



# Defense Suicide Prevention Office Podcast Transcript

## Making Life Easier with Military OneSource

Chris Traugott:

Hello and welcome to the DSPO podcast, Making Life Easier with Military OneSource. My name's Chris Traugott, I'm a senior policy and legislative advisor for the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. And today we have with us Michelle Aldana, the program analyst for Military Community Support Programs. Michelle, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Michelle Aldana:

Hi, thank you so much for having us here. Like you said, I work at Military Community Support Programs. We oversee the Military OneSource footprint, but I'm also, I've grown up being a military kid. My dad was in the military. I've been a military spouse. My husband is a veteran and I'm sure I'll be a military aunt. My brother's still in for a couple more months. So, I feel like I've lived this military experience and which makes me so excited to be able to share all the Military OneSource.mil resources because sometimes I'm like, what I wish I would've known about this when I was going through all this and I know how beneficial it is for so many people.

Chris Traugott:

So, tell us a little bit about what is Military OneSource?

Michelle Aldana:

So Military OneSource is a, I like to say a one-stop shop for support, information, and resources for Service members, their military families, and our military families. It's here to support our military community. We provide individualized support. It's at no cost, free. Everybody loves something free. At least I do. I like free things tailored, confidential support. So you can call us, and if you just have a question and say, hey, I just need to ask about a PCS, or I've just moved somewhere, and I'm trying to find a mechanic or something, you can call us for so many things, and we'll be able to provide that support and that connection. What's really great about Military OneSource is that it's for active duty components, their immediate families, and also our Reserve and National Guard members regardless of activation status and their families. So, when we have those members who are part of the National Guard or Reserve, and maybe they're in rural areas, and they're not close to an installation, we're able to provide support. Which I know sometimes it's hard to find support, and you're able to talk to someone when you call Military OneSource, or you chat with us or text us. The people that you call are people who have master's levels social sciences background. So, they're trained to answer these calls. It's not any old body answering the phone. They're people who are trained to be able to not only hear the stated needs but are unstated needs and be able to ask those extra clarifying questions to get you to where you need to go or the things that you need to do.



Chris Traugott:

That's fantastic. What are the top three concerns that people usually contact Military OneSource for?

Michelle Aldana:

So Military OneSource, we offer a ton of resources. But the top three reasons that people call Military OneSource are for finances and taxes, spouse education, and career opportunities, so, the SECO program and then our non-medical counseling. So those are, and then usually the other ones, the four and five, they kind of fluctuate, but they're all like information and referral related. So, hey, what do I need to do for a PCS? Or I'm going from here to here, can you help me? Or I want to make sure that my kids have resources and clubs or social things that they can connect with when we go to our next location, or me as an adult I want to make sure I have the resources and clubs and social things to connect with so that the transition is easier.

Chris Traugott:

And can you tell us a little bit about how Military OneSource can help with these concerns when a Service member calls?

Michelle Aldana:

Yes, I would love to. I always like to share. So those top three reasons, like one of them is finance. We know that financial stressors are one of the top concerns for our Service members, their families, and just everyone in general. I mean, we all want to have enough money to do the things we want to do now and the things we want to do in the future. So, a Service member, and their family, they can call Military OneSource, chat with them on our Military OneSource.mil or through our app and you can say like, hey, if you're a brand-new Service member, I've just got my very first paycheck, I want to make sure that I'm setting myself up right. Can you help me with the budget? Or you don't have to be brand new, you can be almost leaving. I need a budget because I'm about to leave the military or I need a budget because I just feel like I need one.

You can call Military OneSource to connect with the financial counselor that helps you with the budget. They can help you pay, come up with a plan to pay down debt, or prepare for spending for holidays or vacations and like how do I save for this stuff or how do I pay for these things or I know I'm going to have to pay for school, how do I save for that? Or all those different things that we have concerns about. You can connect with our certified financial counselors, and they can help you through that. They're not going to be the ones that tell you like what stocks or whatever to buy, that kind of thing. But they'll help you come up with a plan. They'll help you connect you to the right people as well. Also, if you call our financial consultants or call Military OneSource for finance, you can connect for MilTax for taxes as well.

We have a free software filing program, MilTax for Service members, and they're trained to be able to handle all those unique things that military families go through. I live in this state, my home of record is another state, how do I file taxes? Or if you're brand new and you're like, I have a car, I want to register my car. Do I register with the state that I'm in or my home state, how do I pay these taxes? Things like that, they're going to be able to help you with that finance piece. The other reason that I said for the top three reasons is for spouse education, career opportunity, that kind of, that goes into finance. Not



only does it help you if you're a spouse, but if you want to have that job, you have that additional financial resource, and you have that connection to others.

You can contact our SECO coaches career coaches, they can help you find that employment that is if you want a virtual job, a remote job, or you're just not really sure what kind of job you want, they can help do an assessment and figure out like what do I like to do. If you go in and say I would love to teach and I only use this because I used to be a teacher, I know someone that went through teaching, and then when they were finally in the classroom like oh, I do not love teaching. We are able to have those coaches that are like, let's figure out what you really do like so that you can concentrate and focus on what your strengths are. So, they do assessments and then that whole resume process, if you have a resume and you need someone to help look over it, our SECO coaches can do that too.

Which is super helpful. Help navigate USSA jobs if you need to. And provide assistance for financial assistance. If you're going to use the MyCAA program for tuition or certification, we just have a lot of great resources, and they're free. Like someone is going to help you. We have a no-wrong-door policy so if you call us, we'll get you that help. If it's not us, we'll make sure we do that warm handover to someone else. And then the top reason that people call Military OneSource is for non-medical counseling. So, if you want to be able to talk to someone, you can connect with them and talk to them about issues. We don't diagnose people, but we are able to help with a solution-focused program. So if you say, hey, I need some help managing my stress like I'm super stressed out, you can get 12 sessions per issue, so you can get 12 sessions for stress management, and then maybe while you're there you realize, you know what, I could, what could really help, like you and your counselor decide if I had some help in communication.

So, you can get 12 sessions in communication, so you don't have to feel like you have to hold on to it, and like I have to like really to make sure I don't go over 12 forever. Like you get 12 per session per issue per person per year. And not only can our Service members and their spouses use it, but also their kids. If you're ages six to 12, you can get non-medical counseling as long as a guardian, a parent, or guardian is with you. And then if you're 13 to 17, as long as that parent or guardian is at the very first session, if they just kind of pop in and they say, hey, I give permission for them to go through this non-medical counseling and then your teenager, your 13 to 17 year old can do those sessions on their own. I feel like I said a whole lot.

Chris Traugott:

But there, there's a whole lot there. Military OneSource is really a rich resource for both information and help and that's awesome. Can you talk a little bit about Military OneSource confidentiality and what should folks know if they reach out for support?

Michelle Aldana:

Military OneSource is confidential up until the point we have to keep you safe because we care about you and keep others safe. So, we do have a duty to warn if you express harm to others, yourself, or illegal activity. So, we have to make sure we're keeping people safe. But other than that, we keep those confidential records. We don't report to the command. We make sure that you get that individualized support that you need and then when you call Military OneSource, so kind of what to expect as I said, you can for at least for non-medical counseling and all of our kind of resources you can reach out to us,



you just kind of tell us what you want and we have wonderful people triage consultants that can figure out what you need even though you might not know what you need.

Because I know that happens a lot. Like, I don't know what I need, but I need something. They'll be able to ask those extra questions when you call them. Or you can use our chat feature on our Military OneSource.mil. They're going to ask you questions like your name, and where you are located, but that's just for our files so that way we can reach back out to you. We can make sure if we did refer you to a provider, we'll call you and say, hey, did this provider make an appointment with you? And if they didn't, we can make sure we connect you with someone that can help you or whatever other resources that you might have. We try to make it as easy as possible, but we do have to ask questions so that we can make sure that we get you to the right place and get you the support that you need.

Chris Traugott:

Thank you so much. Can you talk a little bit about peer-to-peer counseling and what Military OneSource provides?

Michelle Aldana:

So, we do offer peer-to-peer support. If you are a Service member or a spouse of a Service member and you call us and say, hey, I just want to talk to someone who has been through it, you can ask for that. You can, we can connect you to another spouse. We can connect you to someone who has been in the military so that you have that connection of, like, yeah, me too. I totally get it. I went through it. It's hard when you go to a new location, you have to adjust to new management styles or new missions, or you have to move to a new place and make new friends like that. That's hard. And to have someone who's also been through that so that you can talk to, that's great. The peer-to-peer support, I would say, doesn't kind of if you're not quite ready for a counselor, you just want someone to chat with or just let some stuff off your chest.

They're a great resource. They're all, everyone and all our peer-to-peer support have some type of master's in social science. They're certified. We also have health and wellness coaching, which I kind of connect with that. If you want to be able to have those extra things of connections and maybe doesn't reach the level of non-medical support, you can connect with the health and wellness coach that not only helps you with physical goals, they can help you with mental social goals, and emotional goals. It might be I want to just connect more with my kids. I want to connect more with my spouse. I want to be able to know how to make those lasting friendships. Where can I go, what can I do? We really are a great place to just figure out where to start, and we help you on that journey. And what's even better is that it's all at no cost. It is free. You don't have to worry about that burden. We have that we cover that for you. Our DoD pays for all of the services that Military OneSource offers.

Chris Traugott:

Thank you so much. And I guess my final question is how can Service members and their families get connected to Military OneSource, particularly those family members who are living overseas?

Michelle Aldana:

So Military OneSource is available 24/7/365. So, you can contact us anytime. You can call us at 1-800-342-9647. You can download our app, and they have a connect with us, connect us button, and it'll help



you connect that way. You can also go to our Military OneSource.mil site, and we have a chat feature, and you can connect and chat with someone with one of our triage consultants, and they can connect you to resources. It's whatever is best for you. You can choose the kind of support that you want. I know not everybody loves to talk on the phone. So that chat feature might work for you. If you are overseas, I know when I was overseas, we were stationed overseas, I would not know how to call out of my phone. You can go on our website and just say, contact us, and it'll say overseas you can type in your country. Iservt'll tell you how to call us using all the different phone companies that they have in that country. But also, if you're overseas, you can call us through DSN and call that 1-800-342-9647 number. But the app is really reliable as well as the website, the Military OneSource dot mil sites.

Chris Traugott:

Great. Thank you so much and thank you for your time today and for telling us all about this wonderful resource, Military OneSource.mil. Thank you so much.

Michelle Aldana:

Thank you.