

[When It Comes To Preventing Suicide, We're All In This Together](#)

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The following post is by USHUS Cmdr. Janet Hawkins, [Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury](#) (DCoE), Prevention Branch chief, Resilience and Prevention Directorate.

As we continue to watch the number of suicides among military members increase at an unprecedented rate, we must also step up all efforts to educate and prevent future suicides. Taking care of our servicemembers calls for enhanced efforts throughout the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, and the community. We're all in this fight together – as we bring our servicemembers home safe, we want to keep them safe.

As the chair of the Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee (SPARRC), I am proud to have the opportunity to lead a federal and non-federal collaborative effort to examine military suicide, standardize reporting and develop future prevention initiatives with experts in the field. SPARRC includes representatives from across the armed forces and military service suicide prevention programs – [Air Force](#), [Army](#), [Coast Guard](#), [Marine Corps](#), [Navy](#) and [National Guard](#). We are all learning from each other—sharing lessons learned and best practices about suicide prevention. I encourage you to check out the service-specific suicide prevention resources that are available to you.

This year's DoD/VA Suicide Prevention Conference, "Building Strong and Resilient Communities," provided the opportunity for all those involved in suicide prevention and intervention, or affected by suicide, to come together to network and share ideas. In the spring, we look forward to another year of learning and action with the theme, "All the Way Home: A Systems Approach." Next year's conference will provide a similar platform for everyone to join together to improve the support given to our servicemembers, veterans and their families as it relates to the reintegration back into the community. This is particularly relevant as we receive news that the combat mission in Iraq has ended and we see troops returning home.

The reason behind all conferences and working groups is to ensure that our warriors and their families are getting the help they need. One way of supporting them is to encourage help-seeking behavior. DCoE's [Real Warriors Campaign](#) shows servicemembers who have courageously sought care for psychological health concerns and are maintaining successful military and civilian careers. Watch the [video profiles](#) and share them with others. The more people share their own experiences, the more comfortable people will be to reach out for help.

If you or someone you know is in suicidal crisis or emotional distress, please immediately call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#). Even when it's not a crisis situation, navigating the best resources can still be difficult. The [DCoE Outreach Center](#) is staffed by health resource consultants who can provide comprehensive information, resources and tools about psychological health conditions and traumatic brain injury 24 hours a day, seven

days a week. Contact the center by calling a toll-free number, 866-966-1020, by e-mailing resources@dcoeoutreach.org or through the live chat feature.

As National Suicide Prevention Week comes to an end, our efforts to keep our warriors and veterans safe will never cease. Please check the [DCoE](#) website and your service website for a range of educational resources to increase awareness about suicide. Awareness of the risk factors and [warning signs](#) of someone who may be suicidal is critical. I encourage you take the opportunity this month, especially, to educate yourself and your family. Get informed and get involved! Taking a few minutes to learn more could save a life.

*Check out the [DCoE Blog](#) for information on psychological health and traumatic brain injury issues as well as personal stories and reflections from people within the military community on these topics.