



OFFICIAL USE ONLY

**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

MARINE FORCES RESERVE  
4400 DAUPHINE STREET  
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70146-5400

IN REPLY TO:  
ForO 1730.2  
CHAP

MAY 05 2003

FORCE ORDER 1730.2

From: Commander, Marine Forces Reserve  
To: Distribution List

Subj: SUICIDE AWARENESS PROGRAM

Ref: (a) MCO P1700.24B, Ch 3, Para 3009

1. Purpose. To publish policy and assign responsibility for administering the Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) Suicide Prevention Program.

2. Background

a. By a ratio of 3 to 2, more people in the United States die by suicide each year than by homicide. Approximately a half-million people are admitted to emergency rooms each year due to suicide attempts. Suicide knows no special boundaries of age, race or sex. Although males are at highest risk for completed suicides, females are twice as likely to report a past history of suicide attempts. As a reflection of society, suicide affects the military as well. While Navy and Marine Corps suicide rates are lower than civilian rates when matched for gender, age and racial differences, in the past ten years, suicide has been the second leading cause of death of Marines.

b. Given that service members undergo screenings, have regular employment and supervision, and have access to medical and treatment services, it is not surprising the military population has lower suicide rates than the civilian population. However, the problem of suicide is not easily eliminated. Suicide is still one of the top killers of Sailors and Marines. It is only when we all own our responsibility for looking out for those in need that we can stop this preventable cause of death in our communities.

c. The most common suicide risk factors among Marines are relationship problems and legal problems. Alcohol and/or substance abuse is often related to the completed suicide. In addition all Marines should be alert to the following key risk factors:

ForO 1730.2

MAY 05 2003

(1) Mental health problems such as depression and substance abuse.

(2) Talk or hints of suicidal intent.

(3) Previous history of suicidal threats and attempts. A family history of depression or substance can also elevate a person's risk.

d. We can make a difference, but only if we train our Marines and Sailors to recognize these signs and risk factors. The biggest reason people threaten suicide or communicate to others they have been thinking about suicide; and the great majority do so before attempting or completing suicide, is to let others know they are in pain or great psychological distress. It is their way to let it be known that they need help. The goal of suicide prevention training is to enable our Marines and Sailors to be able identify these signs and refer their shipmate for help. To aid in this training, the Navy/Marine Corps Team has produced an excellent video package called "Suicide Prevention: Taking Action - Saving Lives." This package has been distributed to all MARFORRES sites.

3. Policy. Unit Commanders and Officers-in-Charge shall establish a suicide prevention program in their command including but not limited to annual training courses on suicide awareness.

a. Annual training classes on suicide awareness shall be provided at all commands. Commanders may utilize Chaplains, Marine Corps Community Services counselors, Semper Fit coordinators and medical providers to meet the requirement for annual training.

b. All officers and Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) shall take specific actions to help build an environment that respects and protects emotional health and supports individual and unit readiness.

(1) Keep the focus on succeeding and accomplishing the mission.

(2) Provide life skills training to enhance personal problem solving and coping.

(3) Remind others of their own success, competence, and mastery.

ForO 1730.2  
MAY 05 2003

- (4) Promote unit cohesion and camaraderie.
- (5) Recognize achievements.
- (6) Promote social involvement.
- (7) Make it known that helping resources exist.
- (8) Handle problems early.
- (9) Offer user-friendly access to helping resources.
- (10) Emphasize, "It's OK to get help".
- (11) Work to destigmatize counseling and mental health care.
- (12) Communicate clear messages against suicide.

4. Action

a. Unit Commanders and Officers-in-Charge shall ensure that all members of their commands receive annual suicide awareness training.

b. MARFORRES Chaplain and MCCS shall ensure that unit Commanders and Officers-in-Charge have up-to-date resources for training.

c. MARFORRES MCCS shall provide information on community resources available for intervention.

  
R. L. HUDON  
Chief of Staff

DISTRIBUTION: B