



# LIFELINK

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## DoD Announces Suicide Prevention Outreach Award

The Department of Defense (DoD) recently announced that Navy Information Operations Command (NIOC) Georgia has received the 2019 Suicide Prevention Month Outreach Recognition Award. The DoD's annual Suicide Prevention Month observance is a major national effort to expand suicide prevention and education during the month of September, and this award recognizes NIOC Georgia's implementation of an exceptional and innovative program.

Although the award is focused on one month of activities, for NIOC Georgia's Suicide Prevention Program Manager (SPPM), work to help Sailors is a 365-day a year effort that is all about connection.

"Just taking time to talk to someone and being willing to say the 's' word, that no one likes to say, can make a difference," said Senior Chief Petty Officer Gloriana Jensen. "We are creating an open environment where people can talk about suicide and get the help they need."

Jensen has been at NIOC Georgia since December 2018, but her work with suicide prevention precedes this assignment. At her previous station, she led the Indoctrination Command Training Program. In that role, she worked closely with the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC), as well as with other agencies. When a Sailor on base died by suicide, Jensen said she saw the impact on the community and on her peers and became determined to make a difference. The command didn't have a formal suicide prevention program, so Jensen decided to take initiative to start one.

"What I saw was that the pain and anguish doesn't change, no matter how we lose a Sailor," she said. "It affects everyone in so many ways. I just knew there had to be something we could do better."

Jensen dove into trainings and sought to learn as much as she could about suicide prevention. The experience from her previous work helped her revitalize NIOC Georgia's program when she was assigned there. For example, at NIOC GA, local behavioral health treatment facilities are limited. If a Sailor needs hospitalization for evaluation, they may have a three-hour ambulance ride. Watching the additional stress of traveling during a crisis "hurts," she said. Jensen made it a goal "to get as far to the left of this as possible," in order to get Sailors the help they need before things progress to hospitalization.

One of the innovations that the Command implemented is a Suicide Prevention Council that consists of the SPPM, Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPC), medical and chaplain representatives and the FFSC. Also key were education programs such as SafeTALK and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, Jensen said.



"We've seen a change in who our Sailors talk to. It's an open environment, which speaks to the command climate here," Jensen said. "People know we can talk about suicide with our peers and we don't have to whisper the 's' word, because almost everyone has had a personal interaction with suicide."

The development of a Suicide Prevention Advocate program was also a significant action at NIOC Georgia. These peer advocates receive training at the same level as SPCs to provide additional support to Sailors. "People sometimes feel like they can't help because they aren't qualified, when really just the fact that they're out and about on the deckplate means they are able to make a difference. Having these peer mentors out there is important," Jensen said.

During September Suicide Prevention Month 2019, the command organized a "Save Our Shipmates" (SOS) walk, as well. Sailors made life preservers and people were encouraged to write motivational chalk messages on the sidewalks around the command. "We asked people to come out and walk a few laps, and we made sure no one walked alone. It was a way to pledge to always be there for each other," Jensen said.

NIOC GA's Commanding Officer, Capt. William J. Kramer Jr., said, "I'm extremely impressed with the initiative by SCPO Jensen and all of the Sailors at our command who have stepped up to be Suicide Prevention Advocates. The additional support provided by our SPAs, at the deckplate level, shows the commitment and care that our Sailors have for their fellow shipmates. That 'one team, one fight' attitude is truly inspiring to witness."



## Lifelink Spotlight

### Fleet and Family Services Still Open for Business over Phone, Web

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) has found a way to continue supporting Sailors and families while maintaining physical distancing.

Although Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC) at Navy installations have temporarily closed their doors, they remain open for business – virtually and through teleconferences.

“We are still offering numerous services to our customers though telehealth, online training, webinars and numerous other virtual services,” said Shauna Turner, director of CNIC’s family readiness division. “The CNIC family readiness professionals are still providing services that are only a phone call or a mouse click away.”

FFSCs are currently offering telehealth, non-medical services over the phone instead of face-to-face counseling. For telehealth services, customers can call their local FFSC to schedule an appointment or for more information.

Virtual classes include Live Well Resiliency webinars, which offer participants with tips, tools and resources to support the Navy lifestyle. Webinars are open to all Sailors and family members. Webinars are scheduled each month with each webinar lasting about an hour and a half. Register for the webinars [here](#).

Another helpful online resource is CNIC’s [Navy Spouse Navigation webpage](#), which serves as a one-stop-shop of information and other helpful resources for specifically for Navy spouses. From the page, users can find quick links to various Navy and federal programs, such as the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS), Navy Exchange and the Navy App Locker.

The CNIC’s Navy Spouse Navigation webpage also includes links to the coronavirus-related information and the latest updates from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

To find the information you need and more, visit the [FFSP website](#).

## Lifelink Transition to The Navigator

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sailor Office is launching The Navigator, a newsletter that will provide access to resources and important updates from each of the N17 programs, including Suicide Prevention, in an effort to move us all towards a Culture of Excellence. There is an increasing need to integrate our messaging with other program-specific information that is relevant for all of Lifelink’s readers and CRT members.

You will begin receiving The Navigator in place of Lifelink, with an estimated launch in late May to early June. Each issue will contain important Suicide Prevention Program information and updates; however, on a condensed scale. We hope The Navigator meets all of your needs and encourage feedback at any time.

## Plan of the Week Notes

*Below are sample Plan of the Week notes aligning with topics covered by the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign during the month of May:*

1. SAIL boosts the resources available to Sailors and provides additional support to commands to help reintegrate Sailors after a suicide-related behavior (SRB). Many Sailors prefer a caring contact from outside the command and appreciate the anonymity and support from a voice not inside the “skin of the ship.” Learn more: [https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/hq/pdfs/n91\\_fleet\\_and\\_family\\_support\\_program/family\\_advocacy/SAIL\\_CDR\\_Toolkit-18-WEB-04%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/hq/pdfs/n91_fleet_and_family_support_program/family_advocacy/SAIL_CDR_Toolkit-18-WEB-04%20(1).pdf)
2. Psychological and emotional wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak are important to address. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. Coping with stress will make you, your loved ones and your community stronger. Check out ways to take care of yourself and your community from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
3. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and cultivating a healthy work-life balance is key to navigating the stress of Navy life. The idea of work-life balance may seem at odds with the duties of a U.S. Navy Sailor—when the Navy calls, Sailors answer. Unpredictable schedules, lengthy hours and assignments away from home are some of the many challenges Sailors face. However, there are ways to optimize your own work-life balance, no matter what your job in the Navy. Learn more: <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2019/05/13/mental-health-month-finding-work-life-balance-in-the-navy/>
4. May is Physical Fitness Month. One of the best ways to alleviate stress is through exercise. Break a sweat with a challenging total body workout from the Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System (NOFFS) that can also be utilized in a confined space environment with limited equipment: <https://www.navyfitness.org/fitness/noffs-training/operational-series/downloads>
5. Psychological health concerns and crises deserve just as much attention as physical health concerns, illness or disease. There is 24/7 support available from the Military Crisis Line: <http://www.militarycrisisline.net>

## News and Resources

inTransition Teams Up with  
Veterans Crisis Line  
[Health.mil](#)

Panic Attacks and Night  
Terrors: The Mental Health Toll  
of Coronavirus  
[Suicide Prevention Resource  
Center](#)

Adapting Safety Plans to a  
Socially-Distanced Society  
[Psychological Health Center of  
Excellence](#)

Suicide Mortality and  
Coronavirus Disease 2019: A  
Perfect Storm?  
[Journal of the American Medical  
Association](#)

Treating Suicidal Patients  
During COVID-19: Best  
Practices and Telehealth  
[Suicide Prevention Resource  
Center](#)

Inpatient Care to Outpatient  
Care: Best Practices in Care  
Transitions for Individuals with  
Suicide Risk  
[National Action Alliance](#)

Coping with the Stress of  
Social Distancing  
[Health.mil](#)

A Guide to Staying Resilient in  
Times of Crisis  
[Human Performance Resources by  
Champ](#)

Call for Submissions: Novel  
Approaches to Suicide  
Prevention  
[Suicide Prevention Resource  
Center](#)

## Current and Upcoming Events

**Mental Health Awareness  
Month**  
May

## SPC Training Webinars

May 7, 8AM, CDT  
May 21, 10AM CDT  
[Register here](#)

## SAIL Referrals Decreasing during COVID-19

Last month, there was a significant decrease in the **SAIL referral rate**. There is concern that commands are not submitting referrals due to the COVID-19 crisis. Now more than ever, the Navy Suicide Prevention Program is encouraging commands and Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs) to continue submitting SAIL referrals following instances of suicide-related behaviors (SRBs). SAIL services are critical during this crisis and commands must continue to submit referrals. Due to COVID-19 operations, caring contacts have transitioned from in-person contacts to telephonic contacts, but SAIL Case Managers are still standing by to assist Sailors.

Sailors sometimes do not speak up about their feelings of hopelessness or emotional distress prior to an SRB because they fear judgement and other negative perceptions. The Navy created the SAIL Program to provide a support network that assists Sailors in navigating resources. **Participation in SAIL initiates a series of caring contacts during the first 90 days after an SRB to ensure the Sailor has ongoing resources and support.** SAIL is not therapy and does not replace therapy or the care the Sailor may receive from medical and chaplains. It is risk assessment, safety planning and a link to all the additional resources that Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) offers to support our Sailors.

**The SAIL Program launches into action when a command notifies their SPC when an SRB occurs.** The SPC then contacts the Navy Suicide Prevention Program, which forwards the Sailor's information to Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC). CNIC contacts the appropriate FFSC Case Manager, who first reaches out to the command, and then reaches out to the Sailor to offer SAIL. SAIL case managers help Sailors understand, choose and engage with resources they need. Sailors are empowered to strengthen their **coping skills** throughout the process.

Although risk factors associated with SRBs do not cause or predict suicide, several relate to social connection:

- Lack of social support and sense of isolation
- Loss of relationship or significant personal loss
- Feeling like a burden to others, helplessness

If you hold a leadership position, be sure to **actively listen** to your Sailors with the intent to understand, not just respond. After someone experiences an SRB, one of the most important things they need is support. Support from **leadership** is critical at this time. Remaining transparent with others in discussing thoughts of suicide or other forms of self-harm openly promotes help-seeking behavior. Facilitating **positive** and ongoing dialogue around stress helps empower proactive self-care.

**Psychological health** is just as critical to readiness as physical health. Feeling connected to others can help reduce the isolation of suicidal thoughts, which often stem from a desire to stop intense pain rather than a desire to die. Leaders at all levels of the Navy contribute to their shipmates' understanding of resources and command climate. Whether you're a deckplate leader, front-line supervisor or commander, **investing in relationships** with your team through mentorship and other forms of social connection helps create an environment where all Sailors feel heard and **valued**. We all play a part in creating a **supportive environment** where those who need help have the courage to seek help and feel heard.

To learn more about the SAIL Program and access additional resources for leaders, visit [this website](#).

If you or someone you know is in need of immediate assistance, the Military Crisis Line is available 24/7. Call 1-800-273-8255 (Option 1), text 838255 or visit [www.militarycrisisline.net](#) for free and confidential support.