



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

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

SEP 16 2022

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

SUBJECT: 2022 Department of Defense Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month Observance and Kick-off for the 2022-2023 Annual Campaign: *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*

Each year in September we pause to raise awareness during National Suicide Prevention and Awareness month. Every one of us faces life challenges, stressors, and moments that feel overwhelming, and for every person, the response is different. For some, these experiences can increase the risk of suicide. Each September, we remember those who have been affected by suicide, while connecting with one another to decrease the stigma, and remind one another that we are stronger together. As part of our commitment, the Department's Annual Suicide Prevention Campaign, *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*, emphasizes our interconnectedness, empowering each of us to create a safe space for others to reach out for support and connect to available resources.

While National Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month focuses on September, the Department is committed to suicide prevention, awareness, and encouraging help seeking throughout the year. Every day we can take time to remind ourselves to cherish life, while taking action to show our support for those we encounter each day. We serve together, shoulder to shoulder, and regardless of our role or specific organization, we can and must continue to *Connect to Protect* because support is always within reach. The Department's suicide prevention campaign theme *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*, highlights the critical role connections to family, friends, community, and resources play in helping to prevent suicide. Research indicates that connectedness is a factor that can reduce the likelihood someone will consider or attempt suicide. Reaching out and connecting with friends and loved ones can help you and those you care about find strength and encouragement through difficult times. For more information on *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*, go to: <https://www.dspo.mil/spm/>.

If you find yourself wondering what you can do, I want you to remember that sometimes even seemingly small steps can save lives. I encourage you to join me in engaging in a few healthy, and meaningful actions. Be there for others, and check in with those around you. Spend time with people who contribute to your own sense of stability, calm, or joy – or those who best understand what you might be experiencing and are able to assist. Engage in positive actions, some of which can be as simple as exercising, practicing breathing routines, spending time outside, keeping a journal, or reading.

When you need to reach out, do so. In addition to counseling services, Chaplains/Faith Leaders and other resources are also available to assist. For non-crisis support – such as

relationship, family, or financial challenges – connect with Military OneSource, which provides free and confidential 24/7 support to all Service members and their families at 800-342-9647 or via chat at: livechat.militaryonesourceconnect.org/chat. Civilian employees have access to similar support through Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). For your agency’s EAP information, please contact your Human Resources team. The DoD EAP provides resources, information, and confidential help 24/7 at 800-222-0364 (Text Telephone (TTY): 888- 262-7848).

Since July of this year, 988 has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, and is now active across the United States. When people call, text, or chat 988, press 1, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing Veterans Crisis Line/Military Crisis Line (VCL/MCL) network. These trained counselors will listen, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary. The previous VCL/MCL phone number (1-800-273-TALK (8255), press 1) continues to remain available to Service members, veterans, and their families in emotional distress or suicidal crisis 24/7/365.

Veterans and Military Crisis Line (Service members, veterans and their families)
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Individuals can use this new option by dialing 988 and pressing 1 to contact the Military/Veterans Crisis Line. Individuals may still use the previous phone number—1-800-273-8255 and Press 1—by text (838255), and through chat (VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).

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In Europe, call 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118.
In Japan and Korea, call 080-855-5118 or DSN 118.
In Afghanistan, call 00 1 800 273 8255 or DSN 111.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (all Americans)

Call: 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
For TTY users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.
Visit: <https://988lifeline.org/>
Chat: Text with a Crisis Line responder – Send a text message to 838255

Everyone plays an essential part in suicide prevention. Know that you are not alone, and reach out and let others know that you are there for them. Each and every day, we must take care of ourselves, our loved ones, and our battle buddies. We are all in this together, and together we can save lives.



Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.