

# Message from Secretary Hagel on Suicide Prevention Month

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The Department of Defense has no more important responsibility than supporting and protecting those who defend our country and that means we must do everything possible to prevent military suicide. As we observe Suicide Prevention Month, the entire DoD community ? Service members, civilians, members of our families and leaders at every level ? must demonstrate our collective resolve to prevent suicide, to promote greater knowledge of its causes and to encourage those in need to seek support. No one who serves this country in uniform should ever feel they have nowhere to turn.

The Department of Defense has invested more than \$100 million into research on the diagnosis and treatment of depression, bipolar disorder and substance abuse, as well as interventions for relationship, financial and legal issues ? all of which can be associated with suicide. We are working to reduce drug and alcohol abuse and we are steadily increasing the number of mental health professionals and peer support counselors. Effective suicide prevention training is critical to all these efforts and we are instructing our leaders on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of crisis and encourage service members to seek support. We are also reaching out to military families and the broader community to enlist their support in this cause.

Seeking behavioral health care is a choice that embodies moral courage, honor and integrity. Those values are at the foundation of what that we stand for and what we defend. The Military Crisis Line is there for all who need it. I encourage anyone in need to call 1-800-273-8255 and press one to speak to a trained professional, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This service is confidential and available to all service members and their families.

Always remember that our most valuable resource is each other. When one of us faces a challenge, we all must stand together. By fighting as one team, we can ? and we will ? help prevent suicide. Thank you.