



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

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MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION


FROM: HQ USAF/SG
110 Luke Avenue, Room 400
Bolling AFB, DC 20332-7050

SUBJECT: Air Force Suicide Prevention Program

Since the beginning of the Air Force Suicide Prevention Program we have enjoyed record lows in the number and rate of suicides by Air Force personnel. This year however, we have had an alarming increase in the number of suicides. Our average suicide rate over the past three years has been 7.9 suicides per 100,000 personnel; and this year, as of 18 May 2001, our annualized rate is 13.8 per 100,000 personnel. I am very concerned.

There are a number of initiatives underway to improve the program. AFI 44-154, Community Training: Suicide and Violence Awareness Education is being revised to ensure that our suicide prevention training is done "live" rather than being web based. The CSAF is updating the required hand-off policy for personnel who are questioned regarding an allegation of criminal behavior. He has also approved the renaming of our mental health clinics in an effort to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help. Briefings for the Squadron Commander Course are being revised as are training updates in suicide prevention at both the NCO Leadership Academy and First Sergeants Course. The Suicide Event Surveillance System is being revised to allow easy access and data entry of suicide attempts. However, all these improvements will be ineffective if our people are not interested and invested in suicide prevention.

I ask you to continue to support the CSAF's effort to reduce the lives needlessly lost to suicide. We cannot let complacency get in the way of what has been an effective program. Review your suicide prevention programs and encourage your personnel to rededicate themselves to this effort. Ensure that commanders are being briefed on the appropriate use of mental health services and that the community awareness briefings are updated and relevant. I would also encourage you to forward any ideas you have to reinvigorate our Air Force Suicide Prevention Program through your Community Action Information Board. If you have any questions my point of contact is Lt Col Wayne Talcott. He can be reached at DSN 297-4285 wayne.talcott@usafsg.bolling.af.mil.


PAUL K. CARLTON, JR.
Lieutenant General, USAF, MC, CFS
Surgeon General