



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

OCT 25 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach

The health and well-being of our Service members, DoD civilian employees, and families is paramount for force readiness. Every single one of us faces stress, anxiety, and life challenges, and each of us responds to them differently. For some, these experiences can increase the risk of suicide. By being there for one another, helping to navigate challenges in healthy ways and leveraging resources throughout the year, we can remain strong, together.

I highlight this topic as the Calendar Year 2020 Annual Suicide Report was recently released. While the report highlights changes since last year, one thing is very clear – there is more work to be done. While Suicide Prevention Month ended in September, our role in preventing suicide does not end there. Every day we can take time and action to show our support. We serve together, shoulder to shoulder, and regardless of our role or specific organization, we can and must continue to *Connect to Protect* because support is always within reach. We are continuing the Department's suicide prevention campaign beyond September's awareness month with the theme *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*, which highlights the critical role connections to family, friends, community, and resources play in helping to prevent suicide. Research indicates that connectedness is a factor that can reduce the likelihood someone will consider or attempt suicide. Reaching out and connecting with friends and loved ones can help you and those you care about to get through difficult times.

Sometimes even small steps can save lives. I encourage you to join me in engaging in simple, healthy, and meaningful actions. Be there for others, and check in with those around you. Spend time with people who contribute to your own sense of stability, calm, or happiness – or those who best understand what you might be experiencing and are able to assist. Engage in positive strategies, some of which can be as simple as exercising, practicing breathing routines, spending time outside, keeping a journal, or reading.

When you need to reach out, do so. In addition to mental health counseling services, Chaplains/Faith Leaders and other resources are also available to assist. For non-crisis support – such as for relationship, family, or financial challenges – connect with Military OneSource, which provides free and confidential 24/7 support to all Service members and their families at 800-342-9647 or via chat at: livechat.militaryonesourceconnect.org/chat. DoD civilian employees have access to similar support through Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). For your agency's EAP information, please contact your Human Resources team. The DoD EAP provides resources, information, and confidential help 24/7 at 800-222-0364 (Text Telephone (TTY): 888-262-7848).

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact the confidential 24/7 Veterans and Military Crisis Line (VCL/MCL) or confidential National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL).

Veterans and Military Crisis Line (Service members, veterans, and their families)

CONUS

Call: 800-273-8255 (press 1 for the VCL/MCL). For TTY users: Use your preferred relay service, or dial 711, then 1-800-273-8255.

Text: 838255

Chat: www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat

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Europe: Call 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118

Korea: Call 0808 555 118 or DSN 118

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (all Americans)

Call: 800-273-8255. For TTY users: Use your preferred relay service, or dial 711, then 1-800-273-8255.

Visit: suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Chat: suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat

Everyone plays an essential part in suicide prevention. Know that you are not alone, and reach out and let others know that you are there for them. Each and every day, we must take care of ourselves, our loved ones, and our battle buddies. We are all in this together, and together we can save lives.



Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.