



Connect to Protect:
Support is Within Reach

2023 Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit





DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Outreach Toolkit

In recognition of September as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (SPM) the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) created a 2023 Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit in support of the larger Department of Defense (DOD) suicide prevention campaign *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach*. The toolkit is a collection of campaign tools, resources, and graphics for use in all outreach efforts in September and all year. A comprehensive communication campaign is created when the same messaging and resources are used at the local and national levels.

The SPM Outreach Toolkit consists of:

Social Media Content: posts, story graphics, photo frames, banners

Sample Language Tools: public service announcement (PSA), blog, press release

Campaign Tools: pledge, poster, Connect to Protect fact sheet, campaign-style sheet, virtual background

Guides: Leaders Safe Messaging Guide, Means Safety for Military Service Members and Their Families, Your Words Matter Fact Sheet

Who may use the kit:

This toolkit is designed for organizations and communities that will be creating and promoting an SPM campaign. When the SPM campaign promoted across the Services is designed around one message, the message is more likely to resonate. The toolkit is a framework and consists of samples for communities to build on or even use as inspiration for additional creative ideas.

How to use the kit:

The toolkit provides materials to aid in planning an SPM campaign for local installations and the community. Follow the links for the items in the toolkit. Below is a table of the materials.

Promote and protect:

We encourage everyone to promote the campaign Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach. Use the toolkit as is or use it as a jumping-off point. The goal is a cohesive campaign message to create awareness. If you're communicating on social media, use the following hashtags to join the conversation: #ConnectToProtect, #SPM23, and #BeThere. Don't forget to tag us!

Talking points and key messages: The important points below are key messages to share with the community. **#ConnectToProtect**

- [Installation, unit, etc.] is committed to preventing suicide among Service members, veterans, DoD civilians, and their families.
- Suicide prevention is a Department of Defense (DoD) priority throughout the year.



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- During September — Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (SPM) — the Department brings added attention to the complex issue of suicide and emphasizes the available resources and programs.
- We continue the DoD's SPM theme, Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach because research continues to emphasize connections as a primary protective factor to reduce the risk of suicide.
- September is a time to refocus our energies, be inspired to continue our efforts, and reach out to the Service members, families, and coworkers on our installations. Encourage those around you to be a year-round suicide prevention advocate for their unit, peers, and family. Ideas for that encouragement can include the following tips/information:

Connect with self. It is important to focus on your health and wellness.

- Participate in spiritual or community activities and groups, or volunteer for causes or organizations that you care about.
- Spend time with friends and family members.
- Seek support from peers, family, or health professionals.
- Reach out to others. Check-in with friends and family. Let them know you care. Plan activities that you can enjoy together.

Connect with others.

- Listen when they want to talk. Accept what he, she, or they have experienced without judgment.
- Resist the temptation to problem-solve.
- Reassure them and express care and concern.
- Encourage them to get help and stay in touch with friends and family.
- Get to know your military and community resources, so that you can pass on that information if it is needed.

Learn how to help.

- **Speak Up:** If you are concerned about someone, ask if they are thinking about suicide, have a plan, and have the means, such as a firearm, medication, or other methods of self-harm.
- **Listen and Offer Support:** Be calm and express concern. Take what they say seriously and ask how you can help.
- **Act Quickly:** If you are concerned someone is at imminent risk for suicide, do not leave them alone and seek help immediately. The Veterans/Military Crisis Line is available 24/7 at 988 (press 1). You can also call 911.
- Remove any weapons, drugs, or other means of self-injury from the area if possible.
- If you are on the phone with an individual who you believe is in immediate danger, try to keep him or her on the line while you or someone else calls 911.



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- Ask if there is someone nearby who could offer support and keep talking to the individual until help arrives. Remember, there is no one “fix,” and no single person or organization can prevent suicide alone.

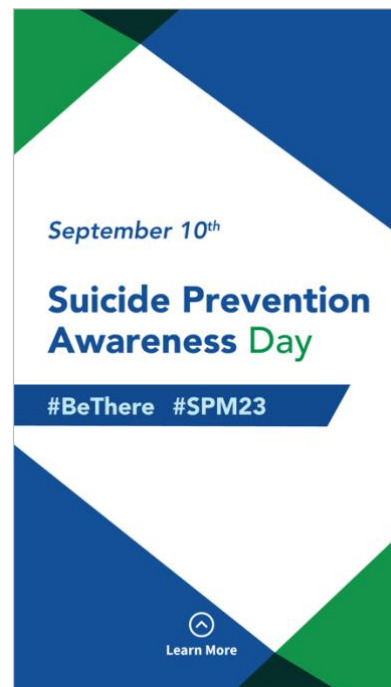
Tools:

SPM Social Media Tools

Date	Post	Graphic
	<p>Help us spread suicide prevention awareness by using our 2023 Facebook frame. Use Facebook to upload your photo and update your Facebook profile photo with the image: https://www.facebook.com/defense.suicideprevention</p>	
	<p>Want to help us get the word out about suicide prevention this month? Use our Suicide Prevention Awareness Day Month Toolkit and share vital resources to help those in your community.</p> <p>https://www.dhs.gov/spm23</p> <p>#SPM23 #ConnectToProtect</p>	
	<p>Suicide Prevention is everyone's job! Thank to 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline getting help has gotten so much easier. Service members and veterans can access the Military and Veterans Crisis line by dialing 988 and pressing 2. It's that easy.</p>	

[Social Media Post Calendar:](#)

A calendar of suggested campaign posts for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram



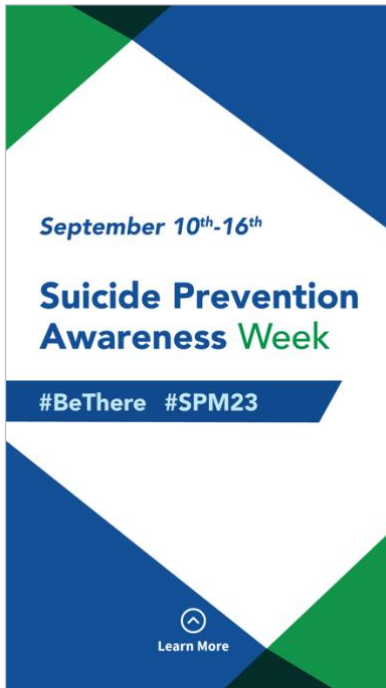
Social Media Story Graphics:

[Suicide Prevention Awareness Day Story](#)

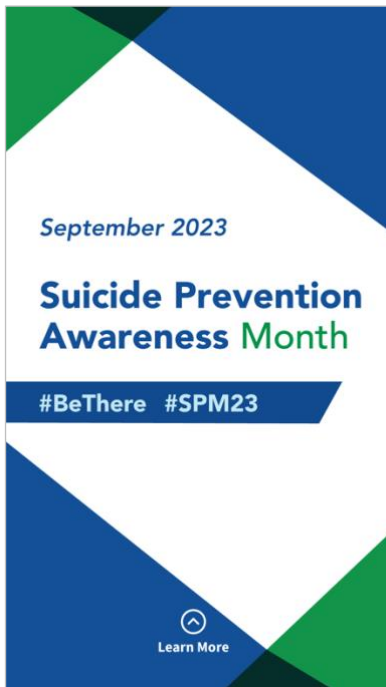


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Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Outreach Toolkit



[Suicide Prevention Awareness Week Story](#)



[Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Story](#)



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Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Outreach Toolkit



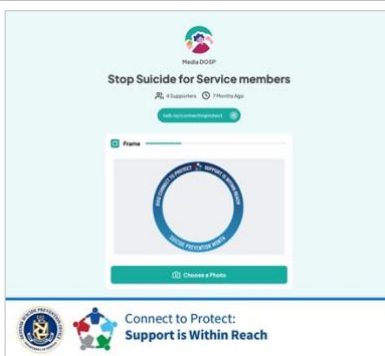
Facebook Post Graphic for Day: Include this graphic with your social media posts for Suicide Prevention Awareness Day for 10 September.



Facebook Post Graphic for Week: Include this graphic with any post throughout the week of September 10-16.



Facebook Post Graphic for Month: Include this graphic with any post throughout the month of September.



Facebook Photo Frame: Use the frame on Facebook and insert your own photo.



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Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Outreach Toolkit



Facebook Banner: Promote Suicide Prevention Awareness Month with a visual of the Connect to Protect message. Insert your own message above the banner.



Twitter Banner: The banner is available using Twitter graphic requirements.

SPM Sample Language Documents

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Sample PSA Script Language

Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach

The following Public Service Announcements (PSA) were created to assist local military installations and programs with language that amplifies the campaign message, **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach** during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.

30 PSA about the campaign: September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. This month, [Name of installation and program] is planning community events so our Service members know support is within reach. Our campaign **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach** addresses the importance of staying connected. [Name of installation and program] is focused on creating connections within our community to encourage helping, helping, and support. Find out about our events and resources at www.dod-local-program-website-dot-com. If you need help, call the Military and Veterans Crisis Line at 988 and press one or text 832825.

30 PSA on Lethal Means Safety: September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and [installation and program] want to take this time to remind everyone to secure their firearms and medications. Putting space and time between suicidal thoughts and the means to act can save a life. Store your firearms in a gun safe or secure them with a trigger cable. Medications should be stored in a safe, locked cabinet, or returned to a local pharmacy for safe disposal. **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach.**

30 PSA about the campaign: September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and [installation name and program] wants everyone to **Connect to Protect**. Our campaign **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach** promotes belonging and supportive relationships within our military community. Connecting with family, friends, and co-workers helps protect us from loneliness and gives us people we can count on during challenging times. Find a list of events, programs, and suicide prevention resources at Program website or DoS-CD-2024-01-11. If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call the Military and Veterans Crisis Line at 988 and press one or text 832825.

30 PSA on lethal means safety: Do you know that putting time and distance between suicidal thoughts and the means to act can save a life? Most military suicides happen by firearm. Please, this September, in recognition of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, secure your firearms in a gun safe or with a trigger lock. [You can add information on how to find a gun lock locally or request being them mailed.] Take your unused medication to a pharmacy for safe disposal and secure other medications in a locked cabinet. If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call the Military and Veterans Crisis Line at 988 and press one or text 832825. **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach.**

2023 SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH SAMPLE PSA SCRIPT LANGUAGE

Sample PSA: Announcement with language that highlights the purpose of Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach. Use the language in whole or in part for installation spokespeople. For release to local media.

DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE
Sample Press Release

The Department of Defense's Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Campaign, *Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach* Emphasizes Connection among Military Members and their Families.

Insert installation name and date: During September, the Department of Defense (DOD) recognizes Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. The Department's 2023 theme, **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach**, promotes connection and belonging to prevent suicide and encourages programming that supports the military community. As promoting hope, community, and care the DOD seeks to increase support and reduce suicide risk and death.

Insert installation promotes innovative programs and resources in the ongoing effort to foster support connections. (Highlight and promote local installation activities and resources.)

A Suicide Prevention Recognition ceremony for installations that exemplified creative programming for 2023-2022 will be held at the Pentagon tent of Heroes on September 6, 2023, and will recognize U.S. Army Garrison, Rheinland-Pfalz, Kaiserslautern, Germany, Coast Army National Guard, Marine Aircraft Group 12, Naval Special Warfare SUECOM, and ACC/10th Base Langley-Eustis. These installations met the challenge of tackling a difficult subject, reaching their installation audience, and making a significant impact. The month will continue with [Installation name and events with dates].

Finally, the Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Toolkit (visit www.dod-local-program-website-dot-com) and contains a variety of tools to promote suicide prevention, including social media frames and banners, a virtual meeting background, a poster, a suicide prevention pledge, and various guides for suicide prevention. Everyone is encouraged to utilize the tools and help promote Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and **Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach**.

"One life lost is too many. We invite everyone to join the **Connect to Protect** campaign by lending an ear and letting friends, family, and co-workers know they matter. Looking out for our military community, building onto the connection, and embracing hope is how we stay strong to one another during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month but all year long," says Dr. Li Chen, Director, Defense Suicide Prevention Office.

Service members and veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Service member or veteran in crisis, can call the Military and Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 988 and Press 1, text 832825, or chat online at www.dod-local-program-website-dot-com.

Any reference to non-federal entities and the appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute an endorsement of the United States Department of Defense of any organization, the linked websites, or the information, products, or services contained therein.

2023 SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

Sample Press Release: A press release with recommended campaign language. Use in whole or in part. It has space for a localized message. For release to local media.



DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Outreach Toolkit

DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE
Sample Blog/Newsletter Language

Connections Save Lives

When was the last time you reached out to someone and asked, "Are you ok?" A simple question can save a life. Taking a few minutes to make a connection can make a difference to someone experiencing a challenging time and significantly impact suicide prevention. Connecting with someone can remind them that they matter, that there is hope, and that they are not alone.

Connect to Protect: Support to Within Reach is the Department of Defense suicide prevention campaign for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month in September. It promotes the importance of connection and belonging and encourages reaching out for help.

As part of its suicide prevention efforts, the 2023 provides a variety of resources for the military community throughout the year. Knowing that connections, supportive relationships, and open communication help guard against suicide ideation, the resource focuses on helping Service members, veterans, and their families strengthen their social bonds. **Reach to Connect to Protect** fact sheet on [CDPR.mil](#) for more information about connections.

Another important aspect of this campaign focuses on lethal means safety and securing firearms and medications. Most military suicides occur by firearm. Storing a loaded firearm at home increases the risk of death by suicide four to six times. Putting time and distance between suicidal thoughts and the means to act can save a life.

Local installations/programs can include a list of their programs, events, and resources here, or include the following. It should be one or the other so that the blog is not too long!

As a community, we Connect to Protect because mental health matters. For more information and to help promote suicide prevention, go to [www.DSPD.mil](#).

In addition to mental health services available at the installation Medical Treatment Facility and through other support resources include:

- Chaplains are available through the workplace or on the military installation. The help you receive is confidential.
- Non-medical counseling is free and confidential through the Military and Family Life Counseling (MFLC) program. [Military Helpline](#) and installation-based non-medical counseling in some locations.
- The [Emergency and After-Hours Helpline](#) offers free and confidential help 24 hours a day, seven days a week by dialing 988 and pressing one, or by text [98888](#) and the text chat [www.dspd.mil/chat](#). Helpline is free and confidential. To reach the Crisis Line OCONUS:
 - In Europe, Call: 0080 1273 8255 or DSN 118
 - In Japan and Korea, Call: 080-855-5118 or DSN 118
 - In Afghanistan, Call: 001 800 278 8255 or DSN 111

2023 SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH SAMPLE BLOG/NEWSLETTER LANGUAGE

Sample Blog: Use recommended campaign language and add individual content. Use on a local website and written in a conversational style.

SPM Campaign Tools



Virtual Background: Use SPM background during virtual meetings. Directions on how to use the background: [Zoom](#) and [Teams](#).

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CAMPAIGN COLORS:

Primary Colors

 HEX: #0056B3 RGB: 0, 86, 179 CMYK: 100/50/0/0 PANTONE: 286-C	 HEX: #C00000 RGB: 192, 0, 0 CMYK: 100/100/0/0 PANTONE: 19-C	 HEX: #808080 RGB: 128, 128, 128 CMYK: 50/50/50/50 PANTONE: 42-C
 HEX: #A0C0F0 RGB: 160, 192, 240 CMYK: 50/30/100/0 PANTONE: 286-C	 HEX: #008040 RGB: 0, 128, 64 CMYK: 100/50/50/0 PANTONE: 349-C	

LOGO USE:

Please do not manipulate the Connect to Protect logo for any reason. Avoid adding special effects such as drop shadows, flares, or any other graphic design addition to the logo. The logo is to be used on all campaign materials and should maintain its relative integrity on all marketing and communications materials. Below are examples of how to properly apply the logo to your planned communications.

Connect to Protect: Support to Within Reach Campaign Style Sheet
Defense Suicide Prevention Office

Campaign Style Sheet: A sheet with the font and color palette for the Connect to Protect campaign. Includes logos in various forms and color scales.



DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Outreach Toolkit

Why Does Connection Matter?

Meaningful connection contributes to overall well being and allows us to live life to the fullest.

The Department of Defense is committed to creating an environment of social support and camaraderie for Service members and their families. Social isolation and loneliness are risk factors for depression, anxiety, suicidality, and self-harm behavior. Connection and belonging buffer that risk and ensure our lives are worth living.

Factors That Might Increase Risk of Social Isolation and Loneliness

- Feeling stress due to a lack of resources or help with financial, relationship, or mental health issues
- Being discriminated against
- Experiencing violence or abuse
- Going through life transitions like getting divorced, losing a job, or loss of a loved one

Keys to Building a Strong Connection to Your Community

- Take time to build strong relationships.
- Communicate openly and honestly.
- Build trust and respect by using inclusive language when talking to a loved one.

ABOUT THE CONNECT TO PROTECT: SUPPORT IS WITHIN REACH CAMPAIGN

Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach was launched in support of the Department's observance of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and the kick off to its annual communications campaign. It encourages leaders to help community members to recognize support is available. Data shows that leaders' messages can positively impact suicide risk. With that in mind, the Department is educating leaders on creating a supportive, inclusive, and healthy environment that encourages help-seeking.

WHAT DO I DO IF I KNOW SOMEONE IS IN CRISIS?

The Military Crisis Line (MCL) is a toll free, confidential, 24/7 resource, that connects Service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, and their family members with qualified, caring responders. The MCL is staffed by responders who understand the challenges of military life. The MCL is staffed by responders who understand the challenges of military life.

Resources:

- Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255
- Military Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255
- 24/7: Call 800 988 then Press 1
- Chat: www.MilitaryCrisisLine.net
- Toll: 800 988

The following resources have been identified as free numbers for active duty Service members:

- In Europe: Call 00800 1273 8255 or 030 120
- In Korea: Call 0080 100 120 or 010 120
- Other: Call support is available worldwide and internationally at www.MilitaryCrisisLine.net
- In an emergency, dial 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

Connect to Protect Fact Sheet: Explains what connectedness means and the purpose of the campaign. Great reference tool to get a feeling about messaging

Connect to Protect:
Support is Within Reach

September 2023

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

How You Can Help: Take a few minutes to listen and show that you care. It can save a life.

Realize There is Hope: Reach out for help. It is an act of courage.

Free and confidential help is available:

Veterans Crisis Line | **Military Crisis Line**
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

#ConnectToProtect
#BeThere

Find suicide prevention resources at:
www.dspo.mil/spm

SPM Posters (2 sizes): Motivational message of campaign theme with resources listed. Print out to hang in communal areas and offices.

SPM Poster (8.5 x 11)



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Connect to Protect:
Support is Within Reach

September 2023

Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

How You Can Help?

HOPE: Reach out for help. It is an act of courage.

COMMUNITY: Find what matters to you and get involved.

CARE: Take a few minutes to listen, connect and show you care. It can save a life.

Free and confidential help is available:

Veterans Crisis Line | **Military Crisis Line**
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

#ConnectToProtect
#BeThere

Find suicide prevention resources at:
www.dspo.mil/spm

[SPM Poster \(8.5 x 14\)](#)

SUICIDE PREVENTION PLEDGE

Together we can make a difference in suicide prevention. Let's promise to #ConnectToProtect by taking the pledge and encouraging others to do the same. The pledge is a promise toward a plan of action for suicide prevention.

I will:

- Look out for my family, friends, and fellow Service members by checking on them and asking, "Are you okay? How can I help?"
- Understand that asking for help when things get difficult is a sign of strength.
- Secure my firearms and medications and encourage others to do the same.
- Find the people, activities and interests that matter to me in my community and get involved.
- Leverage my faith in uncertain times and speak to a chaplain who will listen with compassion and confidentiality.
- Reject drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism.
- Reduce stress by taking care of myself with healthy eating, exercising, and getting enough sleep.
- Help someone who is being bullied or harassed.
- Learn about and use the mental health, prevention and crisis resources that are available to me and others.

I pledge to make it my mission to #ConnectToProtect for myself and others to help prevent suicide.

[SPM Pledge:](#) Asks people to think about and dedicate themselves to suicide prevention behaviors and look out for their community.



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Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Outreach Toolkit

SPM Guides



Leaders Safe Messaging Guide: A guide for military and community leaders to help reduce suicide risk, including how to use inclusive language that encourages help-seeking behavior.

LETHAL MEANS SAFETY GUIDE FOR MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES



Lethal Means Safety Guide for Military Service Members and Their Families: The guide provides the military community with ways to control and secure lethal means safety and explains its importance.

DEFENSE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICE

Your Words Matter: Choosing Words That Support



Your Words Matter is a national campaign that calls for the end of stigmatizing or negative language when addressing mental health. This new approach is integral for suicide prevention. Words hold power and using supportive terms can create connection and encourage individuals to seek support when they need it. Avoiding language that carries stigma is something we all can do to help those for whom and whose an important step in suicide prevention.

HOW TO HELP

- Avoid using harmful or negative terms and phrases. Encourage/Challenge. Contact others to use the proper terms.
- Create a safe space for sharing and receive a feeling of connection by using respectful terms and encourage help-seeking behavior by offering information and resources about crisis services such as the National Crisis Line, Military Crisis Line, and the 24-hour suicide watch at Military OneSource.
- Share stories of hope and recovery through help-seeking and positive coping skills. Recovery stories can be powerful, especially when they come from trusted individuals such as family, friends, peers in the military, leaders, chaplains, and other sources of support.

INSTEAD OF	SAY	WHY
Failed suicide attempt	Suicide attempt	Suicide is not something to attempt or fail.
Mental defect or disorder	Mental health condition	Defect and disorder mean there is something "wrong" or "negative" about the person.
Internal/external behavior	Internal/external behavior	Internal/external behavior is a neutral description of the person and not a judgment about the person's character or behavior.
Suffering from	Experiencing with	The word "suffering" can pain someone as a result.
Committed suicide	Completed a suicide attempt	Completed is a negative word that evokes guilt or religious connotations.
Mental institution	Behavioral health services	Behavioral health services is a neutral term that evokes a positive health outcome.

Use language that acknowledges the person first and not the condition:

INSTEAD OF	SAY
Person with suicidal ideation	Person with suicidal thoughts
Person with mental health condition	Person with a mental health condition
Person with substance use disorder	Person experiencing a substance use disorder
Person with schizophrenia	Person with schizophrenia
Person with bipolar disorder	Person with bipolar disorder



Your Words Matter Fact Sheet: The importance of using inclusive language is one of the important components of suicide prevention. This sheet explains to people how and why using the correct words is important. It also includes examples.