



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS**  
**2700 ARMY PENTAGON**  
**WASHINGTON, DC 20310-2700**

August 25, 2021

Chaplain Corps Teammates:

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. As this annual reminder comes around again, the need for our team to address the tragedy of suicide within and around the Army's ranks has perhaps never been greater. Suicide rates among active military personnel and veterans of the post-9/11 period continue to reach new heights, as they outpace the suicide rates among the United States public which have been increasing for the past twenty years. The combination of challenges we are all facing these days – including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and our military withdrawal from Afghanistan – make these trends only more concerning, especially within the military community. This year's Defense Department Suicide Prevention Awareness Month theme, "Connect to Protect – Support is Within Reach," will aid the Army in increasing awareness of warning signs for at-risk individuals, and enhance understanding of the characteristics of suicidal ideation and coping mechanisms.

In alignment with 2021's National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, including National Suicide Prevention Week, September 5-11, I am again challenging you to pray with your faith communities and others across the Army and beyond, about what we can do to prevent suicide within our Army Family. As you pray, I recommend that you review and discuss the attached report from Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs.

As we experienced in 2020, a sense of personal meaning and purpose can be especially fragile again in 2021; and our responsibility to "Care for the Soul of the Army" includes the duty to provide help, hope, and healing to those in our ranks who are struggling, including our Army's Family members and Soldiers for Life.

Please take up this prayer challenge in September, with the following focus areas:

- September 1-8: Regular Army Soldiers
- September 9-15: Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers
- September 16-22: Army Family members
- September 23-30: America's Veterans

Resources to assist you in this effort include the following:

- Defense Suicide Prevention Office 2021 Suicide Prevention Month Outreach Toolkit – <https://www.dspo.mil/spm/>
- Defense Suicide Prevention Office – <https://www.dspo.mil/>
- Army Resilience Directorate – <https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/>
- The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) – <https://www.va.gov/prevents/>
- REACH to Prevent Suicide – <https://www.wearewithinreach.net/>

- TRADOC's "WeCare" app supporting the Army's Suicide Prevention Campaign – <https://www.army.mil/article/238298>
- Military OneSource – <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help>
- 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

In an effort to integrate our suicide prevention efforts across the Chaplain Corps and to advise our Army leaders on how to leverage our unique capabilities, the Office of the Chief of Chaplains recently stood up a new Soldier Family Readiness Division (SFRD). Along with addressing other important readiness issues, the SFRD will work with the Army Resilience Directorate to ensure the Chaplain Corps is fully engaged in the development and implementation of Army Suicide Prevention policy and programs.

This year, we are continuing our campaign called, #ReachOne. In addition to praying with me in September, I again challenge all of you to look within your circles of influence and even inside your own squads, to reach out to others, one at a time, who may need an encouraging word and some assistance finding resources for more help. We must make reaching out to others a habit and even a reflex, if we hope to be part of turning the tide.

I continue to thank God every day for the vital support each of you provides to Soldiers, their Families, and Army Civilians around the world; and I am praying for each of you, as, together, we all care for the soul of our Army in these difficult times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas L. Solhjem". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas L. Solhjem  
Chaplain (Major General) U.S. Army  
Chief of Chaplains