



September 2013

Suicide Prevention Month



Suicide prevention is one of the DoD's top priorities. Observation of Suicide Prevention Month provides an opportunity to demonstrate our collective resolve to combat this problem and promote steps to increase knowledge and foster understanding of suicide prevention and enhance help-seeking and resilience efforts.

The Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) is part of the Department of Defense's Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. DSPO oversees the development of policies, procedures and messaging to prevent suicide and build resilience across the U.S. military.

www.suicideoutreach.org

Department of Defense (DoD) Talking Points:

Suicide Prevention: A Very Serious Concern at DoD

- ▶ The DoD takes suicide prevention very seriously and considers any measure that saves a life as a measure worth taking.
- ▶ All Service branches at DoD are commemorating Suicide Prevention Month by participating in special suicide prevention activities in September.
- ▶ The DoD has implemented many programs and services to help Service members, DoD civilians, and their families cope with everyday stresses and those unique to military life.
- ▶ Suicide prevention is part of a comprehensive effort to address various high-risk behaviors.
- ▶ Suicide prevention is the responsibility of all leaders. Front-line leaders at all levels must embrace this issue and take measures to create a command climate that encourages Service members to seek the help they need.

The Causes of Suicide Are Diverse

- ▶ Suicide is a complex issue. Just as in the general population, suicide in the military is usually associated with relationship problems, financial distress, legal issues, and depression.
- ▶ There appears to be no direct link between deployment and an associated risk of suicide.
- ▶ Recognize the signs of suicide: hopelessness, anxiety, self-destructive behavior like alcohol and drug abuse, and talking about death.

Building Resilience is Critical

- ▶ The Services are working to enhance protective factors and build resilience by using the Total Force Fitness framework of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Total Force Fitness emphasizes the importance of mental, spiritual, and physical fitness.

DoD Promotes Help-Seeking

- ▶ Seeking mental health care is a sign of strength.
- ▶ Suicide is a medical emergency and care should be sought immediately.
- ▶ Service members in crisis should seek help immediately by contacting the Military Crisis Line. Dial **800-273-8255 (press 1 for military)** for 24/7 crisis support. The crisis line, found at <http://militarycrisisline.net>, also provides a chat and text service.
- ▶ If you suspect someone may be feeling suicidal, talk to them – it could help save their life.