

# ***Headquarters U.S. Air Force***

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*Integrity - Service - Excellence*

## **Air Force Suicide Prevention Program**



**Major Michael McCarthy**  
**Air Force Suicide Prevention Program Manager**

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# Overview

- **AFI 90-505, *Suicide Prevention Program***
- **Timeline**
- **CAIB/IDS**
- **DoDSER**
- **Tiered Training**
- **Postvention**
- **Suicide Messaging**



# ***AFI 90-505, Suicide Prevention Program***

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- ***AFI 90-505, Suicide Prevention Program (Supersedes AFI 44-154, AFPAM 44-160 rescinded)***
- **Timeline**
  - **First major revision to SP guidance in 15 years**
  - **Suicide prevention IPT- Feb 2011**
  - **Informal/AO coord- May 2011- Sept 2011**
  - **T/F coord- Sept 2011- May 2012**
  - **Mandatory coord- June 2012**
- **The way ahead**
  - **AF/CV signature**
  - **AFDPO publication**



# **AFI 90-505, *Suicide Prevention Program***

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- **Removes violence awareness requirement**
- **Elevates 11 elements from AFPAM to AFI**
- **5 Chapters**
  - **Overview, Responsibilities, Program, Education and Training, Metrics**
- **Assigns oversight for SP to the CAIB chair**
- **Codifies AF DoD SER requirements**
- **Establishes tiered training requirements**
- **Provides postvention guidance**



# ***Suicide Prevention & CAIB/IDS***

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- **AFI 90-505, para 10, “The CAIB and IDS at all levels shall monitor suicide statistics and ensure implementation of AF Suicide Prevention Program initiatives.”**
- **Most Common**
  - **Number/Rate of suicides and suicide attempts**
  - **ADLS training rates**
  - **FST training rates**
- **Recommended**
  - **Regular IDS review of [11](#) elements**
  - **Identify gaps in implementation**
  - **IDS develops tailored action plan**
  - **CAIB approves action plan and monitors implementation**



- **3.1.11.6. A DoDSER will be completed for the following groups:**
  - **3.1.11.6.1. All Airmen in Title 10 status who die by suicide or [attempt suicide](#).**
  - **3.1.11.6.2. Active full time ANG personnel (Title 32) who die by suicide.**
- **3.1.11.7. Basic demographic data (DoDSER data fields 1-9), at a minimum, will be tracked on the following populations:**
  - **3.1.11.7.1. All Department of the Air Force civilian employee personnel who die by suicide.**



- **3.1.11.7.2. All Selected Reserve (SELRES) and traditional ARC members who die by suicide.**
- **3.1.11.8. MAJCOM, FOAs, DRUs and the ANG have the authority to conduct additional reviews on suicides by civilians and reserve members not in Title 10 status within their commands.**
- **3.1.11.9. A DoD SER will be completed for suicide attempts no later than 30 days of the date of hospitalization or evacuation, or within 60 days of the date the event was determined to be a suicide for active duty service members and 90 days for guardsmen and reservists in title 10 status (ARC personnel refer to para 3.1.11.10.)**



- **3.1.11.10. At ARC wings where no BH personnel are assigned, active duty mental health personnel (co-located wings) or a credentialed ARC flight surgeon or medical technician, under the supervision of a credentialed flight surgeon (ARC stand-alone wings), are authorized to complete a DoDSER.**
- **3.1.11.11. For reportable events that occur in a deployed setting the DoDSER will be completed at the service member's home station.**



# *Joint-Basing DoDSEs*

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- **No guidance in AFI 90-505**
- **Anticipating guidance in DoDI**
- **Be supportive of sister services**
- **Reach out to MAJCOM and HAF if sister services aren't being supportive of you**
- **No requirement to enter SI DoDSEs (Army)**



# *Tier1- Foundational Training*

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## ■ Tier 1

- **4.1.1.1. All new Airmen will receive suicide prevention training during accessions through a face-to-face format. Upon training completion, Airmen will identify and mitigate risk factors for suicide.**
- **4.1.1.2. First Term Airmen's Center (FTAC) attendees will also receive face-to-face training IAW AFI 36-2624, *The Career Assistance Advisor, First Term Airmen Center and Enlisted Professional Enhancement Programs.***
- **4.1.1.3. All Airmen will complete annual Total Force Awareness Training (TFAT) (IAW AFI 36-2201)... The minimum requirement for TFAT is Computer Based Training (CBT), however Unit Commanders are highly encouraged to conduct suicide prevention training face-to-face using the CBT slides to facilitate small group discussions...**



# ***Tier 2- Targeted Training***

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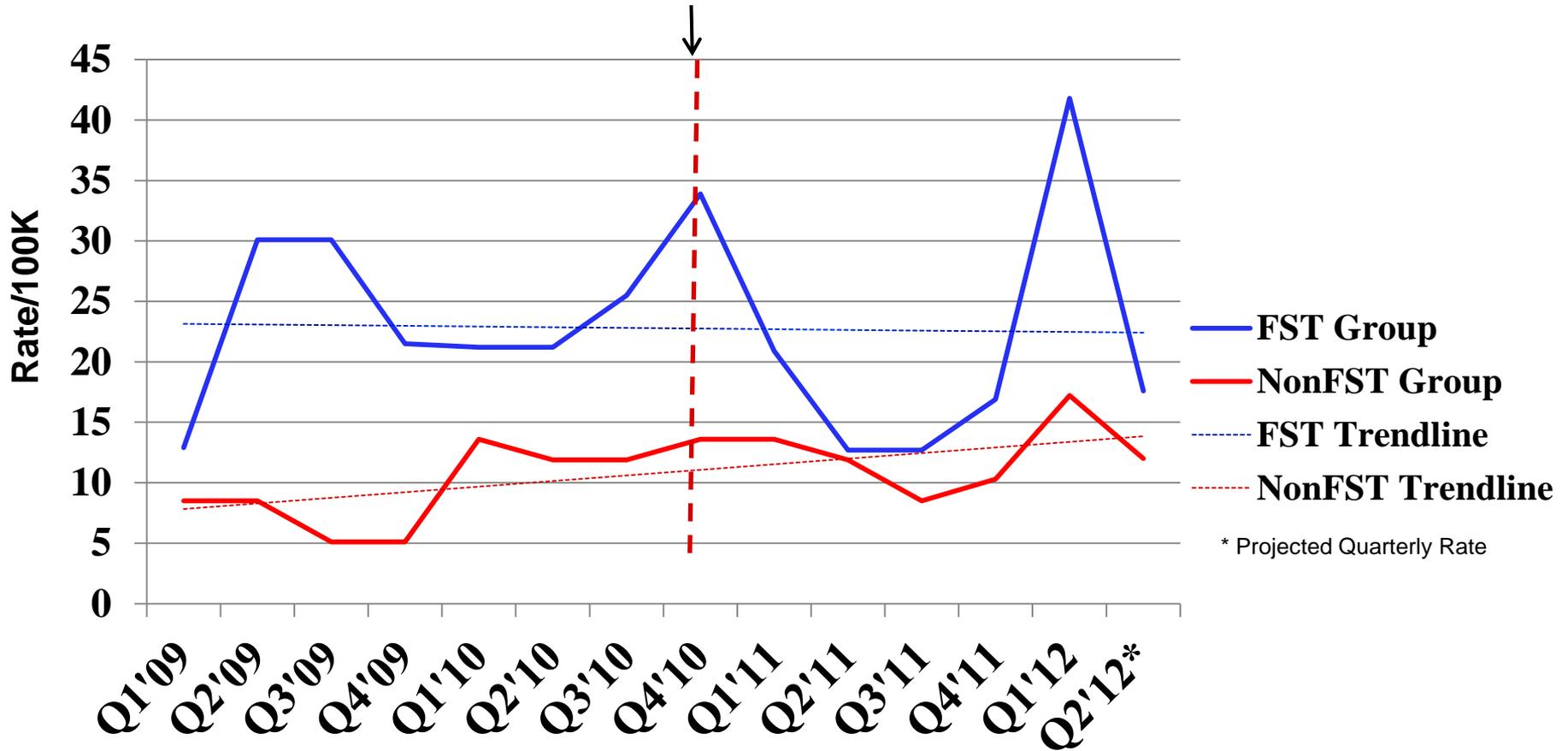
- **4.1.2.1. At-risk groups, designated by the AF CAIB, will complete face-to-face annual suicide prevention training, in lieu of CBT.**
- **4.1.2.2. Supervisors of Airmen in at-risk groups will attend a one-time Frontline Supervisors Training (FST).**
- **4.1.2.3. New supervisors in these fields will complete the required training within 90 days of assuming supervisory responsibility. If the supervisor deploys during the initial 90-day window, the supervisor will complete the required training within 90 days of return.**
- **4.1.2.4. New ARC frontline supervisors working with at-risk groups will complete the required frontline supervisor training within 365 days of assuming supervisory responsibility. If the supervisor deploys during the initial 365-day window, the supervisor will complete the required training within 180 days of return.**



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# Early Results from Frontline Supervisor's Training (FST) for AD At-Risk AFSCs

FST Implementation Memo



*FST AFSCs below LT trend line 17 of 18 months since implementation*



## ***Tier 3- Managing Personnel in Distress***

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- **4.1.3.1. Personnel in agencies with high probability for encountering personnel in distress (e.g., Air Force Office Special Investigations (AFOSI), Mental Health, Security Forces, Judge Advocate, Chaplains, Airman and Family Readiness Center, Commanders, and First Sergeants) will complete agency-specific training on appropriate intervention and referral procedures.**
- **4.1.3.2. Mental Health Flight, ANG DPH or designated ARC personnel will provide training to AF investigative agency personnel on LPSP, investigative interview hand-off procedures, and accessing local emergency services. Active duty training is required within 30 days of reporting for assignment at a new duty location, ARC training is required within 60 days of reporting at a new duty location.**
- **4.1.3.3. All mental health providers will complete annual training on the AF clinical guidelines for managing suicidal behavior.**



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# *What is Postvention?*

- All of the things that are done in response to a suicide  
(Shneidman, 1972)
  
- 2 purposes of postvention (Leenars & Wenckstern, 1998)
  - Care for survivors
  - Prevent future suicides



# ***AF Postvention Resources***

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- **Chaplain Memorial Service Guidance**
  - **Balance between recognizing the member's military service and avoiding glorification**
- **AF Leader's Post-Suicide Checklist and Guide**
- **Public Affairs Guidance**
  - **Senior Leader Messaging**



- **Don't Confuse Suicide Promotion with Suicide Prevention**
  - **Social Learning Theory: We get the behaviors we focus on**
  - **Social Norms Theory: Behaviors become more common when they are perceived to be common**
  - **“Raising awareness” of suicide is NOT evidence-based**
  - **Tie risk factors to desired behaviors not suicide**
- **Research suggests that young adults believe suicide occurs more frequently than it does**
- **Studies have found that young adults largely view suicide as an acceptable problem solving strategy**
- **Suicide prevention isn't done in the mental health clinic**
  - **Consider caring letters**
- **MESSAGING MATTERS!**



# *Leaders' Messaging: Suicide*

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- **Communicate strength-based messages... don't focus on suicide**
- **Avoid overusing the word 'suicide'**
  - **Refocus the discussion to strength and resilience**
- **Champion help-seeking: responsible Airmen use available resources**
- **Promote and model healthy behaviors and choices**
- **Highlight stories of Airmen in crisis who sought help & recovered**
- **Encourage Wingmen to take action when others are in distress**
  - **Ask, Care, Escort (ACE) model**
- **References**
  - **Public Affairs Guidance: Suicide Prevention**
  - **PA Suicide Prevention Communication Guidance Card**

***It is a sign of strength to seek help***



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# ***Following a Suicide***

- **Communicate sadness at the loss and acknowledge others' grief**
- **Emphasize the unnecessary nature of the suicide**
- **Balance saluting military service with expressing disappointment**
- **Ensure Airmen know you and the AF want them to ask for help**
- **KNOW YOUR PEOPLE AND STAY CONNECTED WITH THEM**
- **References**
  - **AF Leader's Post-Suicide Checklist**
  - **AF Leader's Guide for Post-Suicide Response**
  - **Chaplain's Memorial Service Guidance for Suicides**

***Destigmatize Help-seeking  
Restigmatize Suicide***



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# Questions?