

Headquarters U.S. Air Force

Integrity - Service - Excellence

AF Suicide Prevention Program



**Lt Col Michael Kindt
AFMOA/SGHW
AF Suicide Prevention Program
Manager**

U.S. AIR FORCE



U.S. AIR FORCE

Overview

- **Development of Current Program**
- **Results of Program Initiatives**
- **Current Data and Risk Factors**
- **Program Execution**
- **Recent Initiatives**



Preventing Suicide

- **Individual Level:**
 - *Crisis intervention model*
 - **Intervention & treatment at the point of crisis**
- **Community Level:**
 - *Public health model*
 - **Educate community on risk factors**
 - **Identification and referral of those at risk**



History of AF SPP

- **Implemented in 1997 by AF/CV task force**
 - **Embraced suicide prevention as organizational priority**
 - **Atmosphere of responsibility and accountability**
 - **Built upon existing organizational infrastructure & culture**
- **Clearly Articulated Vision:**
 - **Suicide prevention is a community responsibility**
 - **Leadership involvement essential for success**
 - **Affirm and encourage help-seeking behavior**
- **Prevention through early identification and intervention**
 - **Required widespread community knowledge & skills**
- **Organized around integrated system of 11 initiatives**
 - **Integrated network of policy and education**



Functional Components

U.S. AIR FORCE

- **Leadership**
 - **Role modeling**
 - **Agents of change**
- **Policy**
 - **Establish expectations for behavior**
- **Education**
 - **Develop skills & knowledge to meet expectations**
- **Surveillance**
 - **Track suicide and program related data to inform program**



U.S. AIR FORCE

AFSPP 11 Elements

- 1. Leadership Involvement**
- 2. Suicide Prevention in Professional Military Education**
- 3. CC's Guide for Managing Personnel in Distress**
- 4. Community Preventive Services**
- 5. Community Education and Training**
- 6. Investigative Interview Policy**
- 7. Critical Incident Stress Management**
- 8. Integrated Delivery System (IDS)**
- 9. Limited Privilege Suicide Prevention Program**
- 10. IDS Consultation Assessment Tool**
- 11. Suicide Event Surveillance System**



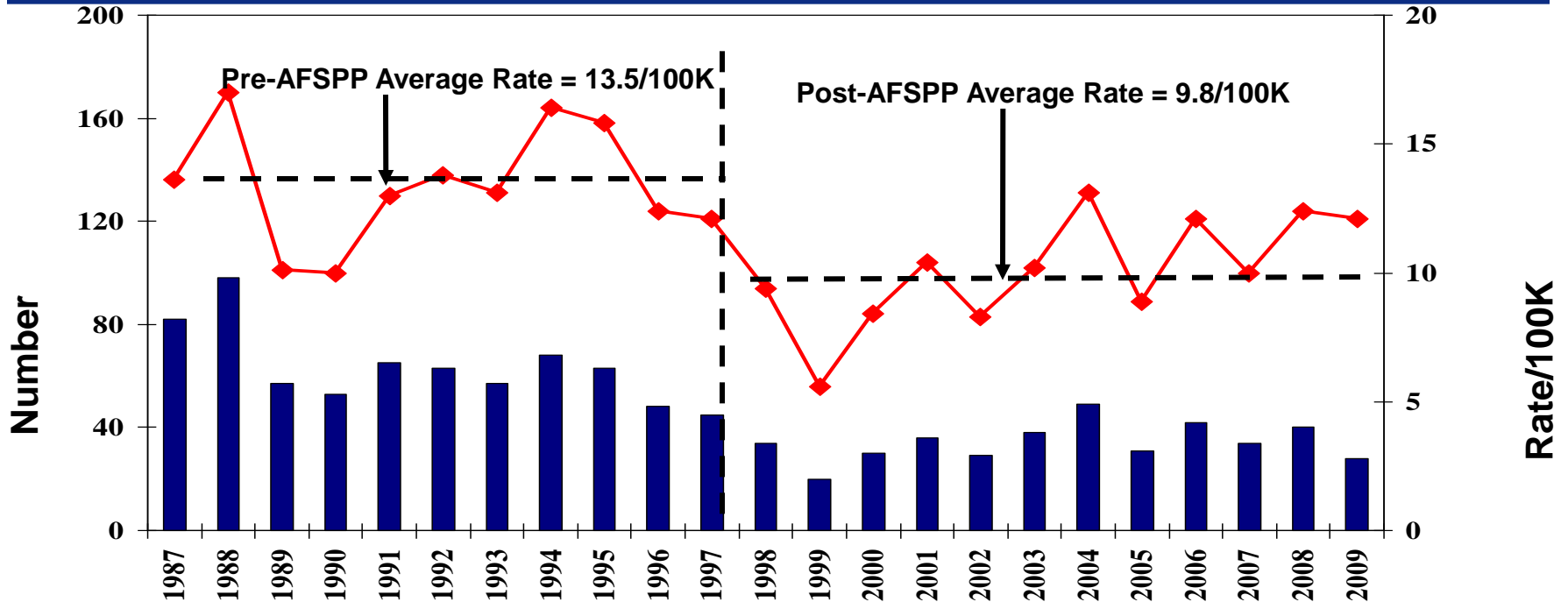
- **University of Rochester Study, BMJ Dec 03**
 - Published AF data from 1990-2002, analysis ongoing
 - No significant change in population demographics
- **Implementation of AFSPP correlated with:**
 - 33% reduction in suicides
 - 18% increase in mild family violence
 - 30% reduction in moderate family violence
 - 54% reduction in severe family violence
 - 51% reduction in homicides
 - 18% reduction in accidental deaths
- **One of 10 suicide prevention programs listed on SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs & Practices**



AD Suicides CY87-09

U.S. AIR FORCE

■ CY Suicides **◆ CY Rate**



Suicides / Suicide Rate:

CY09: 28 / 12.1

CY08: 40 / 12.4

CY07: 34 / 10

CY06: 42 / 12.1

CY05: 31 / 8.9

CY04: 49 / 13.1

CY03: 38 / 10.2

CY03 – CY08 Average Rate = 11

2006 Civilian rate adjusted for demographics = 19.2



Suicide Risk Factors

U.S. AIR FORCE

- **There were 232 ADAF suicides from CY03-CY08**
 - **159 (70%) had relationship problems**
 - **99 (44%) had legal problems**
 - **65 (29%) had financial problems**
 - **47 (21%) had deployed in previous year**
 - **56 (25%) were engaged in mental health care**
- **Actions/Services to address risk factors:**
 - **97 additional Mental Health (MH) providers hired**
 - **Frequent MH screening (yearly, pre- and post-deployment)**
 - **Financial and personal counseling via Airmen and Family Readiness Centers and Military OneSource**



Suicide and Deployment

U.S. AIR FORCE

- **There does not appear to be a significant relationship between deployments and suicide in the AF**
- **57% (133 of 232) of CY03-CY08 AF suicides involved Airmen who had never deployed**
- **Average of 523 days between return from deployment and suicide for 99 Airmen who had deployed ('03-'08)**
- **There have been very few AF suicides in which PTSD/deployment mental health concerns were cited**
- **There have been 3 confirmed AF suicides in theater**
 - **1 in 2007**
 - **2 in 2009**



Senior Leader Involvement

U.S. AIR FORCE

- **SECAF/CSAF and AF leaders are notified immediately on all suspected suicides via AF Watch**
- **VCSAF and senior medical leaders receive weekly updates on suicide incidents/trends each Friday**
- **AF Community Action Information Board (CAIB) reviews AF Suicide Prevention Program quarterly**
 - **CAIB engages in ongoing process improvement of AFSPP**
 - **AF CAIB chaired by AF/CVA; elevates to CSAF as needed**
 - **VCSAF policy requires event review board after each suicide; lessons learned will be sent via CAIB/IDS channels**
- **Annual AF Suicide Lessons Learned review sent to senior leadership and to field**



U.S. AIR FORCE

Collaboration

■ Functional

- **Community Action Information Board (CAIB) and Integrated Delivery System (IDS) enhance collaboration**

■ DoD/Cross-Service

- **AF works closely with Defense Center of Excellence to address psychological health and TBI issues**
- **AF collaborates with sister Service suicide prevention offices to share best practices through the SPARRC**

■ Cross Agency

- **Increased AF/VA sharing for medical care**
- **Enhanced transitional processes streamlines medical eval/disability process**



U.S. AIR FORCE

AF Community & Family Readiness Support to Suicide Prevention (MR)

- **HAF Community Action Information Board (CAIB) closely monitors AF suicides and progress/actions on the 11 AF Suicide Prevention Initiatives**
- **Community based approach – key support and early interventions to Airmen & families at risk:**
 - **Assistance adapting to demands of military lifestyle**
 - **e.g., relocation; transition assistance; deployment & reintegration support;**
 - **Military Family Life Consultants - short-term Individual, marriage & family counseling**
 - **Financial Education - From Accession through Retirement**
 - **Military OneSource – 24/7 information & referral & followup,**
 - **Protocols for immediate referrals into mental health system**
 - **Domestic violence - Education, Advocacy & Intervention**

Integrity - Service - Excellence



U.S. AIR FORCE

Chaplains' Role in Suicide Prevention

- **Suicide interventions have increased from 1,548 (CY06) to 3,011 (CY08)**
 - Confidential communication is provided to the total force and dependents
 - Individuals typically seek counseling for other issues, but respond positively when asked, “Have you thought of harming yourself?”
 - Data source: AF Form 1270 – Chaplain Corps Statistical Data
- **CC Calls - Chaplains commonly tasked for suicide prevention briefs**
- **ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training)**
 - 2-day intervention training for caregivers
 - All new AF chaplains and chaplain assistants since 2005 trained in ASIST
- **safeTALK (Suicide Alertness for Everyone: Tell, Ask, Listen, Keep Safe)**
 - 3-hour, hands-on suicide alertness training for any community member
 - 9 HC instructors trained in Aug 09 to instruct safeTALK trainers
 - Trainers will then facilitate safeTALK workshops across the Air Force



U.S. AIR FORCE

Wingman Culture

- **All efforts to promote psychological health are rooted in the Wingman culture**
 - **AF mission requires Airmen to take care of themselves and their wingmen**
 - **Core values of integrity, service before self and excellence in all we do are modeled and promoted from accession to separation/retirement**
 - **Seeking help is seen as a virtue, not as failure**
 - **Hinges on buddy system**
- **Wingman Day held annually to reinforce this focus**



U.S. AIR FORCE

Recent Initiatives

Integrity - Service - Excellence



Continuing Improvement

U.S. AIR FORCE

- **To enhance the 11 Elements of the Suicide Prevention Program the AF has launched a number of new initiatives**
 - **Clinical Guide to Managing Suicidal Behavior**
 - **Frontline Supervisor Training**
 - **Improved access to MH care and decreasing stigma**
- **Suicide Prevention Working Group**
 - **Initiated by CSAF tasking Safety to work with SG to review and enhance program**
 - **Included SG, Safety, OSI, Chaplain, Personnel and Reserve reps**
 - **Task: Top-to-bottom review of all current AF suicide prevention policies and procedures**
 - **Findings: Program has a commendable track record, but there are areas to improve**



U.S. AIR FORCE

SPWG Recommendations

- **SPWG recommendations were made in the following main areas:**
 - **Leadership**
 - **Policy**
 - **Training**
 - **Data Collection**
 - **PME**



SPWG (cont) Leadership

U.S. AIR FORCE

- **CHALLENGE:** Emphasis seems to have shifted from a community based, line led program to an increasingly SG initiative
- **Increase line involvement in the Suicide Prevention Program**
- **Improve flow of risk factors/lessons learned to line leadership**
- **Develop a PA-led campaign where leaders emphasize that suicide is preventable and we need to be “*All In*” to prevent suicide**
 - **CSAF, VCSAF, CMSAF emphasis**
 - **All Airmen understand warning signs**
 - **Leaders emphasize that it is a sign of strength to seek help**
 - **Core: Wingmen take care of Wingmen using *ACE* (Ask, Care, Escort)**



U.S. AIR FORCE

ACE



Ask your wingman

- Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm
- Ask the question directly: Are you thinking of killing yourself?

Care for your wingman

- Calmly control the situation; do not use force; be safe
- Actively listen to show understanding and produce relief
- Remove any means that could be used for self-injury

Escort your wingman

- Never leave your buddy alone
- Escort to chain of command, Chaplain, behavioral health professional, or primary care provider
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

USACHPPM <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/>





U.S. AIR FORCE

SPWG (cont) Policy

- **CHALLENGE:** Suicide prevention program, data collection and investigation of suicides is not adequately codified
- **Move AF suicide prevention policy from medical (44 series) to special management (90 series) under CAIB (AFPD 90-5)**
- **Evaluate expanding Limited Privilege Suicide Prevention Program under AFI 44-160**
- **New policy will:**
 - **Formalize Event Review Boards to investigate suicide events with the goal of systematically identifying and disseminating lessons learned**
 - **Ensure CAIBs at every level (Wing, MAJCOM and HAF) review and enhance suicide prevention efforts on a recurring basis based on data and lessons learned**



SPWG (cont) Training

- **CHALLENGE: 2007 change to CBT has de-emphasized the vital community aspect of the suicide prevention program**
- **Mandate face-to-face annual suicide prevention training for all AD members**
 - **AF Suicide Prevention Program Manager will develop multi-media training tools for commanders**
 - **Training to be led by a trained IDS member in small groups**
 - **Training should be opened/closed by Sq/CC**
- **ARC and remote units will rely primarily on a revised CBT with the option of conducting in-person training**
- **Develop training materials for family members**
- **Explore outreach to civilian employers of ARC Airmen**



SPWG (cont) Data Collection and Lessons Learned

- **CHALLENGE: Data collection and lessons learned dissemination is inadequate, inconsistent, and not consolidated**
- **Establish Event Review Boards to ensure adequate data collection and review of data at base level**
- **Ensure Total Force data is collected and utilized**
 - **ARC will track all suicides of members regardless of status**
 - **ARC will report ARC suicides in federalized status thru DODSER**
 - **AF/A1 will establish tracking and reporting of DoD civilian employees**
- **CAIB/IDS structure will establish recurrent mechanisms to review and allow leadership to act on current data and lessons learned**



SPWG (cont) PME Education

U.S. AIR FORCE

- **CHALLENGE:** Ensure suicide prevention, education and resiliency training are integrated into all levels of PME & Accession schools
- **AETC reviewing all PME course content for adequacy of suicide prevention content**
- **AF Learning Council to validate requirements and integrate suicide prevention education at all levels of PME and Accession programs**
- **Suicide Prevention Program Manager will review and provide standard content for all suicide prevention briefings for MAJCOM's Squadron Commander courses. MAJCOM will tailor additional info to meet command needs**



- **AF Suicide Prevention Program has proven to be effective over time in reducing suicides across our population**
- **Above average rates in recent years a cause for concern, still below pre-program levels despite years of high ops tempo**
- **Ongoing program enhancements and action on SPWG recommendations provide way ahead to address concerns**



U.S. AIR FORCE

Questions

Integrity - Service - Excellence