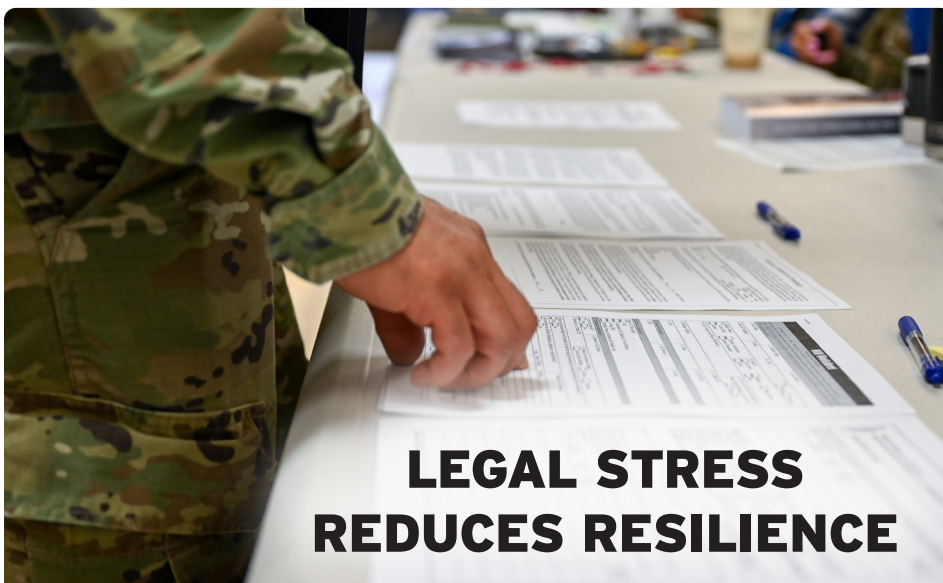




HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE



LEGAL STRESS REDUCES RESILIENCE

CHALLENGE your Service members and yourself to adopt at least one of the recommended resources to manage legal stress.

COPING WITH LEGAL STRESS

Legal issues can be associated with adverse consequences like financial insecurity, changes to living arrangements, or disruptions at work. The legal process can be unfamiliar and seem unending. Whatever the situation, legal stress can compound quickly. Consider using these strategies to help you cope with the uncertainty:

- **Seek help.** Reach out to your chain of command for legal referrals and psychological support.
- **Take action.** Ignoring the problem will not make it go away.
- **Maintain self-care.** Eat regular meals, get enough sleep, move your body, and connect with others daily.
- **Avoid risky behaviors.** Don't try to escape your current reality by abusing drugs and alcohol, gambling excessively, or misusing firearms.

FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- Legal and administrative stressors were identified in 19% of National Guard suicides and 17% of suicide attempts.¹
- These top stressors are a factor in more National Guard suicides than financial difficulties.

LEGAL STRESS CORRUPTS READINESS

Dealing with legal issues and uncertain outcomes can increase stress and decrease overall health in a variety of ways.



Physical

- Reduces quality of sleep
- Leads to poor performance



Mental

- Negatively alters mood
- Diminishes concentration



Social

- Jeopardizes healthy relationships
- Promotes risky behaviors

OFFERING SUPPORT TO THOSE IN NEED

If a friend or family member is experiencing legal troubles, it can be difficult to know what to do and what not to do. Consider these tips to help you support those in need:

- **Create a safe place.** Foster a supportive environment that promotes help-seeking.
- **Listen.** Allow them to freely voice their frustrations and fears.
- **Don't judge.** Remain neutral and refrain from offering your opinion on the matter.
- **Offer your services.** Volunteer to run errands, watch their children, or drop off dinner.



CONTACT US
 For more information on legal stress or other topics, email us at:
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LEARNING ABOUT LEGAL STRESS

What does it mean?

- Legal stress can stem from uncertainty, embarrassment, or anxiety surrounding how an investigation can affect your personal and professional life.

Why does it matter?

- The effects of legal stress can compound quickly leading to decreased overall health and reduced military readiness.

What can you do?

- If you encounter a legal problem, immediately reach out to your chain of command to identify the appropriate legal guidance and psychological support.
- Remember that asking for help is a sign of strength and should be encouraged by all.
- Take steps to enhance your coping mechanisms.
- Voluntarily secure firearms and medications to protect yourselves and others in the event of a crisis.
- Ensure Soldiers and Airmen under investigation know they remain a valued member of the unit.

Coming SOON



The **Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS)** fielding window will open August 1.

The DEOCS is a Command Climate Assessment tool that provides Commanders and National Guard leaders with important feedback about the current climate within their unit or organization.

All National Guard members are strongly encouraged to participate, as findings will inform policies and programs that will better protect Service members.



RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



Contact your chain of command to ensure timely referrals for appropriate legal guidance from the Judge Advocate General's Corps and/or the Trial Defense Services; as well as psychological support from the Director of Psychological Health, Behavioral Health Officer, or Chaplain.



Military OneSource provides Service members and their families with a host of no-cost legal assistance services. www.militaryonesource.com/financial-legal/legal Military OneSource also offers non-crisis counseling 24/7 via phone, online chat, or video.



The Army Employee Assistance Program offers support with life challenges, including legal resources, while continuing to fulfill work responsibilities. <https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/EAP/index.html>



The Air Force Employee Assistance Program provides free, confidential resources to manage everyday life challenges, including legal support, that may impact job performance and well-being. <https://www.afpc.af.mil/Military-and-Family/Personal-and-Work-Life>



The Veterans Crisis Line provides free confidential crisis support to Service members 24/7. www.veteranscrisisline.net



SPOTLIGHT: LEGAL ACTION CHECKLIST

- The National Guard Bureau developed the Legal Action Checklist to better support Service members experiencing legal difficulties.
- The checklist is part of the Regional Training Institute Commander and First Sergeant Orientation Course.
- It provides leaders with a tool to better support Service members under investigation by the Uniform Code of Military Justice or the civilian criminal justice system.
- The checklist outlines initial actions to be taken within 48 hours of notification and follow-up actions to be taken within 72 hours and beyond.
- These efforts assist in creating a supportive environment that encourages help-seeking behaviors and protects a Service member's rights.

REFERENCES:

1. Annual Report on Suicide in the Military, CY2022 www.dspo.mil