



# HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE



## JOINING YOUR FIGHT

*Connect to Protect*

**CHALLENGE** your Service members and yourself to utilize at least one of the recommended resources to increase connections.

### FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- National Guard members who died by suicide were largely enlisted, male, under the age of 30, and never married!
- The use of a firearm was the most common method of suicide (81%), which has remained consistent over time!

### PREVENTING SUICIDE IS A TEAM EFFORT

Everyone has a part to play in preventing suicide. Together, we can create community, collaboration, and hope by:

- Fostering connections
- Encouraging help-seeking
- Increasing access to resources
- Promoting lethal means safety

### ASKING FOR HELP IS A SIGN OF STRENGTH

24/7, confidential crisis support is available for Service members.



**TEXT 838255**  
**CHAT ONLINE**  
**VETERANSCRISISLINE.NET**

### CONTACT US

For more information on enhancing connections or other topics, email:  
[nq.ncr.nqb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil](mailto:nq.ncr.nqb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil)

## SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

Awarding Excellence

Since 2016, the Department of Defense has recognized Suicide Prevention Programs for their achievements in creating innovative and effective programming for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month in September and year-round. Congratulations to the 2022-23 recipients from the National Guard:



### Guam Army National Guard (GUARNG)

GUARNG hosted several campaigns throughout the year including Combating the Holiday Blues, Mental Health Awareness Month, International Overdose Awareness Day, and Suicide Prevention Month to raise awareness and promote resources. The team also conducted trainings, participated in community engagement activities, and sponsored fun events, like Spirit Week and a Cookie Swap, to create a supportive environment that encourages connection.

### 175th Wing, Maryland Air National Guard

Throughout the year, the 175th Wing focused their prevention activities on the central theme, "Being Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable." The intent was to normalize uncomfortable feelings as part of everyday life and provide tools to help manage those feelings while underlying the importance of connection and support. The team also produced a video, developed collateral materials like the Steps to Get Help flyer, facilitated trainings, and promoted lethal means safety practices.



## PRIORITIZE AND PROMOTE PREVENTION

### What does it mean?

- The 2024 Suicide Prevention Awareness Month theme, **Joining Your Fight: Connect to Protect**, highlights the significant role that connections to family, friends, community, and resources play in preventing suicide.

### Why does it matter?

- Connection is a powerful protective factor that increases belonging and hope which buffer against risk and reduce harm.

### What can you do?

- Create a supportive environment that encourages open dialogue and active listening.
- Look for opportunities to connect by asking a battle buddy or wingman about their day.
- Act by using recommended resources, like the Columbia Protocol, to quickly identify Service members at risk and know when to intervene.
- Promote safe storage of firearms in the home to make access to lethal means more difficult in the event of a crisis.
- Remind Service members that they are not alone; crisis and non-crisis support is available 24/7.



## Make Your VOICE HEARD Participate in the 2024 DEOCS

The 2024 Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) is streamlined, making it quicker and easier to respond than previous years.

Knowing that survey fatigue is real, the questions were reduced by nearly 30% and related questions were grouped together. Despite these changes, the 19 protective and risk factors are still adequately measured, making the DEOCS an effective Command Climate Assessment tool.

All National Guard members are strongly encouraged to participate in the DEOCS and make their voice heard!



## RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



DoD's Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit includes materials, activities, talking points, and resources to promote suicide prevention efforts during September and year-round.

[www.dsps.mil/Home/Tools/Resource-Library/spm/SP-Prevention-Outreach-Toolkit](http://www.dsps.mil/Home/Tools/Resource-Library/spm/SP-Prevention-Outreach-Toolkit)



The Columbia Protocol is a risk assessment tool that consists of simple yes/no questions to identify if someone is at risk for suicide and inform the level of support needed. [www.cssrs.columbia.edu/the-columbia-scale-csrs/about-the-scale](http://www.cssrs.columbia.edu/the-columbia-scale-csrs/about-the-scale) (also available for download via Apple Store or Google Play)



Military OneSource offers free, confidential, non-crisis counseling via phone, online chat, or video to Service members and their families. [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil)



Star Behavioral Health Providers has an easy to navigate registry of military-aware civilian providers that are available in-person and online to address mental health issues. [www.starproviders.org](http://www.starproviders.org)



## SPOTLIGHT: PROJECT SAFE GUARD (PSG)

- The time between thinking about suicide and acting is often short; extending that time by safely storing firearms could save a life by allowing for intervention and reconsideration.
- PSG is an evidence-based training program on firearm safe storage across the National Guard.
- The program is delivered by trusted subject matter experts to key National Guard personnel who, in turn, share information with fellow Guardsmen. Initial studies found that PSG participants were 40% more likely to securely store their personally owned firearms with locking devices, safes, and other methods.
- Beginning in Fall 2024, PSG will offer two integrated and expanded trainings for Guardsmen and supervisors. The trainings will be evaluated through surveys, focus groups, and fidelity checks.
- For more information or to participate, email: [ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil](mailto:ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil).

## REFERENCES:

1. Annual Report on Suicide in the Military, CY2022 [www.dsps.mil](http://www.dsps.mil)