

# Suicide Prevention Strategies for Leaders

## EARLY ENGAGEMENT

- Know your team
- Talk to your people often
- Foster unit cohesion and a culture of: “We all need help sometimes”
- Encourage buddy care
- Help people get connected to support before a small issue turns into a big issue
- Educate on safely storing firearms, pills, & poisons
- Take care of yourself; it will teach others to take care of themselves also (e.g., sleep, nutrition, stress)

## RESPONDING TO SUICIDE IDEATION OR ATTEMPT

- Tell the person you are there to help
- Ensure immediate safety for everyone
- If time permits, seek consultation from behavioral health and chaplain teams
- Escort the person to emergency care
- Share details with only those who need to know
- Address rumors and gossip with information that can be shared
- Do not give up on the person or label them as “weak” or “a lost cause”

## RESPONDING TO A SUICIDE DEATH

- Lead by being **PAV**:
  - » **P**RESENT in your unit — more than usual
  - » **A**CTIVE — walk around in the unit and events talking to each member
  - » **V**ISIBLE — let members know you are there
- Check-in on others experiencing difficulties
- Acknowledge your own grief and loss to your unit, it enables them to do so also
- Provide information that is public about the suicide to unit members; avoid details about how the person died
- Create opportunities for unit members to be together and stay connected
- Reach out to people who are disconnected
- Consult with response teams including Casualty Affairs, Chaplains, and Behavioral Health