

2021 Suicide Prevention Month & Campaign Outreach Toolkit

A Campaign and Communications Toolkit for the Services



Connect to Protect:
Support is Within Reach

#BeThere



DEFENSE
SUICIDE
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**Military/Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

**MILITARY
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Connect: 24/7



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Let's Come Together to Prevent Suicide

The Department of Defense (DoD) is committed to preventing suicide among Service members, veterans, and their families. Suicide prevention is a DoD priority throughout the year. Still, September — Suicide Prevention Month (SPM) — is a time when the Department brings added attention to the complex issue of suicide and emphasizes the valuable resources and support available year-round. This year, the DoD's SPM theme, *connectedness*, highlights the critical role relationships and interpersonal connections to family, friends, the community, and resources can play in preventing suicide.

Research indicates that connectedness is a factor that can reduce the likelihood someone will consider or attempt suicide. Social connections that individuals can count on and a sense of belongingness can be protective factors against suicide. At the same time, loneliness and feeling like a burden can increase the risk for suicide for some individuals. In support of this theme, the 2021 SPM slogan is *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*, emphasizing connections with others and the community, as well as with suicide prevention resources.

Each of us needs to focus on how we can “Connect to Protect” Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, and their families and show that support is readily available. We have a moral duty to protect each other — now more than ever.

The 2021 SPM Campaign Outreach Toolkit provides guidance and helpful resources for planning and executing your SPM and campaign program and activities.

Let's get started!

What Does It Mean to Reach?

This year's slogan includes "Support is Within Reach." To the DoD, to *reach* means to bring more awareness to suicide prevention and available resources, change the conversation around mental health and well-being, and turn awareness into action.

The DoD is committed to working with partners to ensure that our suicide prevention efforts align with established best practices, remain current with emerging research, and disseminated across the Services. With support from DoD leaders and leaders throughout the military community, we will continue to expand our comprehensive public health approach to prevention; align our policies to this effort; and advance our data surveillance, research, clinical and non-clinical interventions, and program evaluation capabilities.

Collaborations and partnerships are essential to meeting the needs of Service members and their families during the evolution of their careers, especially during periods of transition. In particular, our partners help us identify areas of opportunity to further our military community, cross-promoted programs and communications.

This year's SPM slogan encourages everyone to *reach* for support – whether that's seeking help or offering support. Support is within *reach* –connections with fellow Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, family, friends, and community are here to support, and DoD is here to provide additional assistance through a variety of services and programs, to include Military OneSource and Military and Family Life Counseling.

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Every September, we recognize SPM to raise awareness around suicide prevention efforts and communicate information about resources and services for Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, their families, and their communities.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has created new challenges. Certainly, we know that during this time, the military community - like others across our nation - may be feeling stress, uncertainty, and disconnectedness. For some, such experiences can be associated with an increased risk for suicide.

Social connectedness is critical during this time. Leveraging virtual connections for social use, work, and learning has helped fill in the physical distance and created new bridges for looking out for one another, building cohesion, and staying connected. Social connectedness and a sense of belonging improve physical, mental, and emotional well-being – now more than ever, it is vital to stay connected while maintaining safety and health precautions established by your community, state, or federal public health policies.

With unique challenges associated with the pandemic and its evolving landscape, The Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) is committed to fully deploying its resources to meet its mission of strengthening and promoting the resiliency and readiness of the Total Force year-round, not just during September's SPM. Through the development of integrated policies, oversight, and synchronization of activities, DSPO focuses its efforts on a comprehensive, collaborative approach with a variety of partners.

How to Use this Outreach Toolkit

In support of the Department's SPM observance, DSPO created the 2021 SPM Outreach Toolkit that offers materials and suggestions to help you execute your outreach initiatives during SPM and carry these forward throughout the year. The toolkit, including the social media graphics, can be downloaded at www.dspo.mil/spm.

Who Should Use This Toolkit?

Anyone planning their SPM observance within their installation, unit, or military or veteran community can use this toolkit as a guideline for designing their campaign activities.

How Should This Toolkit Be Used?

This toolkit provides ideas on how to plan a successful SPM campaign for your community. A community can be Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, their families, and installations, ships, squadrons, etc. The goal is not to limit creativity but to provide direction that reinforces the connectedness theme and the ***Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*** slogan. This toolkit will contribute to a more visible and cohesive SPM, which will benefit the Department and military community.

For questions, contact at osd.dspo.outreach@mail.mil.

Spread the Word

We encourage you to take steps in September and year-round to ***Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*** with Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, and military families. We cannot do it alone – we need all the players at the table to join us in this effort to prevent suicide. Please join us during September by participating in suicide prevention activities and programs within your community.

There are several ways to spread suicide prevention messages during September and beyond. If you're communicating on social media, use the following hashtags to join the conversation: #ConnectToProtect, #SPM21, and #BeThere

Conversation Starters

Looking for ways to *Connect to Protect*? A simple conversation is a great place to start. Below are some ways to encourage dialogue within your military community and *Be There* for Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, and their family members.

Leaders

For leaders, a supportive command environment can help Service members feel more comfortable *reaching* out or seeking help. Here are some resources from the [Psychological Health Center of Excellence \(PHCoE\)](#) and their [Real Warriors Campaign](#) showing how to foster open dialogue within a leader’s command.

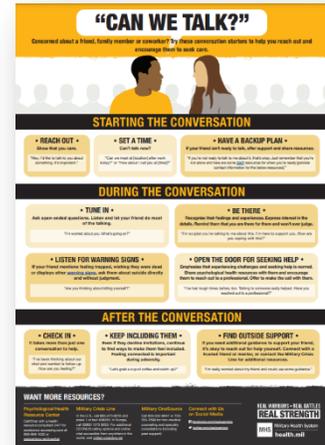
Table 1. Leaders Guide to Fostering an Open Dialogue

<p>Break the silence. Remind Service members that challenges from military life (as well as everyday life challenges, like relationship and financial challenges) are common, and they are not alone.</p>	<p>Share stories of success. Sharing stories or stories of other Service members who successfully reached out for support and care during challenges may inspire and encourage others to seek help.</p>
<p>Spread the truth. Provide accurate information and resources to help break down common misconceptions about seeking care, such as impacts to security clearances or deployment.</p>	<p>Promote mission readiness. Emphasize that reaching out for help not only ensures mission readiness, but also benefits the Service member’s family, unit, Service branch, and community. Seeking support looks different to everyone, and the key is to seek help early before challenges become overwhelming.</p>
<p>Encourage seeking care early. Promote getting help for life’s challenges or mental health concerns as soon as they arise, such as marital or financial counseling.</p>	

Peer-to-Peer

For **peer-to-peer** and **buddy support**, encourage Service members to *Connect to Protect* with each other, online and in-person.

- 1) **Begin with a conversation.** PHCoE provides this [“Can We Talk?”](#) conversation starters infographic encouraging a fellow Battle Buddy, friend, or family member to seek care.
- 2) Learn how to **identify risk factors, warning signs of suicide**, and protective factors that buffer against suicide risk.



- a. **Risk factors** are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take their life.¹ Common risk factors include:

- Depression
- Substance use problems or disorders
- Financial problems
- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- History of abuse, violence, or trauma
- Access to a lethal means of self-harm

Risk factors unique to Service members:²

- Career setbacks, disciplinary actions, or loss of a job
 - Difficulty readjusting following deployment
 - Severe or prolonged stress or combat-related psychological injuries
 - Overwhelming grief from a loss (death of a unit member, disabling injury, etc.)
- b. There are common **warning signs of suicide**, usually seen from what one says or does.¹ Additionally, call 911 or the Veterans/Military Crisis Line at 800-273-TALK (8255), and press 1. Seek immediate help if the Service member:²
 - Talks or writes about suicide, death, or ways to die
 - Threaten to hurt or kill oneself
 - Tries to use or obtain firearms, prescription medications (or pills), or other lethal means of ending his or her own life
 - Increased alcohol or drug use
 - Feeling hopeless, trapped, saying there’s no reason to live or no way out
 - c. **Protective factors** for suicide include:¹
 - Feeling connected to family and community support

¹ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2021). Risk factors, protective factors, and warning signs. *American Foundation for Suicide Prevention*. Retrieved from <https://afsp.org/risk-factors-protective-factors-and-warning-signs>

² Military OneSource (2019). When a Service member may be at risk for suicide. *Military OneSource*. Retrieved from <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/health-wellness/mental-health/suicide/when-a-service-member-may-be-at-risk-for-suicide/>

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- Access to mental health care and being proactive about mental health
- Limited accessibility to lethal means
- Cultural and/or spiritual beliefs that encourage connecting and help-seeking, discourage suicidal behavior or create a strong sense of purpose or self-esteem

Protective factors (as identified by PHCoE):³

- Responsibilities to others
- Strong interpersonal bonds
- Resilience
- Sense of belonging and identity
- Optimistic Outlook

- 3) And for more on how to recognize and respond to suicide risk indicated by your loved ones' or coworkers' social media posts, share the [Simple Things Save Lives video](#). Simple actions, such as checking in on someone who may be going through a challenging time can help and potentially save a life.

Recognizing Signs Online & Reaching Out

As we spend much more time online these days, it's important that everyone knows how to recognize the signs of suicide on social media and how they can help. If someone sees posts that mention...

- Self-medicating in response to emotional or physical pain
- Feeling alone or isolated
- Feeling guilt, shame, anger, rage (seeking revenge)
- Expressing hopelessness or having no reason to live
- Describing methods of suicide

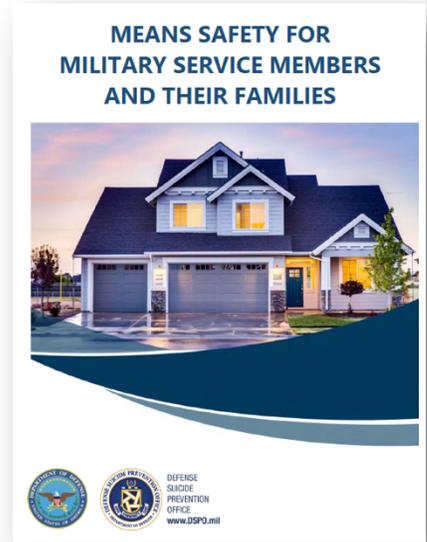
... encourage them to **ASK, LISTEN & GET HELP**.

- **ASK** if they're okay. Are they considering suicide?
- **LISTEN** to how they are feeling, their concerns, and remind them that they're not alone
- **GET HELP**, either from the Veterans/Military Crisis Line or a mental health professional that can guide you and/or the person in crisis and connect you with services

³ Psychological Health Center of Excellence. *Suicide risk resources for providers*. Defense Health Agency, Department of Defense. Retrieved from: <https://www.pdhealth.mil/clinical-guidance/clinical-conditions/suicide-risk>

Lethal Means Safety

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**.

Firearm Safety

FACT: DoD Calendar Year 2019 Annual Suicide Report shows firearm use is the most common method of suicide death in the military. More Service members die by suicide via firearm than by combat, accident, homicide, and other means combined. Here are some firearm safety tips to keep yourself and those in your home safe (refer to pages 8 and 9 of the *Means Safety for Military Service Members and Their Families* PDF for additional firearm safety measures to consider):

<p>Firearm Safety Tip #1</p> <p>CABLE LOCKS: Prevents a firearm from being loaded and fired.</p> 	<p>Firearm Safety Tip #2</p> <p>GUN CASE: Storage solution to secure, conceal, protect and legally transport a firearm.</p> 
<p>Firearm Safety Tip #3</p> <p>LOCK BOX: Provides reliable protection for firearms.</p> 	<p>Firearm Safety Tip #4</p> <p>FULL SIZE GUN SAFE: Allows you to store multiple firearms in one place.</p> 

Firearm Safety – CALM Training

Commanders, leaders, risk reduction and prevention managers, military spouses, and Service members can start a conversation about firearms safety and suicide prevention. Training is available through a free online course on the Suicide Prevention Resource Center’s [Counseling on Access to Lethal Means \(CALM\)](#). This course focuses on safe storage and reducing access to lethal means, such as firearms and medication, how to identify people who could benefit from lethal means counseling, ask about their access to lethal methods, and work with them and their families to reduce access and store safely.

Medication Safety

FACT: Prescription medications are the most common method of non-fatal suicide attempts for Service members (DoD Suicide Event Report, Calendar Year 2018). While we all use medications to address common ailments or treat conditions, sometimes medications can become a means for suicide. Storing medications safely can reduce or prevent a suicide or suicide attempt. (Refer to page 7 of the *Means Safety for Military Service Members and Their Families* PDF.)

Table 2. Safe Storage Tips for Medications

	<p>Do not keep lethal doses of medications on hand. If you are unsure of what a lethal dose is, talk to your pharmacist, who can advise you on safe quantities.</p>
	<p>Discuss prescription and non-prescription medications with your doctor or pharmacist. Do not be afraid to ask any questions about proper dosage, side effects, or any other concerns you might have.</p>
	<p>Lock up all medications. Medication lock boxes are available online and in many pharmacies. Many lock boxes have features that allow for dispensing the right amount of medication when needed, making it easier to access your needed medications safely.</p>
	<p>Dispose of medications that are no longer needed or are outdated. Go to any military or non-military pharmacy to safely dispose of unwanted, unused, or expired prescription drugs.</p>
	<p>Keep only small amounts of alcohol in the home if taking medications. Drinking alcohol while taking medications can be lethal and can lead to impulsive choices such as a suicide attempt. Consider that alcohol could not only increase medical complications, it could also increase the risk for suicide.</p>

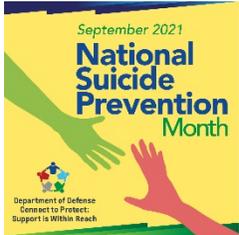
Social Media

Use the following social media content to post during SPM and beyond. The social media content below provides three areas for promotion: (1) posts to add during SPM, (2) posts for holidays/events throughout the year, and (3) posts promoting resources that can be posted anytime (these posts are not linked to any one event or observance).

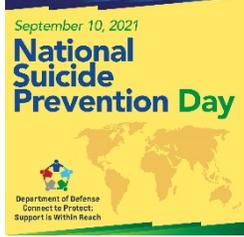
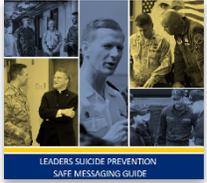
Content may be modified and optimized for specific social media channels you choose to leverage for suicide prevention. If tagging DSPO in your social media channels, mention DSPO at these handles: Facebook - [@DSPOmil](#), Twitter – [@DSPO_BeThere](#).

All SPM assets, including the social media graphics, can be downloaded on www.dspo.mil/spm. Information disseminated to others containing information on nonfederal entities shall contain appropriate disclaimers, such as “The appearance of external hyperlinks or references to nonfederal entities does not constitute endorsement by the United States Department of Defense of the linked web sites, or the information, products or services contained therein.”

Table 3. Social Media Posts for SPM 2021

Date to Post	Post	Graphic
September 1, 2021	Today marks the beginning of Suicide Prevention Month (SPM), and @DSPOmil offers the slogan “#ConnectToProtect: Support is Within Reach.” Our connections to family, friends, community, and unit are more important than ever. This month, #ConnectToProtect, and know that support is within reach Check out dspo.mil to download resources you can share on your social media, including a guide for how to use SPM materials, graphics, blogs, and more. #SPM21	
September 1, 2021 (or first week of September)	[For Facebook only] We changed our profile picture in observance of Suicide Prevention Month #SPM21. #ConnectToProtect and show your support and help raise awareness about preventing suicide. Update your profile pic with the <i>DoD Connect To Protect SPM</i> Facebook frame	

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Date to Post	Post	Graphic
September 3, 2021	<p>@thejointstaff General Milley knows that a mentally ready force is just as important as a physically ready one. In what ways are you coming together as a community to #ConnectToProtect?</p>	 <p>“ We need to come together to Connect to Protect.”</p> <p>– General Mark A. Milley Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff</p> <p>On Suicide Prevention Month</p>
September 5, 2021	<p>Today is the start of #SuicidePreventionWeek. We must protect one another. Looking for ways to #ConnectToProtect? Go to dspo.mil for ways to #BeThere for your family, friends, unit, and community.</p>	 <p>September 5-11, 2021</p> <p>National Suicide Prevention Week</p> <p>Department of Defense Connect to Protect. Support is Within Reach</p>
September 10, 2021	<p>Today is #WorldSuicidePreventionDay. If you need someone to talk to, support is within reach. Call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647, or the Veterans/Military Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 #ConnectToProtect</p>	 <p>September 10, 2021</p> <p>National Suicide Prevention Day</p> <p>Department of Defense Connect to Protect. Support is Within Reach</p>
September 14, 2021	<p>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 <i>Leaders Suicide Prevention Safe Messaging Guide</i> here to communicate safely about suicide www.dspo.mil/download</p>	 <p>LEADERS SUICIDE PREVENTION SAFE MESSAGING GUIDE</p>
September 16, 2021	<p>Simple things, such as checking in with your buddy, especially if you see concerning messages online, can potentially save a life. Follow-up, ask questions, share messages of hope, and refer them to resources, like militaryonesource.mil. View the <i>Simple Things Save Lives</i> video www.dspo.mil/SimpleThings</p>	<p>[Image generated by link]</p>

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Date to Post	Post	Graphic
September 20, 2021	Coping with a loss, especially from suicide, is difficult. Non-clinical providers, first responders, Chaplains, Commanders, and more can use this <i>Postvention Toolkit for a Military Suicide Loss</i> . Download this Toolkit to provide support to families and Service members impacted by a suicide loss. www.dspo.mil/download	
September 23, 2021	We can all #ConnectToProtect with helpful mobile apps that you can use in your own time. DHA Connected Health mobile apps offer a variety of free apps that provide information and support to Service members, Veterans, and their families for various needs, from behavioral health issues and pain management to sleep therapy and apps for military families. https://health.mil/About-MHS/OASDHA/Defense-Health-Agency/Operations/Clinical-Support-Division/Connected-Health/mHealth-Clinical-Integration	[Image generated by link]
September 28, 2021	#ConnectToProtect with your military community – here are five simple ways to get started. We need to support each other – now more than ever – and stay connected.	
October 1, 2021 (or early October)	September’s Suicide Prevention Month might be over but preventing suicide is an effort we are committed to year-round. Update your Facebook frame by looking up “DoD Connect to Protect” #ConnectToProtect	

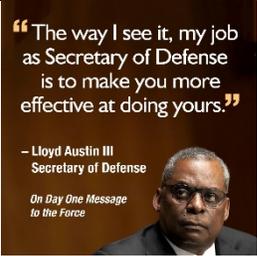
Table 4. Suicide Prevention Campaign Social Media Posts 2021-2022

Date to Post	Post	Graphic
November 11, 2021	<p>Today, we salute our veterans for their service and sacrifice to our country.</p> <p>Veterans, and anyone who may be concerned about a veteran in their life, can speak to caring, trained professionals – many who are veterans themselves - by contacting the Veterans/Military Crisis Line, a confidential and free service available 24/7, 365 days a</p>	

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	<p>year. Contact 800-273-8255 (press 1), chat online at https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat, or text 838255 #BeThere #ConnectToProtect</p>	
<p>November 20, 2021</p>	<p>Today is International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day. Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy, and while grieving looks different for everyone, there is hope, healing, and a way forward. @Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, a @DSPOmil partner, provides support for anyone who lost someone, including to suicide. Visit them to just talk or find resources. #ConnectToProtect www.taps.org</p> <p>The appearance of external hyperlinks or references to nonfederal entities does not constitute endorsement by the United States Department of Defense of the linked web sites, or the information, products or services contained therein</p>	<p>[Image generated by link]</p>
<p>Late- November/ December, 2021</p>	<p>We wish you a wonderful holiday season! We also acknowledge that this time of year can be challenging for some. Know that support is within reach should you need it this winter, whether it's through a friend, a Military OneSource counselor, or Chaplain. #ConnectToProtect</p>	
<p>January 1, 2022</p>	<p>Wishing you and your family health and happiness in the New Year! Looking for a New Year's resolution? Make a promise to #BeThere for a member of your community—give them a call, lend a helping hand, or encourage them to seek additional support #ConnectToProtect</p>	
<p>May 1, 2022</p>	<p>This Mental Health Awareness Month, #BeThere for yourself! Your mental health is critical for maintaining strength, resiliency, and overall well-being. If you need someone to talk to, reach out to someone you trust or call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647. #ConnectToProtect</p>	
<p>May 31, 2022</p>	<p>This Memorial Day, we honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. Thank you. #ConnectToProtect</p>	

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<p>July 4, 2022</p>	<p>Happy 4th of July! This Independence Day, thank a Service member or veteran for their efforts in ensuring our freedom #BeThere #ConnectToProtect</p>	
<p>Anytime</p>	<p>Preventing suicide takes a community, and it starts with us. #BeThere for someone and remind them they don't have to go through anything alone. [We/Service/Installation] added this frame to our profile picture to show our support for preventing suicide. Add this to yours, too, by looking up "DoD #BeThere" Facebook profile pic frame. #ConnectToProtect</p>	
<p>Anytime</p>	<p>Preventing suicide starts with us, and everyone has a role to play. Together, we can educate others about suicide prevention, resources and show our support. Add this frame to your Facebook profile pic by looking up "DoD Prevent Suicide." We're all in this together. #ConnectToProtect</p>	
<p>Anytime</p>	<p>Looking for ways to #ConnectToProtect? Just #BeThere. Check out these five ways to support others (and yourself!) simply by reaching out. #ConnectToProtect</p>	
<p>Anytime</p>	<p>Your mission to protect this country is clear. What about protecting your mental well-being? Resources are available to ensure your resilience and bring you peace of mind. Check out militaryonesource.mil, or reach out to your Service organizations. #ConnectToProtect</p> <p>[Possible handles to tag: @DeptofDefense]</p>	
<p>Anytime</p>	<p>Don't let financial obstacles burden your life. DoD's Office of Financial Readiness is here to help you with financial well-being. https://finred.usalearning.gov #ConnectToProtect</p>	

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<p>Anytime</p>	<p>Did you know, Service members have legal protection from debt collectors? Get financially smart with DoD's Office of Financial Readiness. https://finred.usalearning.gov #ConnectToProtect</p>	 <p>OFFICE OF FINANCIAL READINESS <i>Financially Secure, Mission Ready</i></p>
<p>Anytime</p>	<p>As a military family, we experience unique challenges. Military and Family Life Counseling provides support for you and your family. From counseling for parents and marriage retreats to youth programs and family events, reach out for support: www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/mflc #ConnectToProtect</p>	 <p>MILITARY ONE SOURCE ONE SOURCE CONNECTING YOU TO YOUR BEST MILLIFE. MilitaryOneSource.mil 800-342-9647</p>

Facebook Frame – SPM

DSPO has added the following Facebook frames. For SPM, add this frame to your profile picture. Use the [Facebook Help page](#) on how to find and add a frame to your profile picture.

Facebook Frame – “DoD Connect To Protect SPM”



Example shown below:

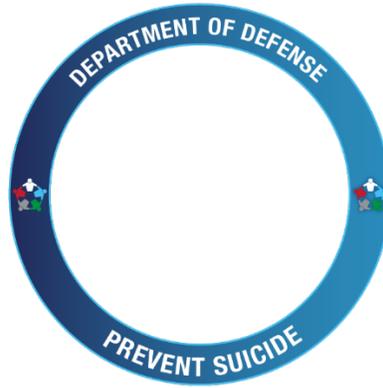


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Facebook Frame – Evergreen

Use the following Facebook frames year-round to continue raising awareness about suicide.

Facebook Frame – “DoD Prevent Suicide”



Facebook Frame – “DoD Connect to Protect”



Facebook Frame – “DoD #BeThere”



Spreading the Word

A Guide for Developing a Newsletter on SPM

The 2021 SPM theme is *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*. Recognizing entities throughout the DoD, the Services, and military and veteran service groups produce a variety of newsletters with varying frequency, formatting, and article lengths, we recommend the following talking points and a message triangle to help structure messaging and help writers develop topics and quotes.

First, identify the top three points you want to make in the article and ensure messages align for a well-structured story.

1. Determine the “Five W’s”: Who, What, Where, When, and Why of the event/story
2. Connectedness plays an important role in preventing suicide, especially as we consider the unique challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on individuals and families.
3. Resources are available to Service members, veterans, and their families to help prevent suicide.
 - a. Ensure you add the following resources:
 - i. Military OneSource
Phone: 800-342-9647
Chat: livechat.militaryonesourceconnect.org/chat
Web: www.militaryonesource.mil
 - ii. Veterans/Military Crisis Line
Phone: 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1), Text 838255, or Chat online at: www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat
Calling from overseas:
In Europe: 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118
In Korea: 0808 555 118 or DSN 118
In Afghanistan: 00 1 800 273 8255 or DSN 111
 - b. Refer to the “[Leader Suicide Prevention Safe Messaging Guide](#)” for safely communicating and reporting about suicide.

If you wish to promote your work widely across civilian outlets, a press release template is provided in [Appendix A](#). The press release template should be used as a guide in preparing your statement. Closely coordinating with your Public Affairs Officer (PAO) and other appropriate measures should be taken before publishing any press releases.

Talking Points and Key Messages

See the below talking points to share information within your community about SPM and 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.
- During September—Suicide Prevention Month (SPM)—the Department brings added attention to the complex issue of suicide and emphasizes the available resources and supports.
- In these challenging times during the COVID-19 pandemic, our relationships have taken on a new level of meaning and importance. As more people are experiencing isolation, limited sports/fitness activities, and other known risk factors of suicide, reaching out and building connections is a useful and needed way to **be there** for your community members.
- This year, the DoD’s SPM 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.
- As we head into September, 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.

CUI

- 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 an 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 1-800-273-8255 (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***.

Suicide Prevention Recognition Nomination

Department of Defense Suicide Prevention Office Recognition Program Overview

Each year since 2016, the DSPO has honored one exemplary installation from each of the Services (including their respective reserve components) for their exceptional efforts to increase suicide prevention awareness and community engagement throughout the month of September – Suicide Prevention Month. This recognition gave installations the opportunity to share across the Department their Suicide Prevention program successes through self-nomination.

To show appreciation for impactful and continuing suicide prevention efforts across the year – from September 1, 2021, through August 31, 2022 – DSPO will honor one exemplary installation from each of the Services (including their respective reserve components) during its annual *Suicide Prevention Recognition*. This expanded period of observation not only amplifies the DoD’s emphasis on year-round suicide prevention efforts but also gives installations the opportunity to continue their ***Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*** campaign throughout the year. In keeping with the Department’s suicide prevention communications theme, connectedness, the Department will recognize recipients for their continued efforts to *#BeThere* and *#ConnectToProtect* Service members and their families by increasing awareness, promoting connectedness, and building community support for suicide prevention.

Additional information on how to submit nominations is forthcoming.

Resources

Provide the following non-crisis and crisis resources across your network and channels along with your SPM activities.

Non-Crisis Resources

DoD Resources

Defense Suicide Prevention Office

Advances holistic, data-driven suicide prevention in our military community through policy, oversight, and engagement to positively impact individual beliefs and behaviors, as well as instill systemic culture change. Additional materials and resources are found on the Defense Suicide Prevention Office website.

Contact Information:

Web: www.dspo.mil



inTransition

A free, confidential program offers specialized coaching and assistance for active duty Service members, National Guard members, Reservists, Veterans, and retirees who need access to a new mental health provider or wish to initiate mental health care for the first time. inTransition services are available to ALL military members regardless of length of service or discharge status.

Contact Information:

Phone: 800-424-7877

Outside the United States (international toll-free number): 800-424-4685

Outside the United States (collect): 314-387-4700

All calls are confidential and free.



Military OneSource

For non-crisis concerns, such as relationship, family, or financial challenges, Military OneSource provides 24/7 service to all Service members, including National Guard and Reserve members and eligible family members. Arrange a face-to-face, phone, online, or video counseling session via the contacts below.

Contact Information:

Phone: 800-342-9647

Chat: livechat.militaryonesourceconnect.org/chat

Web: www.militaryonesource.mil

App: My Military OneSource (Available Google Play and Apple App Store)



Call. 800-342-9647

Click. www.MilitaryOneSource.mil

Connect. 24/7

National Resources

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is the nation's largest non-profit dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide.

Contact Information:

Toll-Free: 888-333-AFSP (2377)
Phone: 212-363-3500
General Inquiries: info@afsp.org
Web: afsp.org



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

Give An Hour

Give An Hour provides care and support for those who otherwise might not receive it by harnessing the skill, expertise, and generosity of volunteer mental health professionals across the country.

Contact Information:

Email: info@giveanhour.org
Web: giveanhour.org



Crisis Resources

DoD Resources

Veterans/Military Crisis Line (VCL/MCL)

The VCL/MCL is a free, confidential resource that provides Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) support for all Service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, all veterans, and their families, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. The caring, qualified responders at the VCL/MCL are specially trained and experienced in helping Service members and veterans of all ages and circumstances. If you or someone you know is in a suicidal crisis, there is help – contact the VCL/MCL.

Contact Information:

Phone: 800-273-8255 (Press 1) or Text: 838255
Calling from overseas:
In Europe: Call 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118
In Korea: Call 0808 555 118 or DSN 118
In Afghanistan: Call 00 1 800 273 8255 or DSN
Chat: www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat
Web: www.veteranscrisisline.net



1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

National Resources

911

In an emergency, dial 911 or your local emergency number immediately. An emergency is any situation that requires immediate assistance from the police, fire department, or an ambulance.

Contact Information:

Phone: 911

Web: www.911.gov



National Poison Control

If you suspect a poisoning, contact a Poison Control Center right away, online, or by phone. Knowing is safer than guessing, and quick action could save a life. Help is available online, with the web POISONCONTROL tool, or by phone at 800-222-1222. Both options are free and confidential.

Contact Information:

Website: www.poison.org



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24/7. Your call is routed to the nearest crisis center in the national network of 150+ crisis centers.

Contact Information:

Phone: 800-273-TALK (8255); TTY: 800-799-4889

Web: suicidepreventionlifeline.org



Note: The appearance of external hyperlinks or references to nonfederal entities does not constitute endorsement by the United States Department of Defense of the linked web sites, or the information, products or services contained therein.

Appendix A. Press Release Template

This year's SPM theme is ***Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach***. To help connect with your local community, we recommend distributing releases to your local community newspaper and, as available, newsletters, magazines, and radio and television stations. Coordinate with your PAO in taking appropriate measures for publishing the press release.

Below is a sample template for you to use as a guide.

[Insert Installation Name] Hosts [Name of Event] to Support Suicide Prevention Efforts

[Insert Installation and date]. [Installation name] is joining the Department of Defense (DOD) in promoting Suicide Prevention Month to educate the military community about suicide prevention, resources, and steps everyone can take to protect one another against suicide. Each September, DOD observes Suicide Prevention Month to promote prevention resources across military communities and share ways to take simple action to ***Be There*** for others and themselves.

This year's SPM campaign slogan is ***Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach***, highlighting the important role connections with family, friends, the community, and resources play in preventing suicide, especially in these unique and challenging times. Research indicates connectedness is a protective factor against some of the risk factors for suicide, such as loneliness or feeling like a burden. The slogan reinforces how everyone within reach – leaders, Service members, and families – can play a role in preventing suicide.

[Insert quote from DOD leader, such as from your Service]

Throughout September, [insert installation] will host a variety of events and activities to emphasize the importance of suicide prevention and highlight available resources. The Suicide Prevention Month Campaign outreach events during September will include:

[Placeholder for calendar/listing of installation's scheduled events/activities during September]

For more information of Suicide Prevention Month and resources available, visit www.dsps.mil/spm.

[Placeholder for PAO point of contact for media inquiries]

Service members and veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Service member or veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans/Military Crisis Line for confidential support available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255 or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat.

Because suicide is a public health issue and scientific research indicates that certain types of reporting can negatively impact vulnerable individuals, reporters covering this topic can visit ReportingOnSuicide.org for important resources on communicating about suicide.

