



# DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

## Suicide Prevention Outreach Toolkit

### Introduction

The Department of Defense (DoD) leverages a variety of activities, tools, and initiatives to build suicide prevention awareness. To support DoD's efforts, the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) created the Suicide Prevention Outreach Toolkit that offers materials and suggestions to help you execute your outreach initiatives throughout the year. The tools in the toolkit can be adapted for use year-round.

### Who Should Use This Toolkit?

Anyone planning suicide prevention outreach within their installation, unit, or military or veteran community is encouraged to use this toolkit as a guideline for designing their campaign activities. Many of the items in the toolkit can be adapted or modified for different audiences as needed.

### How Should This Toolkit Be Used?

This toolkit will contribute to more visible and cohesive suicide prevention recognition, which will benefit DoD and the military community. The toolkit provides content and materials to aid in planning a suicide prevention outreach campaign for your community. A community can be Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, their families, and installations, ships, squadrons, etc. Though the toolkit provides a framework, communities should feel free to get creative! DoD and DSPO especially encourage ideas and initiatives that promote and reinforce the theme **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach**.

### Spread the Word

We encourage you to take steps throughout the year to promote the theme **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach** among Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, and military families. Every person has a part to play in reaching out, fostering connectedness, and preventing suicide. Please join us by participating in suicide prevention activities and programs within your community. Share the toolkit with others in your community, and brainstorm new ways to spread suicide prevention messages throughout the year.

If you're communicating on social media, use the following hashtags to join the conversation: #ConnectToProtect #SPM22, and #BeThere. Don't forget to tag us!

### Talking Points and Key Messages

See the below talking points to share information within your community about how individuals can **#ConnectToProtect** and **be there** for Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, and their families.

- [Installation, unit, etc.] is committed to preventing suicide among Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, and their families.
- Suicide prevention is a Department of Defense (DoD) priority throughout the year.
- This year, DoD's theme, **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach**, highlights the important role that connections to family, friends, the community, and resources can play in preventing suicide.
- Research indicates that connectedness is a factor that can reduce the risk of suicide.
- Having social connections that you can count on and a sense of belonging can be protective against some of the potential risk factors for suicide, like loneliness.

- It is important for each of us to focus on connecting to protect the Service members and military families in our lives. We have a moral duty to protect each other—now more than ever.

## How can you be a year-round suicide prevention advocate for your unit, peers, or family?

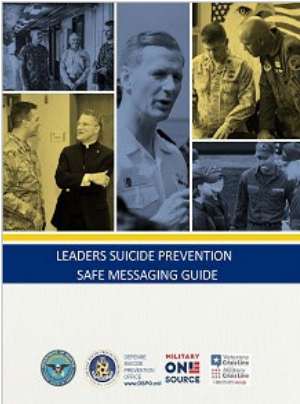
1. **Connect with Self.** It is important to focus on your health and wellness.
  - Participate in spiritual or community activities and groups
  - Volunteer for causes or organizations that you care about
  - Spend time with friends and family members—whether in person or virtually, depending on what is best
  - Seek support from peers, family, or health professionals
  - Reach out to others
2. **Connect with Others.** Strategies to prevent suicide are not limited to when someone is at risk. There are lots of ways to #BeThere for members of your community and strengthen connections. Show your support:
  - Check in with friends and family. Let them know you care.
  - Plan activities that you can enjoy together.
  - Listen when they want to talk.
  - Accept what he or she has experienced without judgment.
  - Resist the temptation to problem-solve.
  - Reassure them.
  - Express care and concern.
  - Encourage them to get help and stay in touch with friends and family.
  - Get to know your military and community resources.
3. **Learn How to Help.** Warning signs can include:
  - Expressing suicidal thoughts or making a plan for suicide.
  - Withdrawing from family, friends, or unit.
  - Expressing feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness.
  - Talking about suicide or wanting to die.
  - Sudden changes in mood or personality.
4. **Speak Up.** If you are concerned about someone, ask if they are thinking about suicide, have a plan, and have the means, such as a firearm, medication, or other methods of self-harm.
5. **Listen and Offer Support.** Be calm and express concern. Take what they say seriously and ask how you can help.
6. **Act Quickly.** If you are concerned they are at imminent risk for suicide, do not leave them alone and seek help immediately. Contact a crisis line, Chaplain, health provider, emergency room, or 911. The Veterans/Military Crisis Line is available 24/7 at 988 (press 1).
  - Remove any weapons, drugs, or other means of self-injury from the area if possible.
  - If you are on the phone with an individual who you believe is in immediate danger, try to keep him or her on the line while you or someone else calls 911.
  - Ask if there is someone nearby who could offer support and keep talking to the individual until help arrives.

Remember, there is no one “fix,” and no single person or organization can prevent suicide alone. We encourage you to take steps in September and year-round to **Connect to Protect**.



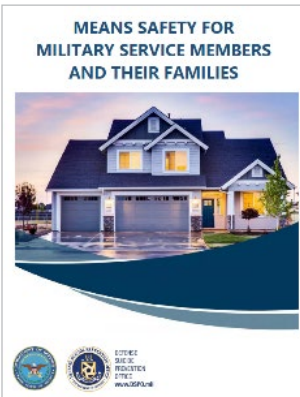
# Tools

Access the following tools from the online toolkit: <https://www.dspo.mil/spm/>



## Leaders Safe Messaging Guide

Talking safely about suicide doesn't lead to suicide. We can all talk about suicide safely – it starts with knowing the facts and using caring and sensitive language. Check out the Leaders Suicide Prevention Safe Messaging Guide here to communicate safely about suicide [www.dspo.mil/download](http://www.dspo.mil/download).



## Means Safety for Military Service Members and Their Families

This SPM, DoD is focusing on promoting lethal means safety to reduce suicide risk. Lethal means are objects (e.g., medications, firearms, sharp objects) used to engage in suicidal behavior. Research shows that adding time and distance between an individual with suicide risk and a lethal means (e.g., via safe storage and making it more difficult to access) has shown to be an effective way to prevent death by suicide. For more information on lethal means safety and suicide prevention methods, share the Means Safety for Military Service Members and Their Families guide and the Stop, Lock, and Live lethal means safety public service announcement video, along with the other tools and the accompanying Service Implementation Guide as part of your SPM observance. Read below for a quick overview on lethal means safety and share some of these resources on ways to Be There.



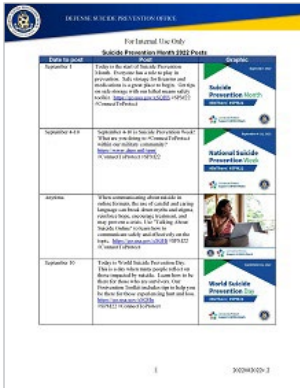
## Virtual Meeting Background Option 1



## Virtual Meeting Background 2

# Social Media Graphics

Visit the toolkit online for social media and graphics: <https://www.dspo.mil/spm/>



**Social Media Content Calendar**



**Facebook Frames**



**Banner**



**Graphic: MCL/VCL Crisis Line**

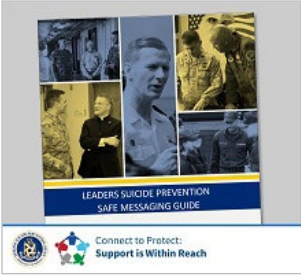


**Graphic: MCL/VCL Logo**



**Graphic: Facebook Frame**

# Social Media Graphics



Graphic: Leaders Messaging Guide



Graphic: OCONUS Military Crisis Line



Graphic: Facebook Cover Image



Graphic: Twitter Cover Image