

Army implements new suicide prevention initiative

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WASHINGTON — The Army is implementing a public health approach to suicide based on Centers for Disease Control suicide prevention efforts. The new, comprehensive and integrated policies, which focus on prevention, rather than intervention, are outlined in the forthcoming Army Suicide Prevention Program regulation scheduled to be published in the

first quarter of 2022.

Gen. Joseph M. Martin, Vice Chief of Staff, led a chain teach initiative today that will soon reach the most junior leaders in teams and squads to ensure consistent implementation of the Army Suicide Prevention Program across the force. The intent of this chain teach is for in-person training of every leader in the Army. The active-duty Army will complete the chain teach by March 1, 2022, while reserve components will finish by Sept. 1, 2022.

“Suicide is a societal issue, and the U.S. Army is not immune. Our formations comprise Soldiers that reflect the nation they’ve sworn to defend,” said Gen. Joseph M. Martin. “We, as leaders, owe it to each Soldier to educate their leaders at every echelon on how to recognize signs of mental health challenges, where to seek the appropriate resources and the importance of ensuring individuals feel connected to others.”

Ultimately, through this initiative Martin wants Soldiers to know they matter.

“It is essential that suicide prevention is a continual focus and chain teach is one of the current Army suicide prevention initiatives,” Martin said. “I’m personally initiating the first session, because there’s nothing more important than our people.”

While leaders will have discretion to tailor the discussions with their Soldiers, the suicide prevention training must, at a minimum, address the following topics: leader visibility tools and processes for recognizing risk and protective factors, identifying available resources, engaging in targeted prevention, implementing early intervention strategies, and accomplishing post prevention actions. Leaders are also required to discuss stigma reduction methods and the Army’s efforts to foster cohesive and inclusive teams.

To support this initiative, the Army provided commanders with briefing slides and a script to generate the discussion with their Soldiers and copies of the Army’s new Senior Commander and Unit Commander Implementation Handbooks.

“The chain teach event is to strengthen the Army’s focus on prevention,” said Lt. Gen. Gary A. Brito, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1. “This initiative will enable a shared understanding of the importance of fostering healthy unit and community cultures and developing a sense of connection among all members of the Army family. We will do this by building cohesive teams,

enhancing resilience, and addressing marital challenges early, before they become crises.”

Sergeant Major of the Army Michael A. Grinston said this initiative is one aspect of the Army’s suicide prevention efforts and is designed to empower Soldiers and augment leaders’ continuous focus on this issue.

“Our intent is to get upstream of suicide by ensuring Soldiers have a comprehensive understanding of what resources are available and how to use them,” Grinston said.

For more information about the Army’s Suicide Prevention Program, contact the Army G-1 PAO Maj. Angel L. Tomko at angel.l.tomko.mil@army.mil the OCPA Personnel Team PAO Lt. Col. Gabriel J. Ramirez at gabriel.j.ramirez2.mil@army.mil.