

Equipping Yourself and Your Organization

Equip Yourself

- ▶ **Educate** yourself about stress, crisis, suicide, and risk factors.
- ▶ **Participate in training** to strengthen your skills.
- ▶ **Focus on actively listening** to people in your day-to-day interactions. If you are concerned, follow up with the ACE protocol described in this Pocket Guide.
- ▶ **Keep up to date on resources** and always have contact numbers and websites on hand.

Equip Your Organization

- ▶ **Develop a policy & protocol** for intervening with persons at risk for suicide.
- ▶ **Provide training** for staff and/or volunteers.
- ▶ **Connect with behavioral health resources.**
- ▶ **Conduct periodic reviews** of policy & protocol and schedule refresher training.

Resources

There are many resources available within the military, government, and community:

National Veterans Crisis Line:

1-800-273-8255, press 1 (available 24/7)

For service members, veterans, family members, and friends in need of support and connection to resources.

Also available by text at 838255 and via chat at: www.VeteransCrisisLine.net

Local community crisis line:

Military Installations: All active duty installations and the National Guard have service member and family support resources (services may be available to different branches and components).

TRICARE: Health care program for military members, retirees and eligible dependents.
www.TRICARE.mil

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC):
www.SPRC.org

Arizona Coalition for Military Families: Connect and equip yourself and your organization through training and networking opportunities and learn more about resources and state-level community capacity building.
www.ArizonaCoalition.org



**ARIZONA COALITION
FOR MILITARY FAMILIES**
BUILDING SUPPORT FOR ALL WHO SERVE

WICHE

Mental Health Program



**ARIZONA
NATIONAL
GUARD**



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**Helping Service
Members, Veterans,
and Their Families
Through Stress
and Crisis**

The Stress Continuum

RED ZONE: STRESS ILLNESS There is an immediate danger or threat to life – call 9-1-1

Examples: actively suicidal (danger to self) and/or violent (danger to others).

ORANGE ZONE: STRESS INJURY

There is an urgent situation which requires support – utilize national and local crisis resources

Examples: extreme anxiety, panic attacks, suicidal thoughts, homicidal thoughts, rage, self-harm behavior, heavy use of drugs and/or alcohol, psychosis, eating disorders, sexual assault, family violence.

YELLOW ZONE: STRESS REACTION

There is a situation where a person shows increased signs and symptoms of distress – encourage connection to local/national counseling resources, and to social supports.

Examples: trouble sleeping, anxious, irritable, grouchy, worrying, apathy, loss of interest, negative, pessimistic, drinking more alcohol to cope, drug experimentation, relationship stress.

GREEN ZONE: READY

There is no crisis situation and stress is manageable.

Suicide in the Military & Veteran Population

Risk Factors

- ▶ **Suicidal behavior:** threatening, talking, or writing about suicide, history of suicide attempts, planning self-harm behavior.
- ▶ **Physical and/or mental illness:** chronic illness or pain, current/past mental illness or family history of suicide, use/abuse of alcohol or other substances.
- ▶ **Stressful life events:** triggering events (real or anticipated) leading to despair, shame, hopelessness or feeling like a burden, such as relationship and financial issues, changes in health status, etc.
- ▶ **History of/current abuse or neglect:** physical, sexual, emotional, mental, financial, spiritual, etc.

Keep in mind that risk of suicide is not necessarily tied to deployment or combat exposure.

Protective Factors

- ▶ **Internal:** ability to cope with stress, religious beliefs, frustration tolerance, willingness to seek help.
- ▶ **External:** responsibility to children or pets, positive therapeutic relationships, social supports.

Be aware that protective factors, even if present, may not counteract significant acute risk.

ACE: Ask – Care – Escort

Ask

If someone is in the red (stress illness) or orange (stress injury) stress zones, have the courage to ask directly:

Are you thinking about killing yourself?

Speak in a calm voice and reassure the person you are there to help.

If they express intent to hurt themselves, ask the following:

Do you have a plan for how you would end your life (when, where, how)?

Do you have the means (drugs, gun, rope, etc.)? If so, where are these items now?

If at any time you feel the person is a danger to themselves or to others, call 9-1-1.

Care

Care for the Service Member or Veteran:

- ▶ Actively listen to them.
- ▶ Reserve judgment about what they are saying.
- ▶ Recognize when the situation is serious.
- ▶ Seek professional help for the person.

Escort

- ▶ Facilitate the Service Member or Veteran getting help.
- ▶ Connect them to a crisis line (1-800-273-8255, press 1), their chain of command, a chaplain, a behavioral health provider or other trained professional.
- ▶ If safe, stay with the person or accompany them to get help.

The ACE information is adapted from the U.S. Army and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ACE Models.