



# Understanding Military Culture

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## Learning Objectives/Agenda

- Identify each branch of service, mission and core values of each branch
- Cultural Competency as it applies to the Warrior Culture of the Military
- Oklahoma National Guard-specifics
- Behavioral Health Concerns in the Military
- Suicide Prevention in the Military
- Military Culture Resources
- Military Suicide Prevention Resources



## *Military service is not a job, it's a lifestyle*

- Culture: knowledge, experience, values, idea, attitudes, skills, tastes and techniques that are passed on from more experienced members of a community to new members
  - Ceremony, ethics, health and medicine, myths, gender roles, gestures, grooming and presence, recreation, relationships, rewards, and privileges



## Who are We?

- Structure & Branches
  - Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard
  - Each branch has a mission, motto and core values
  - Not everyone is a soldier!
- AC (Active Component) vs. RC (Reserve)/NG (National Guard)
  - Full time vs. “weekend warrior”
  - OKNG has more than 10,000 members
    - OKARNG (Army) /OKANG (Air)
  - “Always Ready, Always There”



## Why the Services Can't Work Together

*One reason the Services have trouble operating jointly is that they don't speak the same language.*

- For example, if you told Navy personnel to “secure a building,” they would turn off the lights and lock the doors.
- Army personnel would occupy the building so no one could enter.
- Marines would assault the building, capture it, and defend it with suppressive fire and close combat.
- The Air Force, on the other hand, would take out a three-year lease with an option to buy.





## U.S. Army Values

- Loyalty: Bear trust, faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other soldiers
- Duty: Fulfill your obligations
- Respect: Treat people as they should be treated
- Selfless Service: Put the welfare of the nation, The Army, and your subordinates before your own
- Honor: Live up to all the Army values
- Integrity: Do what's right, legally and morally
- Personal Courage: Face fear, danger, and adversity (physical or moral)



## The Soldier's Creed

- I am an American Soldier
- I am a warrior and a member of a team
- I serve the people of the United States, and live the Army Values
- *I will always place the mission first*
- *I will never accept defeat*
- *I will never quit*
- I will never leave a fallen comrade
- *I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills*
- *I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself*
- I am an expert and I am a professional
- *I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat*
- I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life
- I am an American Soldier



## What is a Veteran?

- A Veteran is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount of up to and including their life



# Today's Military Population

- Proud Men & Women, who volunteered to serve their nation
  - Difficult population to ask for and accept help
  - *Selfless service*
- 2 million+ currently serving in the military
- 1.6 million+ deployments since 9/11
- 33,000+ deployed from Oklahoma since 9/11
- 1 in 4 Americans have a connection to the Military
- Most of us know someone who has been injured or killed
- 30% coming home from deployments with PTSD, TBI or depression
- Nearly half have experienced multiple deployments
- Psychological issues rise with repeated deployments

*Army One Source Fact Sheet*



## OKARNG

- Who is the Oklahoma Army National Guard/OKARNG?
  - 87% male
  - Age: **Under 27, 49%**, 27-37, 29%, 38+ 22%
  - OKARNG soldiers are in all 77 counties in Oklahoma
  - Most have deployed
  - Medically ready soldiers for foreign and domestic operations



## Cultural Incompetency?

- Equal employment
  - Gender, Disability, Age, Pregnancy
- Freedoms
- Mental/Behavioral Health Recovery
- People First Language?

*Please don't get caught up in semantics*

*Please don't worry about offending us*



## Females in the Military

- Male dominated population
  - 15% female
- Violence
  - Engage and destroy America's enemies
  - Violence is trained and desensitized
  - Dehumanize the enemy
- Changing military culture with combat roles
- Female service members and veterans
  - *Homefront* by Kristin Hannah



## Why Can't Everyone Go To the VA?

- Not all service members are eligible for VA services
- Difficulties with VA Medical Center
- VA and Vet Centers are important partners in continuum of care



## A Few Items to Remember

- Express thanks, not sorrow, when discussing upcoming/past deployments
- Individuals need support, regardless of support for/against war/President
- Service members are skilled at telling you what we think you want to hear





# Most Common Behavioral Health Issues

- Adjustment Disorder
- TBI
- Depression
- Moral injury
- PTSD
  - DSM-5 included in new chapter on Trauma- and Stress-or-Related Disorders, instead of anxiety disorder
  - PTS/PTSI
- Substance Abuse
  - A study of army soldiers screened 3 to 4 months after returning from deployment to Iraq showed that **27% met criteria for alcohol abuse and were at increased risk for related harmful behaviors.**
  - **Prescription drug abuse doubled among U.S. military personnel from 2002 to 2005 and almost tripled between 2005 and 2008.**
    - Opiates and Benzodiazepines
- ALL exacerbated by Family and/or Economic Stressors



## Suicide in the Military

- More than half of military suicides have a firearm in the home or immediate living environment
- According to a Veterans Affairs report this spring, a service member or veteran commits suicide every 62 minutes.
  - 23 per day
  - Most likely underreported for those who have discharged
- **Oklahoma Army National Guard has 18 soldiers to suicide and 19 KIAs since 9/11**
  - All male, 17 enlisted
  - 15 27>
  - 9 deployed, 0 multiple deployments



I wasn't strong enough

*I am a failure*

I should have been the one who died, not...

I didn't do enough, I should have done more

I am a bad person because I killed ....

I should have been able to stop what was going  
on around me

I don't deserve to feel happy

Even when I know I'm safe, I still feel in danger

I have no control over these memories/behavior, I'm  
losing it!

I can't trust anyone anymore; never let your guard down

If I get close to someone I'll hurt them

My family won't accept the person I've become

**Irrational, typical  
thoughts and  
beliefs of  
Returning  
Veterans**



## Perspectives from Veterans

- “The True Cost of Blind Patriotism: Despair and Veteran Suicide”

(McNulty, 2014, <http://www.buffingtonpost.com/william-mcnulty/the-true-cost-of-blind-patriotism-4590912.html>)

- Despair vs. Depression
- Despair is a fundamental lack of hope and complete inability to see meaning in life
- Sense that so much of one’s life was given for so little purpose
- There are many depressed people who are not suicidal
- Sense of being outnumbered and isolated
- Healthy mind and body
- Continued service
- Involvement

- “A Veteran's Suicide on *60 Minutes*: Lessons Learned?”

(<http://www.buffingtonpost.com/joseph-bobrow/veteran-suicide-60-minutes-2849668.html>)

- Haunted—unprocessed traumatic residues, or ghosts, literally haunt and consume the present.
- No silver bullets/laundry lists to extinguish inner emotional pain



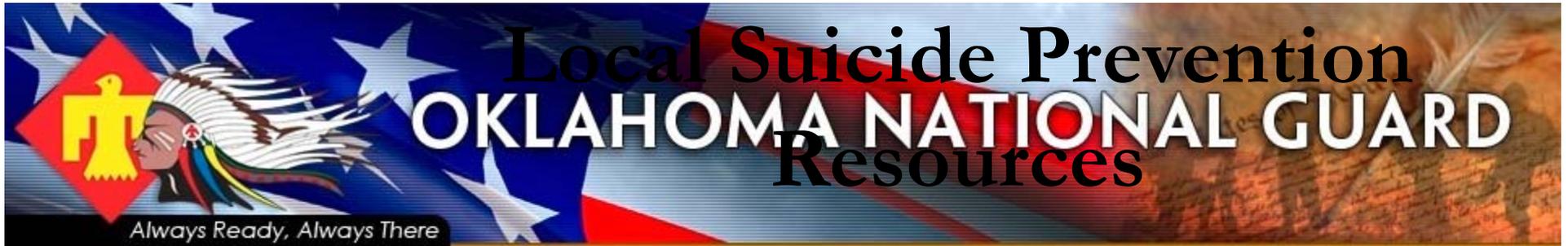
## Military Culture Resources

- Center for Deployment Psychology
  - <http://www.deploymentpsych.org/>
  - <http://www.essentiallearning.net/student/content/sections/Lectora/MilitaryCultureCompetence/index.html>
- Citizen Soldier Support Program
  - <http://www.citizensoldiersupport.org/>



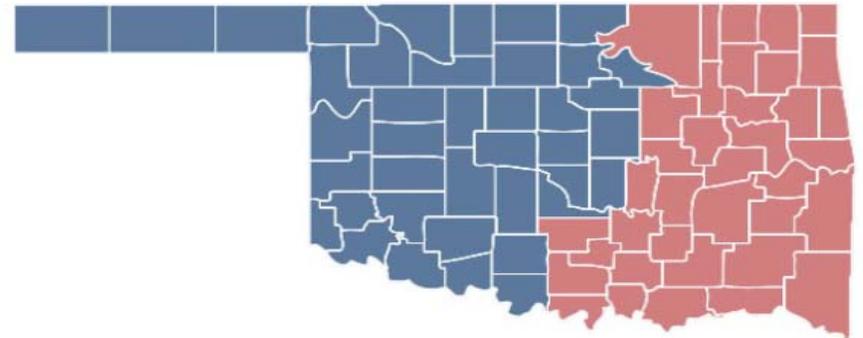
## Military Culture Resources

- National Center for PTSD (VA)
  - [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/professional/ptsd101/course-modules/military\\_culture.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/professional/ptsd101/course-modules/military_culture.asp)
- Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), Real Warriors Campaign
  - <http://www.realwarriors.net/healthprofessionals/militaryculture>



## Resources

- Directors of Psychological Health (DPH)
  - Vickie Kerlin LPC      405-365-0256      [vickie.l.kerlin.ctr@us.army.mil](mailto:vickie.l.kerlin.ctr@us.army.mil)
  - John Dixon              918-513-1992      [john.dixon@ngphp.com](mailto:john.dixon@ngphp.com)
- Chaplain 405-228-5167/5178



OKC HeartLine 2-1-1  
877-362-1606

Tulsa 2-1-1 Helpline  
877-836-2111

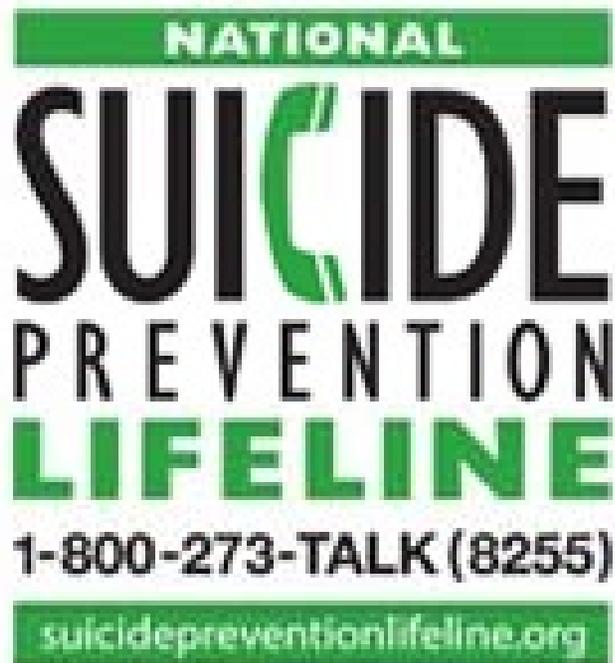
Easy-access system for information and referral to community services for those who need help and those who provide help.

**THIS IS NOT A CRISIS LINE!**



The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text.

Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, [chat online](#), or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

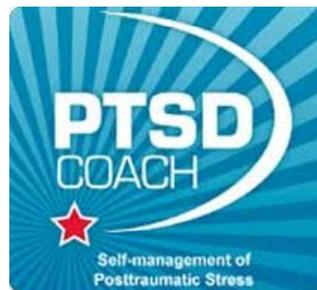




Free downloads to Iphone and Android systems, it is designed to:

- Encourage people to reach out for help when they are having suicidal thoughts.*
- Help those who are concerned about family members, spouses, or fellow service members who may be suicidal.*
- Provide a personal contact help center.*
- Provide activities to help people who are depressed stay connected to others.*

<http://militaryfamily.com/downloads/apps/military-suicide-prevention-operation-reach-out/>





# QUESTIONS?

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