

Fort Hood Soldiers have many resources to combat suicide
By Brandy Gill, CRDAMC PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas - For past generations, suicide was a taboo topic in open conversations. People may have talked about it behind their hands, or whispered about it at family events, but it was hardly ever addressed in the open.

However, times have changed and so has the perception of those who seek help because they are struggling with thoughts of doing harm to themselves, especially in the Army. The change in how people view suicide has resulted in a new war the Army has chosen to fight – preventing suicide.

Col. Patrick D. Sargent, commander of Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center, says it's normal for Soldiers to have feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, frustration, anger, and sadness. "But thoughts about suicide are a sign of a serious problem. Don't ignore or hide your feelings, seek help, let us help you prevent something tragic."

Preventing suicide may not seem like a war the Army needs to wage, but according to the Department of Defense website in July of this year, there were 22 potential suicides among active duty Soldiers and 10 potential suicides among reserve component Soldiers.

Three of those deaths have been officially ruled as suicides and the rest are still under investigation the website stated, but for a nation at war, even one suicide is one too many, Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, vice chief of staff of the Army, said.

"Every suicide represents a tragic loss to our Army and the nation. While the high number of potential suicides in July is discouraging, we are confident our efforts aimed at increasing individuals' resiliency while reducing incidence of at-risk and high-risk behavior across the force, are having a positive impact," he said.

To improve resiliency and reduce the incidence of suicide for Fort Hood Soldiers, Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center's Resilience and Restoration Center (R&R Center) wants Soldiers to be aware of the many services available, especially Soldiers with thoughts of harming themselves.

"If a Soldier feels he or she is at risk, the R&R Center should be their first stop," Lt. Col. Sharette Gray, CRDAMC's chief of behavioral health, said.

Gray added that Soldiers don't ignore physical problems because being physically fit is important to their jobs. "Being mentally fit is even more important in the overall fitness of Soldiers," Gray said.

"Any Soldier who feels like they are considering suicide should come into our clinic. We are here for them, we do everything we can to help them," Gray added.

Soldiers who come to the center on their own or are brought in by friends or members of their unit are first triaged, a process that determines the seriousness of their condition. A treatment plan is developed to fit the needs of the Soldier. The treatment plan may involve counseling by a psychologist, drug therapy from a psychiatrist, family counseling with a social worker, treatment for alcohol or drug addiction, or even financial counseling.

“Tragically, we’ve seen that Soldiers attempt suicides for various reasons,” said Col. Patrick Sargent, commander of CRDAMC. “Numerous deployments, financial problems, drug and alcohol addiction, difficulties at work, family dynamics, everything impacts a Soldier’s relationship with the Army, family and friends. Regrettably, these reasons aren’t worthy of taking a precious life,” Sargent added.

Sargent wants every Soldier and Family member at Fort Hood to know that Darnall has programs and services to support them.

“There is no problem that is so tough that we can’t help resolve,” Sargent says. “Each Soldier is different and therefore, we must treat each one with care and compassion. Treatment helps Soldiers build confidence and self-esteem,” he added.

Most Soldiers can be treated on an out-patient basis, which means they can remain in their units and attend regular appointments with their care provider. When it is necessary to hospitalize a Soldier with a severe condition, he or she may be admitted to CRDAMC or to a civilian treatment center.

If a Soldier should receive inpatient treatment at an off-post treatment center, nurse case managers make frequent contacts with facility liaisons to check on the Soldier’s progress and to ensure appropriate care will be available after being released, according to Martha Belton, a nurse case manager at the R&R Center.

“We have good working relationships with all the local treatment centers. We get regular updates and talk to the Soldier’s provider as well,” she said. “Our goal is to ensure continuity of care. We want to make the process easier so Soldiers and their families have peace of mind when they leave a treatment facility.”

Belton explained that after leaving an inpatient treatment center, a Soldier is followed by a case manager from the R&R Center. The Soldier is included in group weekly assessments until an appointment is made with a provider who continues with the Soldier’s long term care.

Belton said as a nurse case manager she and her counterparts don’t just manage a Soldier’s behavioral or mental health care, they also provide assistance in many areas affecting the Soldier’s wellbeing.

“If the Soldier needs assistance with the chain of command we can help, and if the Soldier consents, we will talk to their Family members and share our many resources with them, too,” she said.

“We are constantly checking, rechecking, and checking again until the Soldier no longer needs behavioral health care services, Gray said. “Before we close any case file we always check to make sure the Soldier is doing alright.”

Sometimes behavioral health care and nurse case management is a thankless job, but providers at CRDAMC don’t mind because they love what they do, according to Gray.

“This isn’t just an everyday job. It touches us because we know we have made a difference in someone’s life,” she said. “We help them move past that dark place and get their lives back.”

Checking on Soldiers at risk for suicide is not just the providers’ job, Sargent says. “It’s something every Soldier must do in order to combat suicide – watch out for your buddies.

“Always remember, you are not alone. We ask that you remember ACE – Ask, Care, Escort. Watching out for one another is what makes the Army a family,” Sargent said.

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Side Bar:

If you or someone you know is considering suicide, The R&R Center is open for walk-in healthcare during normal duty hours in building 36009 behind CRDAMC, or you can call (254) 285-6881. After regular duty hours, on weekends or holidays or go directly to the CRDAMC Emergency Department for immediate assistance.

Resources

Talk to Someone:

Vets4Warriors	1-855-Vet-Talk (1-855-838-8255)
Military One Source	1-800-342-9647
National Suicide Hotline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Deployment Stress Hotline	1-254-535-4497
Fort Hood Chaplains Crisis Line	1-254-287-2427

Online Services:

TRICARE Assistance Program Services (Humana Military Healthcare Services, Inc. 1-800-444-5445, www.humana-military.com or TRICARE South Behavioral Health: 1-800-700-8646)

TRICARE Telemental Health program www.tricare.mil/telementalhealth

Family Matters:

CRDAMC Child and Adolescent Psychology 1-254-288-8731

Social Work Service 1-254-288-6474

Marriage & Family Therapy 1-254-288-2605

Family Violence Hotline/Advocacy 1-254-286-6774

There are also several other options available for those who are not in crisis but need someone to talk to. Ask your primary care provider about available resources including a consult for care, Military One Source, TRICARE Assistance Program (TRIAP) or local or online support groups. For more information on services, resources or where to go for help visit the Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center website at [CRDAMC Behavioral Health Resources](#) or the Humana Military website at [Humana Military Resources](#).

CUTLINES

Martha Belton, a CRDAMC nurse case manager at the Resilience and Restoration Center, talks with a Soldier about suicide prevention and care that is available at the medical center. The R&R Center provides assistance to any service member in the Fort Hood area who is struggling with thoughts of suicide. (Photo by Brandy Gill, CRDAMC PAO.)

The staff at the CRDAMC Resilience and Restoration Center helps Soldiers with all aspects of behavioral health care from setting up appointments, to inpatient treatment, to finding long-term services. The R&R Center is located in building 36009 behind the hospital. Walk-ins are welcome. (Photo by Brandy Gill, CRDAMC PAO).