



HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE



LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

CHALLENGE yourself and your fellow Service members to use at least one of the recommended resources to promote and practice lethal means safety.

FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- Use of a firearm was the most common method of death by suicide in the National Guard year in 2024 and has been for the past decade.¹
- Research shows a 91% reduction in suicides from initiatives that focus on limiting access to lethal means.²
- Access to a firearm in the home increases suicide risk by 4 to 6 times for everyone in the family.²
- Drinking alcohol while taking medications can be lethal and can lead to impulsive choices such as a suicide attempt.¹



EVERY MINUTE MATTERS

Preventing gun violence starts before a crisis. Responsible firearm storage, recognizing concerning behavior, and creating time and distance between a person at risk and a firearm can prevent suicide, gun violence, and other unintentional harm.

- Always practice secure firearm storage to help prevent unauthorized or impulsive access. Watch this short video to learn more about protecting your loved ones: <https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/In%20Our%20Nature%20%20min%20%20COLORGRADE%20NOVEMBER%20EDIT.mp4>
- Pay attention to warning signs and changes in behavior such as increased substance use, threatening or violent behavior, or significant life events that may signal support is needed to prevent gun violence.

The "5-minute window" is critical. Research shows that nearly a quarter (24%) of suicide survivors report acting on their suicidal impulse in less than five minutes.³ Creating a delay in accessing lethal means allows this brief, intense crisis to pass.

If someone you know is at risk, take action to help reduce access to firearms until they are no longer in distress.

CNGB & SEA Corner

Always Ready, Always There

As we observe National Suicide Prevention Month this September, we rededicate ourselves to our most critical asset – **our people**.

Our Guardsmen stand watch, ready to answer the call at a moment's notice to defend our homeland and fight our Nation's wars. That duty does not go without unique stressors placed on all of us.

It is up to each of us to check on our teammates, speak up during difficult times, and intervene when necessary. Securing lethal means is a vital step to saving a teammate in distress. It creates a potentially lifesaving barrier when seconds matter.

Do not wait for a teammate to ask for help – reach out to them. Your engagement can save a life. Every one of you matters to your loved ones, our Guard community, and our Nation.

Stronger Together, Stronger Tomorrow.

Steven S. Nordhaus John T. Raines III

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SECURE & PROTECT

Secure storage of firearms, medications, and other potentially lethal items is a simple yet effective way to prevent impulsive, high-lethality actions in moments of crisis. Whether at home or on installation, choosing the right storage solution helps protect your family, fellow Guard members, and community.

SAFE STORAGE OPTIONS

- Cable & Trigger Locks
- Gun Cases & Lock Boxes
- Full-Size Gun Safes
- Separate & Safe Ammunition Storage
- Medication Lock Boxes

If you are a Veteran or supporting one, VA medical centers and clinics across the country have FREE cable gun locks for distribution. Visit <https://www.va.gov/reach/lethal-means/cable-gun-lock/> for more information to get yours today.

CONTACT US

For more information on lethal means safety or other topics email: ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil



LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

What does it mean?

- Lethal means safety involves securing firearms, medications, and other methods of self-harm.
- Practicing lethal means safety behaviors protects Service members by reducing preventable lethal harm.

Why does it matter?

- The time between thinking about suicide and acting is often short; extending that time could save a life by allowing for intervention and reconsideration.
- Reducing access to lethal means helps prevent avoidable harm and ensuring Guard members and their families stay safe and prepared to meet mission demands.

What can you do?

- Learn the warning signs for suicide to help yourself and your loved ones recognize the risk factors and seek help.
- Make lethal means safety part of your personal safety plan by identifying trusted family members, friends, or fellow Service members who can help secure firearms, medications, or other lethal means if you are ever experiencing significant stress or a crisis.
- Firearms are highly lethal and impulse-driven; use safe storage options and consider storing firearms outside of the home if you or someone in your home is at-risk for misusing a firearm.
- Use medication lock boxes and safely dispose of unwanted, unused, or expired medications. For drug disposal information visit: https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/drug-disposal.html.

PROJECT SAFEGUARD

Project Safeguard is a lethal means safety training and counseling curriculum that uses peer-to-peer intervention to reduce the negative stigma associated with delivering lethal means training, and provides Service members with tools to protect themselves, fellow Service members, and their families.

For more information, email: ng.ncr.ngb-arng.mbx.ngb-j1-partnerships@army.mil



Make Your **VOICE HEARD** Participate in the 2026 DEOCS

The **Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS)** includes questions intended to assess unit command climate and is **100% confidential**. Based on the DEOCS results, commanders, leaders, and their support teams will develop a targeted action plan to address any emerging and current problematic issues that may negatively impact unit readiness.

All Service members are **strongly encouraged** to participate in this year's DEOCS, 1 AUG - 1 NOV.

Take the survey. Your honest input drives real change.



RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



National Guard's (NG) Psychological Health Program supports Guardsmen and their families with any psychological health need. Find local support: <https://www.nationalguard.mil/Resources/Psychological-Health/>



Access available suicide prevention resources on the **National Guard Bureau's (NGB) Suicide Prevention site**: <https://www.nationalguard.mil/Resources/Suicide-Prevention/>

Review the **Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) Lethal Means Safety Guide** for information on how to keep yourself, fellow Service members, and family safe: https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/DSPO%20Lethal%20Means%20Safety%20Guide%20for%20Military%20Service%20Members%20and%20Their%20Families_v34_FINAL.pdf



Watch this short video on how time and distance with safe storage of firearms can save lives. Champion safe storage by encouraging fellow Service members to "Go SLO"—that is, use Safes, Locks, and storage Outside the home during distress: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/709275/time-based-suicide-prevention>



Listen to this podcast to learn more about firearm safety: <https://www.cstsonline.org/suicide-prevention-program/podcasts/lets-talk-about-your-guns>. **Episode 1-05: I've Got Your Back, Buddy**



SPOTLIGHT: NEW YORK AIR NATIONAL GUARD FIREARMS SENTINEL PROGRAM

- The **New York Air National Guard's Firearms Sentinel Program** is a peer-led, research-based suicide prevention initiative developed at the Eastern Air Defense Sector (EADS) in Rome, NY, with the goal of achieving **zero suicides**.
- Formerly known as EADS SAFE, the program integrates suicide prevention and mental wellness education into a two-hour firearms safety course, teaching safe storage, lethal means reduction, and tactical pauses when risks change.
- Recognized by DSPO for its effectiveness, this "buddy-to-buddy" program connects Service members to health resources and has expanded to all Air National Guard wings in New York since joining the NGB J1 Warrior Resilience and Fitness (WRF) portfolio in FY 2022.

REFERENCES:

1. DSPO. https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/2026_CY/documents/DSPO_ReportonSuicide_CY24_20260317_508c.pdf
2. DSPO. https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/DSPO%20Lethal%20Means%20Safety%20Guide%20for%20Military%20Service%20Members%20and%20Their%20Families_v34_FINAL.pdf
3. National Institutes of Health. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11924695/>