



COMMANDER'S CALL TALKING POINTS

October 2020



The Key to Positive Culture? Connectedness

Connection to others is a basic human need. Recognizing the importance of connection and fostering an environment where genuine relationships and open communication can flourish creates trust and security with your Airmen and Space Professionals — two requirements needed for a positive culture. Here are some ways to use your leadership role and improve connections with your Airmen and their caregivers:

- ✧ Talk to your Airmen and encourage them to speak to their families and caregivers about topics related to Mental Illness Awareness Week and Health Literacy Month
- ✧ Provide information and resources to decrease gaps in health literacy between health care providers and your Airmen
- ✧ During interactions with your Airmen, highlight the valuable role that the caregivers have in an Airman's support system

Mental Illness Awareness Week: Oct. 4 – 10

Nearly one in every five U.S. adults experience mental illness.¹ The high-pressure jobs that men and women in the armed forces hold can make them susceptible to mental illness, with military suicide rates reaching an all-time high in recent years. Twenty-five Airmen died by suicide in the first quarter of 2020.²



During [Mental Illness Awareness Week](#) talk to your Airmen and Space Professionals about their mental health. Topics for discussion include: [how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected resiliency](#) and why it's important for mental health conditions to receive the same urgency, importance, and support as physical health conditions.

The Value of Easy-to-Understand Health Information

Taking care of one's mental and physical health and resiliency should be part of everyday life, not just when going to the doctor, clinic, or hospital. October is Health Literacy Month, with the goal to provide health information in a simple way so that Airmen and their caregivers can make informed decisions and be effective health care team members.³

When it comes to invisible wounds, health literacy means providing easy-to-understand information on how to recognize and understand the signs and symptoms of invisible wounds, what treatment options are available, and how to find resources and support. Additionally, knowing when and how to describe symptoms accurately and honestly to a health care professional is a critical component of recovery. Share the [Invisible Wounds Fact Sheet](#) for a comprehensive list of resources and the signs and symptoms of invisible wounds.



Supporting Caregivers and Families

Family members and caregivers are some of the most influential people in an Airman's support system and should be considered when thinking about your Unit's health. These hidden heroes experience their own challenges and sacrifices in support of the Total Force, especially those whom are supporting Airmen with invisible wounds.

As leaders, it's important for you to demonstrate appreciation for caregivers and provide them with information and resources

they need to stay resilient. The [Taking Action as a Caregiver Fact Sheet](#) is one resource that you can share that highlights invisible wounds health topics for caregivers.

Resources

MILITARY ONE SOURCE

Military One Source
Find a [list of DoD resources and support options](#) related to specific mental health conditions.



Department of Defense
Visit the [Caregiver Resource Directory](#) for information on commonly referenced resources, organizations, agencies, and programs.



Air Force Personnel Center

Access information on the [U.S. Air Force Key Spouse Program](#), the [Airman & Family Readiness Division](#), and relevant resources for families and caregivers.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA's National Caregiver Support Line (CSL)

Call 1-855-260-3274 Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. ET, to speak to a licensed professional for immediate assistance and/or information and eligibility on different caregiver support options.

¹ National Alliance on Mental Illness. <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/NAMI-You-Are-Not-Along-FINAL.pdf>

² Department of Defense Quarterly Suicide Report, 2020. https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/QSR_CY2020_Q1.pdf

³ Military Health Systems Communication Toolkit, Monthly Topics October. September 2020.