



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

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

AUG 30 2023

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

SUBJECT: 2023 Department of Defense Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month Observance and Kick-off for the 2023-2024 Annual Campaign: *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*

September is National Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month and an important time to highlight and reinforce the importance of mental health and suicide prevention.

Suicide is a complex problem with no single cause or solution and preventing the tragedy of suicide is a Department priority. As the Secretary of Defense said, "Mental health is health. Period." Just as we take care of our physical health, we must also take care of our mental health, establishing the healthy connections and relationships found to be primary protective factors in suicide prevention. With this in mind, *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*, the Department's suicide prevention campaign, was developed to remind us to support our peers, friends, and family members, and to reach out for support for ourselves.

Prevention is key and reaching out for help is a sign of strength. If you or a loved one is in crisis, help is within reach through the following organizations:

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

CONUS

Veteran/Military Crisis Line, Call 988 and press 1 or by text (838255), and through chat (VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).

OCONUS

In Europe, Call: 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118
In Japan and Korea, Call: 080-855-5118 or DSN 118
In Afghanistan, Call: 00 1 800 273 8255 or DSN 111

988 Suicide and Crisis Line (all Americans):

Call: 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
For TTY users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.
Visit: <https://988lifeline.org/>
Chat: Text with a Crisis Line responder – Send a text message to 838255

Support is also available for relationship, family, or financial challenges. To access non-crisis support, Military members and their immediate family can connect with Military OneSource for free, and confidential counseling 24/7. Tricare can also connect anyone with mental health and counseling services. Additionally, if you are a DoD civilian employee, DoD Employee Assistance Programs provides resources, information, and confidential help 24/7 at 866-580-9046 (Text Telephone (TTY): 711).

Suicide affects everyone so it is incumbent on all of us to look out for each other and encourage help-seeking behavior. Join me in helping to prevent suicide, not only in September, but all year long. We must *Connect to Protect*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.