



MWSS-172 Suicide Prevention Policy

Suicidal behaviors are a barrier to readiness that have lasting effects on Marines, Sailors, and our Families. Effective suicide prevention requires coordinated efforts within a prevention framework dedicated to promoting mental, physical, spiritual, and social fitness; strengthening healthy stress responses; mitigating stressors that interfere with mission readiness; identifying Marines and Sailors at high risk or in crisis; caring for Marines and Sailors with suicidal behaviors and ensuring everyone receives proper treatment; and fully reintegrating those who are found fit to return to duty.

Engaged leadership - I expect all leaders within MWSS-172 to take an active role in the lives of your Marines, Sailors, and their families. Always take decisive effective action when you see a Marine or Sailor in distress and never be afraid to ask the difficult questions about what is going on in their lives. Combat exposure, post-traumatic stress, substance abuse, misuse of prescription drugs, legal troubles, financial difficulties and relationship problems are often significant stressors that can have a devastating effect on the mental health of our personnel. Look for deeper issues for why they are not performing to standard or why their behavior, mood or habits have changed.

Education and Training - All too often we have Marines, Sailors, and their families who are experiencing significant emotional stress and do not know how to deal with it. Warning signs either go unnoticed or people fail to take appropriate action and lives are unnecessarily lost. As a result, I expect 100% compliance with all suicide awareness training. Educating our Marines and Sailors on the warning signs and what to do when they see someone in distress is critically important in preventing suicide among our ranks. Additionally, we must remove the stigma associated with seeking mental health assistance. Without reservation, the policy of this command is to maintain a climate where seeking help is encouraged and seeking to help others is expected. We will also look at methods to restrict access lethal means (firearms, poisons, medication) for those deemed at risk for harm to themselves or others.

Treatment - Getting Marines and Sailors to treatment should always be our primary goal when we discover that they are experiencing significant stress in their lives. Military life counselors, the Chaplain, prevention specialists, and our mental health care professionals are here to assist. We all face complex challenges in life and at some point everyone needs assistance. I encourage anyone who is experiencing significant stress to ask for help and utilize the resources that are available.

While the topic of suicide is often a very difficult subject to approach, not only for those in need but also for those who recognize the warning signs in others, I will tell you that asking for help or providing help to others is one of the most courageous things a Marine or Sailor can do. Even one suicide in our command is one too many and is something that we can prevent.

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