



PHOP Newsletter

September 2021

Suicide Awareness and Prevention

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

Across the Armed Forces, September is recognized as Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month. With that, an opportunity arises; not only to remember those that we've lost to suicide, but a chance to better our understanding of suicidality and the importance of recognizing and addressing the warning signs.

Signs that Someone May Be Thinking About Suicide⁴

- Talking About Wanting to Die
- Talking About Being a Burden to Others
- Putting Affairs in Order
- Reckless Behavior
- Withdrawal (Being Less Involved with Others/Events)
- Changes in Sleep Patterns/Insomnia
- Expressed Feelings of Hopelessness and/or Desperation
- Expressed Feelings of Purposelessness
- Feeling Overwhelmed/Trapped
- Sudden Mood Changes
- Increased Anxiety and/or Agitation
- Uncharacteristic Anger

In addition to these signs, listen for and be aware of major negative events that occur in another's life. If they have recently lost a loved one, experienced a divorce/breakup, lost a cherished job/position, and/or are facing serious legal issues; they may be considering suicide. **You do not need to see all the signs to ACT!**



TAKE ACTION

In recent years, the Navy Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve have taken active measures to ensure an environment that fosters psychological wellbeing and promotes the seeking of help when needed. For this reason, the **ACT/RACE** models were developed by the Navy and Marine Corps, respectively, to provide a framework for supporting others who are in distress. Indeed, *all Service Members are expected to recognize the warning signs and to take action to support fellow Service Members* who may be in distress. While these acronyms are slightly different, the approach remains the same:

ACT: Ask, Care, Treat

RACE: Recognize, Ask, Care, Escort

In both intervention models, the **first step** is to recognize that another is in distress. Know the signs - and recognize them in your colleagues, peers, and loved ones.

The **second step** is to ask the person exhibiting these signs about their current stress - and if they are thinking of suicide. *It is okay to directly ask about suicidal thoughts.* Bringing up the topic of suicide, with care and concern, will not encourage them to consider suicide as an option. It will show that you care and are prepared to support them.

The **third step** is to care for the individual. You can do this by inviting them to tell you more about what's going on with them. *Listening is caring.* You do not need to give advice or opinions. Simply hear their story without judgement.

The **last step** is to ensure that the person is connected to professional supportive services. If a person has expressed suicidal thoughts, behaviors, and/or intentions; **DO NOT LEAVE THEM ALONE.** Help them get connected to supportive services - and stay with them until they are connected. Escort them to NOSC/HTC Leadership, the Medical Department, the Chaplain, and, if necessary, call 911. Help them to understand that **connecting to help is a sign of strength!**

PHOP is DEDICATED to the psychological health and resiliency of those Serving in the US Navy Reserve and the US Marine Corps Reserve. PHOP is a CONFIDENTIAL and FREE service. PHOP provides consultation, education, and connection to resources.

Contact PHOP 24/7 at (866) 578-PHOP (7467)

PHOP is Not an Emergency/Crisis-Response Program



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Suicide Awareness and Prevention

Lethal Means Safety



Research conducted by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health¹ has shown that, for persons experiencing suicidal ideation, the impetus to take their own life is typically confined to a very brief interval of time. Furthermore, this study revealed that suicidal individuals who do not have access to lethal means during this brief period are substantially less likely to attempt and/or complete suicide. For example, a study conducted by the Annals of Internal Medicine² indicates that access to firearms has been found to triple the risk of suicide in **at-risk** military members, reservists, and Veterans. Additionally, firearms are by far the most common method for suicide completion in the military today. With the prevalence of firearm ownership in the armed forces, it is critical to learn ways to reduce the likelihood of a fatal suicide attempt by way of lethal means training. **Lethal means counseling** focuses on limiting access to specific suicide methods in a time of crisis. For gun owners who are considering suicide, lethal means safety may include **temporarily** limiting access to firearms. From gun safes to chamber locks and locking away or removing prescription medications from the home, anything that stands between a service member and a potentially lethal item/substance can be the difference between life and death. For more information regarding lethal means training, please reach out to your command or your local PHOP representative.

→ Increasing the time and distance between someone with suicidal intent and lethal means can reduce suicide risk.



Personal responsibility means more than simply looking after fellow service members. **Taking care of your own needs as they arise, learning about the warning signs of suicide, contributing to a supportive culture, and educating yourself on the resources available to you** are all ways in which you can take an active role in the prevention of suicide in the armed forces.

Upcoming PHOP Events

FY22 Begins—Start scheduling your PHOP visits!!

12 Month AMRAP WORKOUT

10 Family Days

20 Trainings

30 Phone Calls

40 eBHS Surveys

50 face-face meetings

Resources



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: AFSP encourages suicide prevention education and the use of safe firearm storage options. <https://afsp.org/>



Veterans Crisis Line

Veterans/Military Crisis Line: If you or someone you know is in crisis, call **1-800-273-8255** (press **1** for Military or Veterans) to be connected with qualified, caring responders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Text **838255** or chat online at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat



HARVARD T.H. CHAN

Means Matter: The Harvard Injury Control Research Center 'Means Matter' campaign is dedicated to activities that promote safety and prevent firearm injury by reducing a suicidal person's access to lethal means. www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/



App Store

Here you will find access to dozens of health apps specifically created to support Veterans.

<https://mobile.va.gov/appstore/>

Works Cited

- 1) <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/>
- 2) <https://doi.org/10.7326/M13-1301>
- 3) <https://www.dla.mil/AboutDLA/News/NewsArticleView/Article/1178178/its-okay-to-answer-question-21/>
- 4) Suicide is Preventable: <https://www.suicideispreventable.org/>

Site/Region-Specific Information

BUMED PHOP Behavioral Health Screening
<https://surveys.max.gov/index.php/795535?lang=en>

Email: PHOP.Northeast@serco-na.com

PHOP Client Satisfaction Survey
<https://surveys.max.gov/index.php/196241?lang=en>
PHOP GPOC Satisfaction Survey
<https://surveys.max.gov/index.php/131161?lang=en>