



HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE



STOP STIGMA TOGETHER

CHALLENGE yourself and your Service members to use at least one recommended resource to promote help-seeking.

FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- Access to mental health care and being proactive about mental health is a protective factor in preventing suicide.¹
- Only about half (52%) of U.S. adults needing mental health support received care in 2024.²
- Stigma, which is a negative or false belief about something, can be a barrier to seeking care.³
- In the military, stigma is often associated with the fear of appearing weak or unfit for duty.

COURAGE FUELS READINESS

Having the courage to ask for help is a sign of strength and ensures Service members are resilient and mission ready. It demonstrates sound judgement and an understanding of the important role mental health plays in maintaining overall fitness and well-being. Reach out for help before manageable problems become unmanageable, because seeking mental health support can also:



Enhance your physical performance



Decrease your risk of harmful behaviors



Improve your quality of life



**TEXT 838255
CHAT ONLINE
VETERANSCRISISLINE.NET**

CONTACT US

For more information on mental health or other wellness topics, email: ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil

CNGB & SEA Corner

Always Ready, Always There

Seeking help is a fundamental act of strength and is essential to warfighter readiness. Our mission depends on Soldiers and Airmen who are physically, mentally, and spiritually prepared to serve. Yet, the stigma around mental health support may prevent Service members from reaching out when they need it most.

When even one Guardsman struggles in silence, it affects not only their personal readiness but also the cohesion, trust, and effectiveness of the entire unit. The well-being of our Service members is critical to sustaining the most lethal fighting force in the world.

Each of us has a responsibility to break down stigma by encouraging open dialogue, supporting our fellow Guardsmen, and recognizing mental health as a core domain of readiness—not an exception. If you or someone you know is struggling, take action. No one is alone. Use the resources in this issue to step up, speak out, and seek help.

Stronger Together, Stronger Tomorrow.

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COLLECTIVELY COMBATTING STIGMA

Combatting stigma is a team effort. No one should sit on the sidelines and allow negative stereotypes to prevent or delay seeking support. However, sometimes it can be hard to know what to do or say. Follow these tips^{3,4} to ensure you are doing your part:

- ✓ Find a private place to talk with limited distractions, like during a walk or a coffee break.
- ✓ Show concern and be direct. Say: "I see you're going through something. How can I help?"
- ✓ Actively listen without judgement. Say: "I care about you and I'm here to listen. Can we talk?" Then be quiet and let them do the talking.
- ✓ Connect them to support services, such as a Director of Psychological Health or Chaplain.
- ✓ Be patient. You may need to reach out more than once. Reassure them that you are available to listen and help when they are ready.

STAMP OUT STIGMA

What does it mean?

- Stigma is negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes people may hold towards those who experience mental health concerns.³

Why does it matter?

- Stigma can cause Service members to delay or discontinue mental health care, which decreases their military readiness.

What can you do?

- Talk about mental health like you would any other part of readiness.
- Share your experiences and encourage others to do the same.
- Respectfully challenge those who use stigmatizing language. Casual comments like “just suck it up” discourage people from getting help.
- Familiarize yourself with the **Resources to Recommend** below and promote them to Service members in need. Remember, support is within reach.
- Ask for help, if you need it. If you’re not sure, complete the **VA screening** referenced below.
- Always secure your firearms to make access to lethal means more difficult in the event of a crisis.

BRANDON ACT

The Brandon Act empowers Service members to get confidential help, reducing the stigma associated with mental health concerns. Service members can start the referral process by talking to their commander or supervisor.

Learn more: <https://www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Mental-Health/Brandon-Act>



RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



NG's Psychological Health Program supports Guardsmen and their families with any psychological health need. Find local help: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/millife-guides/psychological-health-program/>

NG's Chaplain Corps offers confidential, trusted support to help Service members navigate tough times and guide you to the right resources. Contact your local Chaplain to learn more.



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides prevention, treatment, and recovery support, as well as Mental Health Awareness Month campaign materials. <https://www.samhsa.gov/>



If you think you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition, complete the **VA's screening** to help determine if you should seek further evaluation from your physician or a mental health professional. <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/depression/index.asp>



SPOTLIGHT: OKLAHOMA NATIONAL GUARD (OKNG) OPENS WELLNESS CENTER

- OKNG's new 35,000-square-foot wellness center supports the mental, physical, and spiritual health of its Service members and their families.
- The facility normalizes mental health care by offering amenities like workout and relaxation spaces and access to programs that include Behavioral Health, Family Programs, Integrated Primary Prevention, and Suicide Prevention.
- Learn more: https://www.army.mil/article/290624/oklahoma_guard_opens_wellness_center_to_strengthen_readiness



REFERENCES:

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Risk factors, protective factors, and warning signs. <https://afsp.org/risk-factors-protective-factors-and-warning-signs/#protective-factors>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness. Mental Health by the Numbers. <https://www.nami.org/mental-health-by-the-numbers/#:~:text=Fast%20Facts,Source>
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mental Health Stigma. <https://www.cdc.gov/mental-health/stigma/index.html>
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration. Starting the Conversation. <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/starting-the-conversation-guide.pdf>