO also looks forward to supporting the Alliance's five strategic priorities, including improving data, strengthening crisis care, expanding research, enhancing healthcare system practices, and elevating research-informed messaging.

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Mental Health in Motion

Fostering mental well-being begins with a holistic approach to health, where even small daily choices matter. Physical activity is a skill you can build into your daily routine, one that helps reduce stress, improve mood, and strengthen resilience.

Movement in any form, whether rucking with a teammate or just walking around the block during your lunch break, helps regulate the body's stress response and sharpen clarity. Consult the Uniformed Services University's [Total Force Fitness](#) for other practical ideas to stay fit while avoiding injuries.

The Power of Words: Safe Messaging Guides for Leaders

The language we use when discussing suicide plays an important role in reducing stigma, encouraging help-seeking, and preventing harmful behaviors. While the media's portrayal of suicide does not always align with safe messaging practices, it is critical for the military community to lead by example in framing suicide-related discussions with care and compassion.

Download the [Leaders Suicide Prevention Safe Messaging Guide](#) for tools and resources to safely and effectively communicate about suicide with Service members, units, and military communities. Additionally, check out DSPO's new [How to Talk About Suicide chart](#) for a quick reference guide to talk about suicide in a way that strengthens readiness, fosters resilience, and saves lives.



Celebrating 250: Military and American Values

At the Military Health System (MHS) Conference, hosted in May in Dallas, Texas, retired U.S. Army captain Medal of Honor recipient Florent "Flo" Groberg delivered an inspiring keynote reminding us that resilience, courage, and support for one another are not just military values; they are American values that have shaped our nation for 250 years.

In 2012, Groberg selflessly protected countless lives by diverting a suicide bomber away from his unit. He experienced severe injuries, including the loss of half his left calf muscle, significant nerve damage, and a traumatic brain injury. At MHS, Groberg spoke candidly about his experience with mental health challenges and the road to recovery, both mentally and physically.

"That was the biggest lesson I ever took from combat," he said. "It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter where you come from. It doesn't matter what your work experience is. Your title does not matter. You are a human being." Read more about Groberg's captivating story and inspiring speech on [Health.mil](#).

