

Policy Statement on Suicide Prevention



Suicide is a permanent 'solution' to a temporary problem. It must be emphasized to anyone at-risk that there are people who care about them who will be left behind if they act on a passing impulse. These people will then have all of the associated guilt/doubt as to what they missed or did wrong. We must further discard some of our misconceptions about those who contemplate suicide, even in jest -- particularly that people who joke about suicide are not serious about acting. The exact opposite is true! Almost everyone who attempts suicide has given some sort of sign in the past.

Each tragic loss to suicide has far reaching impact on families, friends, and service members left behind. At the unit level, suicide affects morale, unit cohesion, and ultimately unit effectiveness and readiness. Preventing suicide requires a hyper-vigilant approach, one where we are ready to ask the difficult questions to help identify at-risk individuals and provide immediate intervention to prevent losing an irreplaceable part of our team. If you see, hear, or think a Marine or Sailor in this unit has lost hope, swift action is necessary. NEVER assume you are over-reacting. DO NOT minimize the matter, and NEVER promise you will keep it a secret. Get help immediately. Use your chain of command to inform them of the situation. Find someone -- NEVER leave a person alone who is even remotely contemplating suicide. Talk to them and let them know that you care and want to help.

Bottomline, preventing suicide is a challenge that will require serious intellectual, individual, organizational, and leadership commitment. I am 100% "All-In" to meeting this challenge. I expect and require everyone in 5th ANGLICO to be equally committed. Do not hesitate to help someone who is in a downward spiral. Get involved with the OSCAR team in the unit to identify trends. If you are the one experiencing depression or thoughts of suicide do not hesitate to talk to someone. DO NOT SUFFER IN SILENCE - have the courage to ask for help! Chaplains are always available. They are an integrated part of our unit with unique trust and confidence. Being outside the chain of command and having 100% confidentiality make them especially valuable as an adviser if you are unsure on what course of action to take.

Available resources include:

Chaplain Knipp (098) 969-4744

National Suicide Crisis Hotline (+1-800-273-8255)

Suicide Prevention Program Officer, Capt Coleman (315-623-8711) or (090-6015-5483)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. R. Ashton".

M. R. ASHTON

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps
Commanding Officer
5th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company