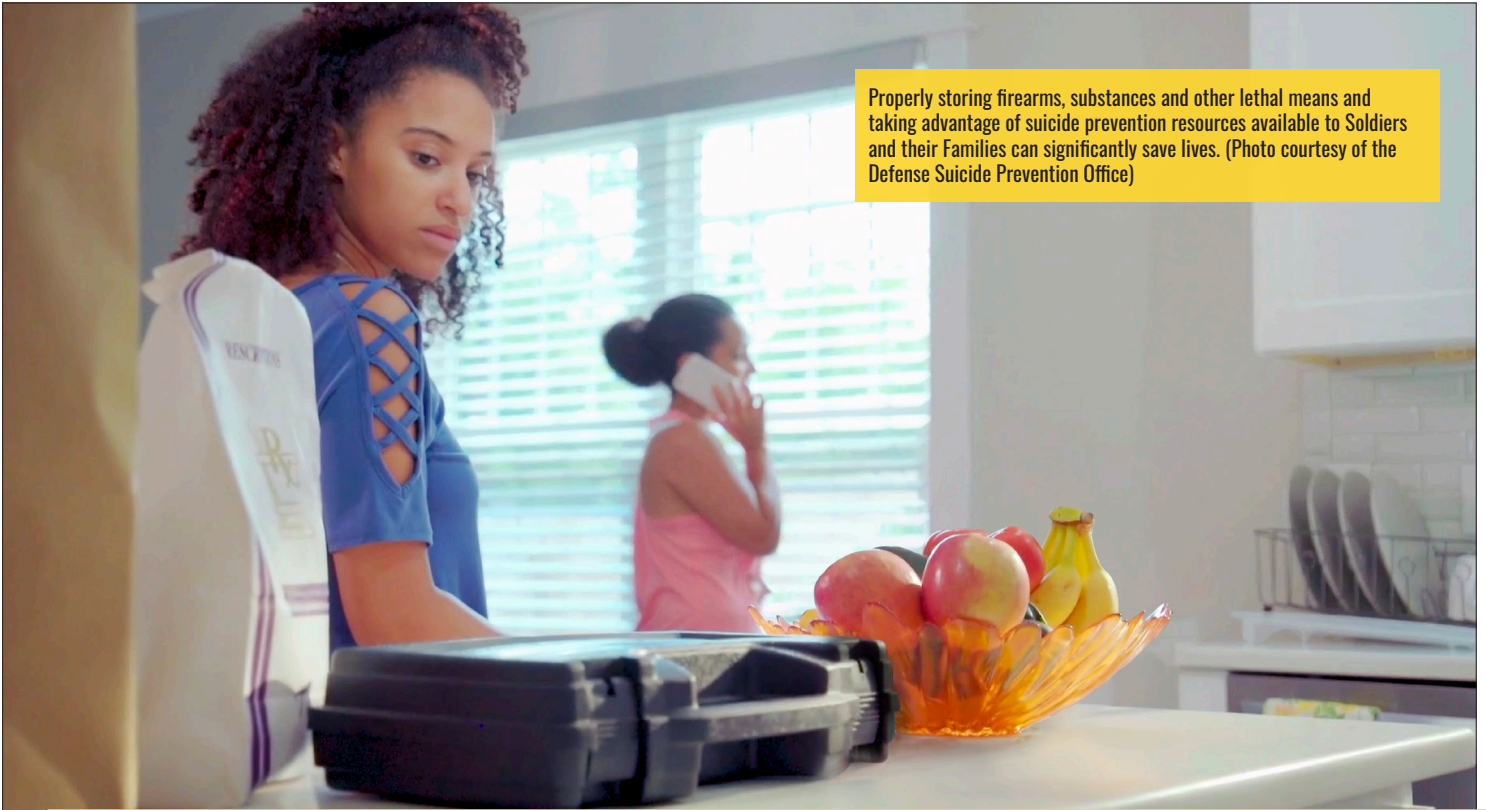




DPRR COMMUNITYLINK

THE DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS NEWSLETTER | FEBRUARY 2025



Properly storing firearms, substances and other lethal means and taking advantage of suicide prevention resources available to Soldiers and their Families can significantly save lives. (Photo courtesy of the Defense Suicide Prevention Office)

Encouraging Lethal Means Safety to Prevent Suicide in the Army

By Mavia Hanson, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

In recent years, the conversation around mental health and suicide prevention has expanded to include lethal means safety, which promotes safe storage of firearms and medications to improve survival rates. According to the [Department of Defense Annual Report on Suicide in the Military](#), 523 service members died by suicide in 2023. Firearms were the primary method of suicide death for Soldiers (65 percent for the active component) and Family members (61 percent for spouses and 43 percent for dependents).

"At its core, lethal means safety involves reducing access to highly lethal methods of suicide, particularly during periods of crisis," said Dr. Emmy Betz, Director of Firearm Injury Prevention at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

While suicide can have long-lasting effects on the Army community at large, there is much that can be done to prevent it. The Army's public health approach to suicide prevention aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's strategy, which focuses on creating protective environments against suicide. This includes safe-storage practices and policies. [Research](#) has shown that a suicide attempt can

occur within five to 10 minutes from decision to action. Increasing time and distance between an individual in crisis and lethal means, such as a firearm, can allow time for intervention and reconsideration. "By limiting access to lethal means, individuals in a mental health crisis are provided an opportunity to survive their moment of despair and seek and receive the help they need," Betz said.

For firearm owners, responsible storage is essential—not only to prevent access during a crisis but also to protect against unauthorized use, theft or accidents. According to the [Defense Suicide Prevention Office](#), firearm safety can be simple if you have a [plan](#).

- Ensure firearms are unloaded, locked and safely stored when not in use. This can significantly reduce the risk of gun-related injuries.
- Store ammunition separately and in a different location to add an extra layer of safety.
- Research options for offsite storage, such as gun shops, the police department, an armory, a pawn shop or a commercial storage facility.

See **SUICIDE PREVENTION** on page 9



DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Team,

The new year has brought many changes. However, one constant you can count on is DPRR's determination to bring top-quality programs, policies and resources to our Soldiers, Army Civilians and Family members.

Our efforts to provide the Army with critical policies and awareness materials are integral to initiatives aimed at reducing harmful behaviors such as sexual assault and sexual harassment throughout the force, which we're effectuating, as indicated by record declines in sexual assault prevalence in the active component and at the [military service academy](#).

In December, we announced the imminent deployment of our new Prevention and Quality of Life awareness materials. I'm elated to share that these products are now available on the DPRR Products on Demand [site](#). The new materials highlight and encourage the use of critical Army programs such as our prevention workforce—the Integrated Prevention Advisory Group; Child, Youth and School Services; Army Community Service; and Morale, Welfare and Recreation; among others.

In January, we published the Army's first standalone regulation for the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program. The new regulation is a continuation of the Army's dedication to ensuring proper care of survivors of sexual harassment and sexual assault. In addition, we recently fielded the 2025 Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month campaign for the Army's April observance. This year's SAAPM theme is "Step Forward. Prevent. Report. Advocate." This campaign is a call to action for all individuals to use their personal and collective strength to advance meaningful change in preventing and responding to sexual violence. See the SAAPM [microsite](#) for additional information and access to the campaign materials.

Another observance we'll mark in April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, or CAPM. The DoD theme for CAPM 2025 is "MilParents Rock." This campaign is designed to increase awareness and use of positive parenting resources to help prevent child abuse and neglect. A phenomenal resource available to parents is the Family

See **DIRECTOR'S COLUMN** on page 9

DoD Offers Health Care Flexible Spending Account to Service Members

By C. Todd Lopez, DoD News

Enrollment for the new Health Care Flexible Spending Account benefit runs from March 3-31, 2025. Service members can sign up and put as much as \$3,300 in pretax earnings into an account each year, which can be spent on qualifying health care expenses.

"A Health Care Flexible Spending Account is an optional benefit that enables service members and their Families to use pretax earnings to pay for eligible health, dental and vision care expenses," said Ronald T. Garner, the Assistant Director of Military Compensation Policy within the Defense Department.

Garner said that married service members who are both eligible for an HCFSAs can maintain two separate accounts and contribute as much as \$6,600 each year.

Component service members, reservists and National Guardsmen on Active Guard Reserve duty and members of the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve on active duty for more than 180 days are all eligible to participate.

The HCFSAs are already available to federal civilian employees and to many in the private sector, but it's only now available to service members. Garner said it's something the department has been working on for a while. TRICARE, he said, is an extensive program, but can't cover everything, and in some cases, an HCFSAs may help.

"No health care, no health insurance program is going to cover every cost, and many costs are unforeseeable," he said.

"For instance, if your child gets sick in the middle of the night, you're not going to wait until you can go see a doctor to get some cold medicine. You're going to run down to the local pharmacy and grab some cold medicine and bring it back so that you can take care of your child. That's a cost that will be covered by the HCFSAs."

Eligible service members should look closely at their own financial situation and how much they expect to spend each year on health care expenses before deciding to contribute, he said, adding that some service members are more likely to benefit from an HCFSAs than others.



Health Care Flexible Spending Accounts are now available to Soldiers and their Families. A special enrollment period is available from March 3-31, 2025 (U.S. Army photo)

"I would say that, in my experience, this is going to be really valuable to military Families," he said.

"For example, I think that there's going to be a lot of value to those who have Family members who are part of the Exceptional Family Member Program. I think those Families tend to incur a lot of expenses and often unforeseen expenses that others do not. I think a program like this is going to be particularly beneficial to that group of service members and their Families."

Typically, enrollment in programs like an HCFSAs occurs only during Federal Benefits Open Season, which runs from mid-November through mid-December. With the announcement of the new HCFSAs benefit for service members, a special enrollment period is available from March 3-31, 2025.

At other times of the year, Garner said, an array of qualifying life events will also allow service members who are not already signed up for an HCFSAs to enroll outside the typical open season. Some of those life-changing events include deployment, a permanent change of station, marriage or the birth of a child, he said.

According to DoD's "2023 Demographics Profile of the Military Community," about 46.7% of service members are married, and about 36.7% of service members have dependent children. For those members, making sure their Families are taken care of and that their financial situation is squared away is something that contributes to military readiness, said Garner.

Read the full article [here](#).

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TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH



Embracing change can make life more peaceful for individuals. It can lessen their stress and enable them to make decisions more effectively. (U.S. Army photo)

Coping With Change Using Cognitive Reframing

By Chet Curtis, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

We all must cope with change in our lives. We know it will come. Some change can be overwhelming, even frightening. It can also be abrupt, not planned or expected, so you can't prepare. Change can add a lot of stress to your life.

Finding ways to accept and cope with change can make life smoother and less fearsome. It can lessen the stress and enable you to make decisions.

The way we think about change plays a role in how well we deal with it, according to Kendra Cherry in her article "How to Get Better at Coping With Change."

Throughout my military career, I have had to cope with change, some of it negative. Whether it's an assignment, a deployment or a promotion, we all must cope with change.

According to Cherry, "Automatic negative thinking patterns can undermine your ability to focus on the positive." She said when negative thoughts bog you down, it is more challenging to have faith in your coping abilities.

One way to cope with change, especially negative change, is to change how you view or interpret a situation, according to Dr. Catherine Pipas in her article "Building Community Well-Being Through Emotional Intelligence and Cognitive Reframing."

This is a tool that can help people change their mindset to rid themselves of negative thoughts and look at a situation from a different perspective. It can be a helpful means of turning problems or negative thoughts into opportunities for change and growth.

"The premise of cognitive reframing is that our thoughts about our experiences drive our emotions, actions and outcomes," Pipas said.

"Negative thoughts lead to negative behaviors; positive and productive thoughts lead to positive and productive behaviors. While we can't change negative experiences in our past and shouldn't deny their impact, we may need to change our thinking about the past if it is limiting our effectiveness in the present."

It's all about taking a negative experience and seeing the positive instead. It's looking at a negative experience and learning from it so you can let it go and move forward.

According to Pipas, it's easy to get into the mindset that your initial outlook is the only way to look at a problem. Cognitive reframing teaches you to ask yourself questions like, "Is there another way to look at this situation?" or "What are some other possible reasons this could have happened?"

Reframing a situation by pointing out alternatives and reviewing why it makes you uncomfortable can help you see things from another perspective and make it easier to cope with the situation. Using cognitive reframing can help you improve your mental health, reduce stress, build resilience and assist in solving problems.

Remember to see change as an opportunity and a learning experience. Look for the positive in any change. It's a practice that will improve your outlook.

Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month 2025 Materials are Available

By Jasmine Taylor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Nationwide, April is recognized as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. The U.S. Department of Defense observes SAAPM by focusing on creating the appropriate culture to eliminate sexual assault which requires a personal commitment from the Army community. Creating a positive culture can start with each individual. We can commit to ensuring that every Soldier, Army Civilian and Family member is able to reach their full potential, free from the indignities associated with harmful behaviors.

This year, the campaign theme is "STEP FORWARD. Prevent. Report. Advocate." The 2025 SAAPM campaign highlights the importance of eliminating sexual assault and sexual harassment by working together to build a respectful culture for all.

From battlefields to field offices, individuals are encouraged to:

Step Forward

- Take time to listen, learn and understand.

- Build connections with others by starting conversations.
- Be there for others.

Prevent and Report

- Report behavior that crosses the line.
- Be ready to listen.
- If you see something, step up and intervene.

Advocate

- Keep resources and important phone numbers close by in case someone needs support.
- Encourage a culture of consent in which clear communication, mutual agreement and respect are standard for all interactions.
- Be a change agent by living the Army Values and intervening early and often.

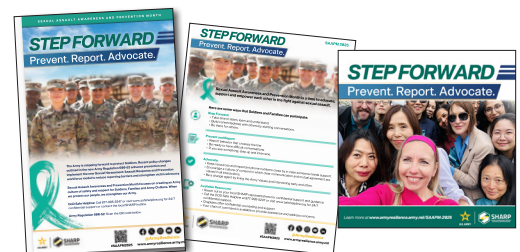
The Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness has created SAAPM 2025 materials to provide our Total Army team with information, resources and actionable steps to promote prevention, increase reporting and promote a safer community. The materials can be used to

plan SAAPM events or outreach engagements. All materials are available on the DPRR Products on Demand website.

To download these digital materials, register at the Products on Demand site:

- STEP 1:** Visit <https://marcomcentral.app.pti.com/Ironmark/ARDMaterials>
- STEP 2:** Select "New Users" to register.
- STEP 3:** Once inside, select "SAAPM," then choose SAAPM 2025.

If you or someone you know needs help, call the DoD Safe Helpline at 877-995-5247 or visit safehelpline.org for confidential, 24/7 support.







Going Through a Divorce or Breakup? What Soldiers Should Expect

By Antonietta Rico, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Perhaps you're out with friends drinking and pretending everything is fine while inside your heart feels shredded. Or you're sitting alone on your couch, your home empty and silent. The fact is, you miss your spouse or significant other, and that's OK. It's normal. The end of a relationship requires grieving.

"It's a loss," said Col. Liquori Etheridge, Deputy Army Director of Psychological Health, Behavioral Health Division, Office of the Surgeon General, and a licensed clinical social worker.

Etheridge said that after a loss there is a wide range of normal responses people should expect to experience. Although it will vary by individual, some normal reactions after a divorce or breakup include sadness, isolating or ruminating on the circumstances that led to the breakup. Anxiety can also be a normal reaction, especially if kids are involved and parents worry about how they will maintain a strong relationship. People may also wonder if they will ever find love or be able to trust again, Etheridge said.

"A person has to have a good understanding of who they are as an individual before getting into a relationship."

—Col. Liquori Etheridge, Deputy Army Director of Psychological Health, Behavioral Health Division, Office of the Surgeon General

When a relationship ends, people cope with the loss in different ways—some healthy, some unhealthy. Some may turn to substances, including alcohol, or exercise or eating, said Dr. Nathaan Demers a licensed psychologist and adviser for the Colorado-based male mental health campaign Man Therapy. Man Therapy uses humor to encourage help-seeking among working-age men. The campaign offers resources on a wide range of topics, from divorce and relationships to issues affecting a military population.

"A lot of times people turn to things in excess—

in that they're trying to fill what feels like a void," said Demers.

"What's most important is trying to be able to actually face those emotions, rather than trying to bury them."

For example, feeling like a failure is common after a divorce or breakup, Demers said. However, every relationship has ups and downs, and relationships end for many different reasons. Yes, it can be your fault, but it can also be the fault of your partner, or it can be something as simple as timing—many of us have met the right person but at the wrong point in our lives, he said.

"A very healthy first step is being able to confidently say, 'I am not a failure because this relationship failed,'" Demers said.

Another common theme when relationships end is blame. Soldiers in particular may blame themselves because of the stress Army life puts on families and relationships. Long work hours, absences for training, going on deployments—all of that may make Soldiers feel like they are to blame, said Etheridge. But a job, even a stressful one like the Army, is not to blame.

"Doing a job does not cause a divorce or a breakup of a relationship," said Etheridge. "What choice, other than not doing your job, does an individual have?"

Etheridge said it's important for Soldiers to understand that maybe their partner was not able to cope with Army life, and that's OK; it doesn't make their partner a bad person. How a partner handles Army life is not something a Soldier can control.

Sometimes the Soldier may actually be to blame for the end of the relationship, like in the case of infidelity. But Demers and Etheridge both said that even if a person made a mistake, self-compassion, forgiveness and introspection are key.

Etheridge said individuals should work to accept their role in the dissolution of their relationship, accept that their behavior was not conducive to a healthy relationship and accept that "they have to work through a process of self-forgiveness and also work through the process of understanding why

they were engaging in behavior that adversely impacted their relationship."

"We've all made decisions that we are not proud of ... and a helpful step to move forward is having a little bit of compassion for ourselves and being able to say, 'I effed up, I understand why I effed up, I was doing the best I could with what I had at that time,'" said Demers.

Providing a genuine apology can be another step, which includes taking ownership for the 'why' behind the mistake and how one plans to change behavior so it doesn't happen again, Demers said.

Before moving on to the next relationship, Etheridge recommends that Soldiers do a [self-assessment](#). People need to know their personal [strengths and weaknesses](#), like if they tend to have a temper or if they lack [healthy communication skills](#), he said. They need to know if they have unresolved childhood or trust issues, and also why they want to be in a relationship and [what they are willing to put into it](#). This can give them a road map of what they need to work on—and then they should do the work, he said.

"A person has to have a good understanding of who they are as an individual before getting into a relationship," Etheridge said.

For those currently going through a breakup or divorce, if some of those normal feelings like self-blame, ruminating, sadness or anxiety are becoming severe or persisting for a long time, it's time to seek help, Etheridge said.

They can seek help from a professional but also from community organizations or from friends.

"There's no 'team of one' within any of the armed forces for a specific reason," Demers said.

If a friend, or even someone in the unit you don't know well, is going through a divorce or breakup, it's important to check on them, he said. Sometimes people think they're not equipped to handle these types of conversations because they're not a professional; however, simply asking how someone is doing can be a lifeline when times are rough.

Read the full article on the DPRR [website](#).

Practical Strategies for Rebuilding Relationships

Use these methods to help get a damaged, strained or tense relationship back on track:

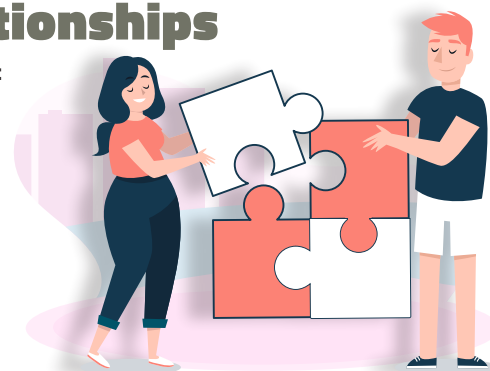
Acknowledge and apologize: Address uncomfortable feelings and take responsibility for your actions after an argument or disagreement.

Stop strategies: Pause, take a break or go for a walk until both parties are ready to listen and speak respectfully.

Spend quality time together: Set aside special time to connect with and understand each other on a deeper level.



To learn more about how to rebuild relationships, visit the DPRR [website](#).



AROUND THE FORCE

- ▶ BOSS
- ▶ SHARP
- ▶ FAP
- ▶ R2



BOSS Car Care Event Gives Single Soldiers Tips on Vehicle Upkeep
U.S. ARMY GARRISON OKINAWA, Japan —Yasutomi Shimabukuro, a specialist with the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Torii Auto Skills Center, explained vehicle maintenance to Soldiers during a Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers car care event. (U.S. Army photo by Natalie Stanley)



Army SHARP Academy Celebrates Intermediate Course Graduates
FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan.—On Dec. 20, the SHARP Intermediate Course graduated 24 students. During the graduation ceremony, individuals were recognized by the academy staff and their peers for their exceptional performance. At (right) Sgt. 1st Class Michael Taylor was honored with the Jay Lee Hoffman Spirit Award for his outstanding service. (U.S. Army photo)



Army SHARP Academy Recognizes Lee Hoffman Spirit Award During SHARP Basic Commencement
FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan.—On Dec. 20, the SHARP Basic Course graduated 24 students. Laiza Sboron received the Jay Lee Hoffman Spirit Award in acknowledgment of her exemplary contributions. (U.S. Army photo)



Fort Drum Families Learn Healthy Eating Habits
FORT DRUM, N.Y.—Family members explored different flavors, colors, shapes and textures during a Sensory Eating Adventures class held at the Soldier and Family Readiness Division's Enrichment Center Oct. 18, 2024. A collaborative effort involving staff from the Family Advocacy Program, the Exceptional Family Member Program and U.S. Army Medical Activity Department dietitians, the course focused on early-childhood eating habits, sensory processing and making mealtimes a positive experience for Families. (U.S. Army photo by Mike Strasser)



Red Cross Animal Visitation Program Boosts Spirits for Deployed Soldiers
U.S. ARMY GARRISON BAVARIA, Germany—The 7th Army Training Command's Headquarters and Headquarters Company collaborated with the American Red Cross animal visitation team Jan. 16 to boost service members' morale after the holidays with an event in Grafenwöhr. The American Red Cross' animal visitation teams regularly support military Families stationed in the United States and overseas. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Thomas Dixon)



10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command Defenders Perform Deadlift
U.S. ARMY GARRISON RHEINLAND-PFALZ, Germany—U.S. Army Air Defenders performed the deadlift during the Army Combat Fitness Test in Sembach. The ACFT is the physical fitness test of record for the Army. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Yesenia Cadavid Saucedo)



The Vital Role of Social Support in Building Soldier Resilience Within the Army

By Jasmine Taylor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

When times are tough, whom can you count on to have your back? Do you turn to your best friend because they provide great encouragement or a trusted Family member who always offers a safe space? If so, you may know what type of social support you need whenever you may need it.

The American Psychological Association defines social support as “the provision of assistance or comfort to others, typically to help them cope with biological, psychological and social stressors.” Simply put, it is the comfort one receives through healthy relationships with others. In the Army community, it is especially important to have close relationships.

“This can more effectively help Soldiers deal with whatever challenges they may experience in areas that impact them emotionally, spiritually or physically,” said Dr. Terrence Elliott, Prevention Program and Soldier for Life Specialist, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness.

There are four recognized [types](#) of social support: emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal.

- **Emotional:** expressions of empathy, trust, love, grace and care. This type of support involves physical presence, to include listening and understanding.
- **Instrumental:** tangible aid and service. This type of support involves actively stepping in to help someone manage a challenge or problem they are facing.
- **Informational:** Constructive thoughts, advice, recommendations and information. Those offering informational support do so in the form of giving advice or sharing helpful information to help someone navigate a situation.
- **Appraisal:** This type of social support consists of words of encouragement, feedback or validation.

Each form of social support is essential and impactful but may not help everyone in the same way. Some individuals may have a favorite kind or a mix of preferences. It is common to rely on different people for various kinds of support or to feel more experienced in giving your loved ones a specific type of support.

Furthermore, there is a proven link between social support and health and wellness.

“Ultimately, connection and community are key outlets for (Soldiers) to heal,” said Marco A.



Research shows that people who have strong social support networks tend to feel less stressed and lonely overall and are often more connected to their communities. (U.S. Army photo)

Bongioanni, U.S. Army veteran and Licensed Mental Health Counselor. According to a [study](#) published by the *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*, individuals with a robust support system experienced diminished stress, resulting in lowered chances of chronic illnesses, better sleep and an overall better state of well-being.

Along with improving physical resilience, social support can also help build emotional resilience through companionship.

“Strong social connections can make it easier to ask for and give help when someone is going through difficult times,” said Heather Hassinger, Chief, DPRR Ready and Resilient Training Branch.

“When individuals have a strong social connection, it pulls them into the community, giving a sense of purpose and helps to build teamwork and trust to accomplish a mission.”

The absence of adequate social support can pose significant risks to Soldiers. Those who lack appropriate social support may struggle with feelings of isolation and can be more susceptible to emotional challenges.

“Social connectedness is critical to psychological resilience; it is the glue that bonds Soldiers together into cohesive units. Loneliness resulting from a lack of social connection has been associated with increased risk of depression and suicide,” said Dr. Ian Gutierrez and Dr. Madhavi Reddy, Clinical Research Psychologists at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Research Transition Office.

Read the full article on the DPRR [website](#).

Soldiers Learn Mental Skills at US AFRICOM Exercise

By Erik Moshe, Ready and Resilient Training Branch

U.S. Africa Command’s annual premier, largest joint and combined exercise, African Lion, demonstrates the U.S. military’s commitment to maintaining strong relationships with allies and partners, reflecting the core principles of its approach in Africa: partner-led and U.S.-enabled. Marking its 20th anniversary, the event ran from April 19 to May 31, 2024, and was led by U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa. The training exercise attracted more than 8,100 participants from over 27 nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization contingents.

U.S. Army Southern European Task Force received the support of performance experts from the Vicenza, Italy, R2 Performance Center to improve the readiness of Soldiers and partner nations. In classroom and field environments, trainers Brittani McVay, Jamie Kenyon and Eric Urrutia instructed over 300 Soldiers and staff from Joint Services and NATO allies. Through small group and mastery sessions, the trainers taught participants a variety of performance-enhancement skills.

“It was very eye-opening for us to experience what different military populations go through during a field rotation,” McVay said. “It gave us a new appreciation for what they do and how they operate.”

The trainers joined U.S. Marine Corps members to observe a live training exercise and discuss how mental-skills exercises could improve their overall performance and well-being. “We had brief micro-coaching conversations to discuss how our services apply to their work,” Urrutia said.

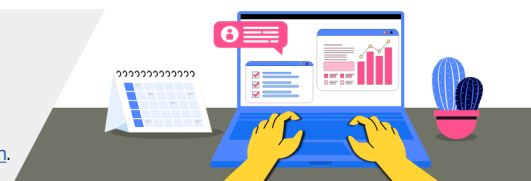
Kenyon worked with a team of Army interpreters to help translate performance-enhancement modules into French and Arabic and networked with other military forces. “The partner nations and other military services were very excited and enthusiastic to learn about what we teach,” Kenyon observed. “On my last day of working with the interpreters, there was such a bond and appreciation for the work we did together.”

The task force will continue to integrate Ready and Resilient training into its local workshops and physical training events focused on team building and communication.

Take your team’s performance to the next level. To [schedule a training](#), reach out to your nearest R2 Performance Center.

Do you want to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter?

Submit articles and photographs by March 21. For any questions, contact the editor at jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com.





Firearm Safety Tip #1

CABLE LOCKS:

Prevents a firearm from being loaded and fired.



Firearm Safety Tip #2

GUN CASE:

Storage solution to secure, conceal, protect and legally transport a firearm.



Firearm Safety Tip #3

LOCK BOX:

Provides reliable protection for firearms.



Firearm Safety Tip #4

FULL SIZE GUN SAFE:

Allows you to store multiple firearms in one place.



Safely storing firearms can save lives by adding time and distance between someone making the decision and taking action. (Graphic courtesy of the Defense Suicide Prevention Office)

Reducing Access to Lethal Means *SUICIDE PREVENTION* Continued from page 1

[Studies](#) reveal that making lethal means less accessible has reduced death by suicide by 91%. Additionally, 90% of individuals who survive a nonfatal suicide attempt will not attempt again.

"It's about making sure the person at risk doesn't have access to a loaded weapon. These are simple but effective steps that can save lives," Betz said.

Collaborative efforts with firearm businesses and local communities can be a critical lethal means safety strategy for the future. Pause to Protect, a lethal means safety initiative, works with local gun shops, particularly those near military installations, to provide resources and education on firearm safety. Currently, Pause to

Protect has a dozen participating businesses that offer free, exclusive or reduced-cost secure storage options to service members. Additionally, the program has [hundreds of businesses](#) willing to consider requests for temporary, voluntary gun storage.

"By equipping firearm businesses with materials and funding (provided by the Defense Department's Defense Suicide Prevention Office and USAA's Face the Fight Foundation), they can support the local military and civilian populations through storage options and education," Betz said.

Knowing how to respond when someone is in a crisis can be vital to their safety and well-being. One of the most critical actions a person can take when encountering someone who has expressed that they are having suicidal thoughts is to engage directly but compassionately. Betz encourages asking questions such as, "Are you thinking about hurting yourself?" She noted that this will not increase the likelihood of self-harm.

"Let them know you're there to support them. You don't need to fix the crisis yourself, but you can stay with them until they connect with a professional who can help, whether through a crisis helpline or a walk-in clinic."

If the person has access to lethal means, it's appropriate to ask whether you can temporarily hold on to them. The exact words

aren't as important as the intent—the key is communicating support and staying with them until they're safe.

Army Civilians, Soldiers and their Families can turn to the following resources for more information on lethal means safety and suicide prevention and intervention.

- [Ask, Care, Escort](#) is an Army training program that educates Soldiers and Family members on methods of suicide intervention.
- The [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#) is a federally supported resource center funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- The [Army Suicide Prevention Program](#) provides resources, builds awareness and supports Soldiers and Families with suicide prevention tools.
- [Counseling on Access to Lethal Means](#) trains individuals on how to work with people who might be at risk of suicide and provides information on how to reduce access to weapons or substances.

To learn more about the Pause to Protect program, visit the [website](#).

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide and needs help, contact the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) at 988 and press 1 for the Military Crisis Line.

"It's about making sure the person at risk doesn't have access to a loaded weapon. These are simple but effective steps that can save lives."

—Dr. Emmy Betz, Director of Firearm Injury Prevention, University of Colorado School of Medicine



Strengthening Support and Prevention Resources *DIRECTOR'S COLUMN* Continued from page 2

Advocacy Program Toolkit, which equips Soldiers and Families with FAP resources to create safe, supportive environments. The toolkit, which includes posters, fact sheets and infographics, is available at the following [link](#).

We're also celebrating Month of the Military Child in April. Our military children make unique contributions, commitments and sacrifices each day on behalf of our Nation. They gracefully accept

and support their military parents' requirements to work long hours, deploy and PCS. Our military children are a resilient, adaptable force, and I'm proud of all our children as they also serve.

DPRR has been hard at work enhancing the Army Quality of Life microsite, available at [www.army.mil/qualityoflife](#). Previously, the content was aligned to the QoL task force's 10 lines of effort. However, we revamped the content so that it contains more

useful information for spouses and Family members. Please keep an eye out for additional updates to the QoL microsite.

Thank you for your dedication in providing excellence through the Army's prevention, quality of life and resilience missions!

—Dee Geise, DPRR Director





Understanding the Silent Danger of Cyberbullying

By Jasmine Taylor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The cyber world may often appear to be an unsafe, endless void, posing countless dangers to users, from phishing attacks and romance scams to identity theft. In this digital age, parents, especially those in the military, should be proactive in protecting their children from silent threats. Frequent relocations and deployments (along with the push for autonomy that youths commonly seek) may heighten military children's exposure to online threats, including cyberbullying.

"The impact from the frequent moves, stress from leaving friends behind or meeting new friends, adjusting to new schools (and) new routines, cannot only wreak havoc on the child, this can also be stressful on the Family as well," explained Dr. Carmen Leggett, DCS, G-9, Family Advocacy Program Specialist.

As a result, parents may miss crucial signs indicating their child has experienced cyberbullying, which not only affects the child but can be damaging to the Army Family.

"Addressing cyberbullying through communication, parental and community engagement, education and digital awareness is vital to fostering a community that is resilient, supportive and prepared to promote healthy online interactions and protect the well-being of their children," Leggett said.

Cyberbullying, often synonymous with cyberstalking, is not an uncommon occurrence. In fact, [almost half of U.S. teens](#) ages 13 to 17 report experiencing it. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, cyberbullying involves the use of electronic communication to harass, intimidate or threaten someone. Cyberbullies can be classmates, or complete strangers, but often know their targets.

"Cyberbullying is prevalent among peer offenders largely due to the prolific use of technology and

social media platforms by children and youth," explained Special Agent Jada Masawi of the Family and Sexual Violence Division, Army Criminal Investigation Division.

However, cyberbullying shouldn't be reduced to a few "mean" messages from a high school hater. It can be considered a criminal offense in numerous states and may take several forms, including:

- **Online harassment:** Sending abusive or threatening messages, posting embarrassing or humiliating content.
- **Impersonation:** Creating fake accounts or hacking a child or teen's account to harass or deceive.
- **Surveillance:** Tracking a child's online activity or location.
- **Threats of harm:** Direct or indirect threats of violence.

"About 81% of youths think cyberbullying is not a big deal and protected behind a digital device. (They) may believe they are anonymous to the point that they fail to consider the implication of their actions," said Masawi.

While cyberbullying [laws](#) differ by state, most acknowledge harassment through computers, phones or texts; messages that cause fear or embarrassment; threats sent electronically; and/or explicit photos intended to harm someone as unlawful. "[Sexting](#)" is often included in these laws and is illegal in some places.

To learn more about your state's cyberbullying laws and legislation, visit [StopBullying.gov](#) or Cyberbullying Research Center's [website](#) or contact your local law enforcement authorities.

But it's not just important for parents to educate themselves about cyberbullying. Open and ongoing

communication about healthy relationships and responsible social media use can substantially mitigate risk.

"It's important for Army parents to create a safe space for their child to open up to them. Listen more than you speak and be aware of any reactions that might make them feel judged or afraid to share their experiences. Hearing their perspective is essential to understanding their unique situation and being able to help," said Leanne Lemons, DCS, G-9, FAP Specialist.

The Family Advocacy Program office provides support services to assist teens facing cyberbullying and equips them with tools to foster respectful relationships. Additionally, various resources are available to help guide Families through related challenges.

"It is imperative to take cyberbullying seriously," stated Lemons. She also explained that parents may underestimate the effects of cyberbullying and may see it as less harmful than traditional bullying because it happens online. In fact, cyberbullying can lead to noticeable changes in behavior and self-esteem in children and teens. If a parent suspects that their child has been cyberbullied, they should take the following steps:

- **Notice:** Parents should pay attention to any changes in their child's mood or behavior, particularly in relation to their use of digital devices.
- **Talk:** They should ask their child questions to understand what is happening, how it started and who is involved.
- **Document:** Parents should keep a record of the incidents.

Read the full article on the DPRR [website](#).

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

46%

of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 have experienced cyberbullying.

pewresearch.org





DPRR

DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS

FEBRUARY 2025

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- Thad Collard, Exceptional Family Member Program
- Marie De Vinney, DPRR Front Office
- Georgina Gould, R2I&T Division
- Teneshia Gray, Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Division
- Kristie Mahoney, Assessments Division
- Erica Manning, Exceptional Family Member Program
- Rachel Ropke, Integrated Prevention Division
- Jillian Singleton, Morale, Welfare and Recreation Program
- Blake Smith, Assessments Division
- Jack Taylor, Exceptional Family Member Program

Farewell

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- Jill Knaus, Plans and Operations Branch
- James Matthews, DPRR Front Office
- Kristen Murphy, Communications and Outreach Division
- Marcus Smith, Exceptional Family Member Program
- Brian Thomas, Assessments Division

HAIL AND FAREWELL

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

International Association of Chiefs of Police Officer Safety and Wellness Conference

March 11–13: This symposium for law enforcement professionals will feature experts presenting resources and best practices for officers, to improve their own safety and wellness as well as to make them more effective at keeping their communities safe.

Location: Anaheim, Calif. **Learn more:** Visit the OSW [website](#) for more information.

APRIL

Society for Public Health Education 2025 Annual Conference

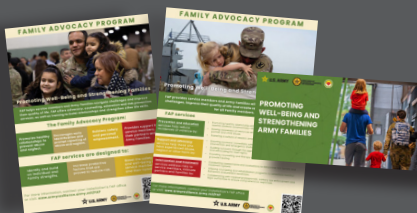
April 16–18: The conference celebrates SOPHE's 75 years of growth, achievement and impact while offering participants learning experiences and opportunities to connect with colleagues in the field.

Location: Long Beach, Calif. **Learn more:** Visit the SOPHE [website](#) for information.

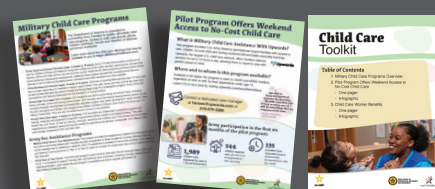
Quality of Life Programs

Whether you're in search of a safe, reliable child care arrangement or you desire to work through relationship difficulties with a spouse or intimate partner, the Army has programs and services to support every Family.

FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM TOOLKIT



CHILD CARE TOOLKIT



The toolkits are now available for download and printing on the DPRR Products on Demand [website](#).

TOP-PERFORMING POSTS

FACEBOOK



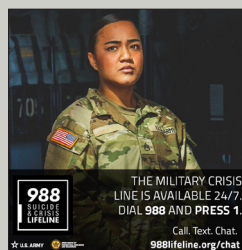
Impressions: 3,537

X



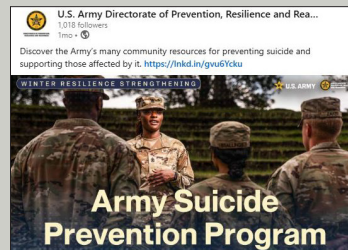
Impressions: 1,489

INSTAGRAM



Impressions: 165

LINKEDIN



Impressions: 851

SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

Follow @ArmyResilience

Please coordinate with your Public Affairs Office to share or retweet @ArmyResilience content on command or installation Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn platforms. Contact Kevin O'Brien for questions regarding DPRR social media at kobrien@strategyconsultingteam.com.

Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

DPRR COMMUNITYLINK

March 6, 2025, Volume 10, Issue 3

The DPRR Community Link newsletter is an authorized bi-monthly publication produced by the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness for the Army community. The contents of the DPRR Community Link are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army. The editorial content of the DPRR Community Link is the responsibility of the Communications & Outreach Division at DPRR. For questions, or to subscribe or submit articles and photographs to DPRR Community Link, please contact the editor at jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com. This publication is available for download at <https://www.dvidshub.net/publication/1102/r2-community-link-newsletter>

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Do you want to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter?

Submit articles and photographs by March 21. For any questions, contact the editor at jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com.

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Contact DPRR Communications & Outreach at
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