

Policy Letter #7 Suicide Prevention

ATOE-DNC-CU

16 JUN 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR CAMPBELL BATTALION CADRE AND CADETS

SUBJECT: Policy Letter #7, Suicide Prevention

1. In and around the military, there are times when service members, cadets and families are put in stressful situations. The leadership of this battalion must always be aware of these stresses and how to assist every Soldier and Cadet in this command. Life is precious. We must always be cognizant of the signs and symptoms of suicide contemplation and what to do if it is noticed.
2. The attached checklists are guides to identify suicidal tendencies and what steps to take if symptoms are present.
3. Whenever the behavior of someone indicates suicidal tendencies are present, it is your moral and military obligation to bring it to the attention of the chain of command and to assist whenever and however possible.
4. POC for this policy is the undersigned at (910) 893-1582.

Policy Letters #7a, Suicide Tendency Checklist

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Suicide Tendency Checklist

Verbalizations:

- Makes vague statements about how things look hopeless
- Are obsessed with death, talking about it frequently, listens to sad music or poetry
- Says they are a burden to others
- Talks about dying
- Talks about himself or herself as a failure

Behaviors:

- Poor personal appearance
- Talks slowly and with difficulty
- Shows trouble concentrating
- Doesn't work as well as he or she used to
- Seems either slowed down or hyper
- Withdrawn from friends or are already loners
- Abuses alcohol or drugs
- Adopts a daredevil attitude
- Has made a suicide plan or threat
- Has lost interest in things he or she used to enjoy
- Acquires a means with which to commit suicide

Life History:

- Has had friends or family member that has committed suicide
- Has tried to commit suicide in the past
- Has lost a parent, child, close family member or close friend
- Has unstable social relationships
- Has been impulsive in the past

Policy Letter #7b, What to Do...

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What to Do

In the event you suspect a person of contemplating suicide

1. **Take Threats Seriously**. Trust your suspicions. It is easy to predict suicidal behavior when a person exhibits most of the factors in the checklist. However, the warning signs from many people are very subtle. Something like telling a loved one “goodbye” instead of “good night” may be the only clue.
2. **Answer Cries for Help**. Once you are inclined to believe someone may be contemplating suicide, you can help in several ways. The most important thing is to not hesitate. It is better to offer help early and be incorrect than to regret not doing so later. The first step is to offer support, understanding and compassion, no matter what the problem.
3. **Confront the problem**. If you suspect that a person is suicidal, begin by asking questions such as, “are you feeling depressed?” or, “have you been thinking about hurting yourself?” Be direct. Don’t be afraid to discuss suicide with the person. Getting him or her to talk about it is a step in a positive direction. Be a good listener. Don’t make moral judgments, act shocked or make light of the situation. Making comments such as “you should be grateful for what you have,” or pointing out, “you have it much better than most” may only deepen the sense of guilt the person already feels. Instead, discuss these things in a broader sense and give the person the feeling that you and others actually care.
4. **Tell them YOU care**. Persons who attempt suicide most often feel alone, worthless and unloved. You can help by letting them know that he or she is not alone, that you are always there for them to talk to. Tell loved ones how much you care about them and offer you support and compassion. By assuring that person that some help is available, you are literally throwing him a lifeline. Remember, although a person may think he or she wants to die, he or she has an innate will to live and is hoping to be helped.
5. **Remove access to likely suicide tools**. Control access to weapons, medication or anything else he or she can use to commit suicide. This control should not be exhaustive and deliberately apparent, but means of impulsive serious self-harm should be monitored.
6. **Get Professional Help**. The most useful thing that you can do is to encourage that person who is considering suicide to get professional help immediately. If necessary, offer to go with or even take him or her to seek help. The Army community offers many sources of help such, as Mental Health Services, and the Hospital Emergency Room for immediate intervention. When danger is less immediate, the Family Life Center and the Chaplains Corp offer compassionate counseling and

services. Other sources of help include the Alcohol and Drug Counseling Centers, Army Community Services Center and the Chain of Command.

Policy Letter #7c, What Not to Do

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What NOT to Do

In the event you suspect a person of contemplating suicide

Do Not-Leave someone alone if you think the risk of suicide is imminent.

Do Not-Assume the person isn't the suicidal type. If in doubt, ask.

Do Not-Debate the morality of self-destruction or talk about how it may hurt others. This may induce more guilt.

Do Not-Keep it a secret. Tell someone immediately what you suspect including commander.

Do Not-Try to shock or challenge the person out of contemplation

Do Not-Analyze the person's motives for wanting to commit suicide

Do Not-Argue with the person