



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP COMMANDERS OF THE
COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: 2024 Department of Defense Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month Observance and Kick-off for the 2024-2025 Annual Campaign: *Joining Your Fight: Connect to Protect*

September is National Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month, and the Department of Defense is committed to the fight against suicide. One death by suicide is too many. This year our theme *Joining Your Fight: Connect to Protect* emphasizes that we must join together to fight suicide, provide mental health care and resources, and protect our Service members and their families.

The Department's year-round initiative follows the Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III's five lines of suicide prevention efforts including Promoting a Culture of Lethal Means Safety, Revising Suicide Prevention Training, Reducing Stigma and Other Barriers to Care, Improving the Delivery of Mental Health Care, and Fostering a Supportive Environment. These five lines are the foundation of the Department's Taking Care of Our People initiative and the commitment to the welfare of the Total Force.

This year Congress passed the Brandon Act allowing Service members to request and receive a confidential mental-health evaluation. Our leaders will abide by the Act and continue to do all they can to reduce the stigma around seeking mental health help. Only when Service members and their families receive the help they need, is our military community mission ready.

The welfare of our military community is a collective effort and Service members, and their leaders must understand that asking for help is paramount to well-being. All health issues, whether physical or mental, should receive proper attention. When someone suffers a physical injury, it is addressed immediately with medical attention. When someone is having mental health issues, those issues must be addressed to prevent more serious consequences. It is up to the Total Force to support and encourage each other to take care of their physical and mental health and ask for help.

Those in need of help, or those looking for help for a loved one, have a variety of options in seeking care. They can talk to their chaplains and faith leaders, get non-crisis support through Military OneSource, which offers non-crisis, free, and confidential counseling 24/7, or they can contact Tricare which can connect anyone with mental health and counseling services. Our civilian employees should contact your Human Resources team for your agency's specific Employee Assistance Program (EAP) information. The DoD EAP provides resources, information, and confidential help 24/7 at 866-580-9046 (Text Telephone (TTY): 711. Service members, family members, and veterans can also reach out for help via the Veterans and Military Crisis line by dialing 988 and pressing one.

For those serving overseas, the Veterans and Military Crisis Line provides specialized lines based on geographic area:

Veterans/Military Crisis Line

OCONUS: In Europe, call: 844-702-5495 or DSN 998, in Southwest Asia, call 855-422-7719 or DSN 998, in the Pacific, call 844-702-5493 or DSN 998.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Line (all Americans) call: 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
TTY users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 and then 988. Visit:
<https://988lifeline.org/Chat>: Text with a Crisis Line responder by sending a text message to 838255

Suicide is a public health issue, and it affects everyone. We must join together and fight to protect our military community. Let's encourage our friends, co-workers, and family members to seek help. We must *Join the Fight* not only in September, National Suicide and Prevention Awareness Month, but all year long.

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Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of
Defense for Personnel and Readiness