



# DPRR COMMUNITYLINK

THE DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2025



The 2025 Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting featured discussions on integration programs, child care solutions, innovative technology and leadership efforts to enhance Soldier and Family experiences. (AUSA photo by Ken Cedeno)

**AUSA CONFERENCE 2025**

## AUSA Discusses Holistic Approaches to Family and Soldier Well-Being

By Cynthia Bell and Mavia Hanson, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

More than 44,000 attendees from 92 countries, along with 750 exhibitors, convened Oct. 13–15 at the 2025 Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C. Embracing the theme "Agile, Adaptive, Lethal: Moving at the Pace of Change," the three-day event featured professional development workshops and sessions on a variety of topics.

A robust panel discussion ensued during the general session "Warfighter and Family Forum 1: Relocation Readiness—A PCS Integration Forum." Panelists shared tips and best practices for relocation readiness and integrating Soldiers and Families into new communities. The discussion touched upon [ALARACT 097/2025](#), which details the new Onboarding and Integration program, formerly the Total Army Sponsorship Program. Senior Commanders now have flexibility in determining requirements for onboarding and integrating Soldiers at their installations.

"Knowledge is power, and that is how we effect change, and that is how we affect the readiness of our Soldiers," said Dr. Patti Brown, AUSA's Senior Advisor of Family Readiness.

Other helpful resources shared included the [Housing Support Office](#), which can help Soldiers take a more in-depth look at leases when they

choose to live off post, and Army Housing Online User Services, which provides links to floor plans of Army housing and privatized housing, along with housing staff contacts at the new PCS location.

The second general session, "Building a Healthy Home Front," explored how supporting Families, fostering resilience and taking a holistic approach to health strengthens both Soldiers and their communities.

Speakers explained the connection between physical, mental, spiritual and financial health in building readiness. Recognizing this relationship, Lt. Gen. Mary K. Izaguirre noted that addressing challenges early—whether it's a leaky roof, educational stress or financial strain—ensures that Families and Soldiers can focus on what matters most: being resilient, connected and ready for the mission.

The discussion concluded with [Army Emergency Relief](#) sharing examples of its daily support of holistic health and fitness through critical assistance to Soldiers and Families worldwide. AER's Chief Executive Officer, retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston, said an example of AER's direct effect on readiness was when \$25 million in requests from 15,000 Soldiers was processed during the first few days of the recent government shutdown.

See [FAMILY AND SOLDIER WELL-BEING](#) on page 9

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# DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Team,

As we enter the new year, I'd like to reflect on a year defined by resilience, innovation and impact. Taking care of Soldiers and Families is the foundation of Army readiness, and throughout the year we have collectively demonstrated that our programs are not only valued—they are essential.

2025 began with a landmark achievement. In January, our Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention and Policy teams published the Army's first standalone regulation, AR 600-52, codifying the new SHARP program structure and strengthening prevention, response and victim advocacy.

Alongside this milestone, we launched the Army-wide "We've Got Your Six" awareness campaign, reinforcing our commitment to Quality of Life and Prevention programs for Soldiers, Army Civilians and Families.

By spring, we transformed the Army's Quality of Life [website](#) into a vital resource for Soldiers and Families, focusing on six key life topics that enhance Soldier and Family readiness and retention.

April's Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month reaffirmed our dedication to strengthening our Army, and in May, SHARP teams at Fort Bragg, Camp Humphreys and Fort Jackson were honored for their exceptional work—embodying the Army's promise to protect every Soldier with dignity and respect.

June brought organizational change as DPRR realigned from G-9 to G-1, ensuring mission continuity while transitioning the Exceptional Family Member Program to the Office of the Surgeon General and moving prevention and resilience missions to U.S. Army Transformation and Training Command. Despite these shifts, our team never missed a beat.

In August, the CYSS team flawlessly executed the Army-led Service Day for the BGCA Military Youth of the Year competition providing contestants with a fun, interactive day of life-skills and leadership development opportunities.

September marked Suicide Prevention Month, during which DPRR launched the [Soldier-led Prevention Music Initiative](#)—a seven-song series

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# Army Encourages Soldiers to 'Just Pick Up'

By Jasmine Taylor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

In a memo released by the Secretary of the Army Hon. Dan Driscoll, leaders are charged with making daily calls to Soldiers as part of the "Just Pick Up" campaign. This check in initiative is intended for the Holiday season through Jan. 15, 2026. The effort, best explained as a grassroots suicide prevention strategy best practice adapted from 1st Infantry Brigade, 11th Airborne Division leaders, will focus on Soldier well-being checks to address potential risk factors by offering Soldiers support and access to helping agencies, programs and services.

The Calendar Year [2023 Annual Report on Suicide in the Military](#), released November 2024, detailed 523 active-duty, National Guard and reserve Soldiers who died by suicide. The data revealed an increase in deaths by suicide when compared to [Calendar Year 2022](#). The 2023 findings also called attention to the positive effects of gestures such as a phone call or a visit to help those who may be struggling emotionally.

For some, the first frost of winter may not usher in feelings of enthusiasm about the change in seasons. Many people may worry about their holiday budgets or feel lonelier and more isolated than during other times of the year. In fact, a [study](#) by the American Psychological Association revealed that 41% of people surveyed said they felt more anxious during the winter holidays.

"The holidays can be a high-risk period for self-harm. We know it's a problem; it happens every year, so we'll address it head-on," Driscoll said in the memo.



The Army's "Just Pick Up" campaign encourages daily calls to Soldiers, promoting support and mental health resources. (U.S. Army photo by Terrance Bell)

"For those who need help: When your phone rings during daily checkup, just pick up and ask for help. We want to pick you up, share your load and get you moving forward again."

The effort is a reminder that seeking help is a sign of strength. It takes tremendous courage to reach out and ask for support; but we can find strength and hope together through connection. If you or someone you know may be having a hard time, please contact the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#). The Lifeline is free, confidential and available 24/7/365. Military OneSource also offers free, short-term, confidential [counseling services](#) to Soldiers, Army Civilians and their Families.

Read Hon. Driscoll's Just Pick Up memo at [army.mil](#).



## Real Talk ASAP Intervention and Prevention Materials

Sometimes the road to change starts with one real conversation. DPRR's Real Talk materials use relatable, everyday language to address and stop the misuse of substances within our ranks. Developed to reach junior Soldiers and cadets, the campaign supports the Army's primary prevention efforts by promoting open dialogue and building trust without guilt, shame or blame. Real Talk empowers team members to stay sharp, stay focused and steer their future. The messages provide actionable steps for anyone hoping to get back on track, while encouraging help-seeking before issues escalate.

Digital materials, including posters, postcards, infographics, web banners and a social media toolkit, are available for download at DPRR's Products on Demand [website](#).



## BRAVE AI Integrations to Advance Mental Health Care for Soldiers, Families

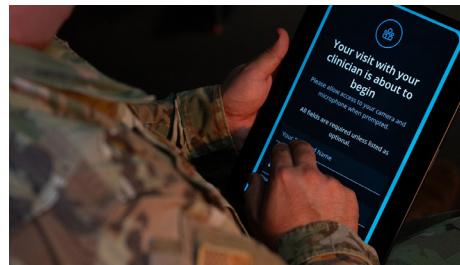
By Jasmine Taylor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The next phase of the Defense Health Agency's Behavioral Health Resources and Virtual Experience, or BRAVE, will use artificial intelligence to further eliminate barriers to mental health care for active-duty Soldiers and their Families.

During the Building a Healthy Home Front forum, at the Association of the United States Army's 2025 annual meeting, Lt. Gen. Mary K. Izaguirre, Surgeon General of the Army, said, "We're working with our partners at the Defense Health Agency to effectively support that treatment part of the health, bringing virtual care to remote areas... (and) leveraging technology...and humans to provide care."

"If we can leverage AI to be that entryway, and then triage, then we can preserve those human touchpoints that need that level of care," she said.

BRAVE has hosted approximately 60,000 virtual therapy sessions since it was launched three years ago. The program is now available at 84 locations across the U.S., Europe and Indo-Pacific region. DHA plans for BRAVE to be available worldwide by the end of this year.



A.I. integration could help the Behavioral Health Resources and Virtual Experience further streamline mental health care to Soldiers, Army Civilians and their Families. (Photo courtesy of Defense Health Agency)

In a [release](#) from DHA, the agency said BRAVE has used teleconferencing to reduce patient wait times and provide confidential access to therapy services. The platform's team of service providers consists of licensed clinical social workers, psychologists and therapists.

BRAVE is managed by the DHA Virtual Medical Center, which offers several other telehealth tools,

including the VMC Virtually Integrated Provider Readiness and Remote Clinic, the MHS Patient Portal and MHS Nurse Advice Line. DHA VMC ensures that members of the Army community receive the best possible care through modernized military medicine.

DHA's BRAVE virtual services are not to be confused with My Military Health's SilverCloud, which ended in July of this year. The confidential self-help platform provided advice for managing emotions and stress, but it did not offer formal behavioral health treatment. MHS also announced the sunsetting of MHS Video Connect in July.

Virtual supports like BRAVE are a part of the Army's holistic approach to prevention, which focuses on building resilience and keeping a healthy home front.

"I see our best strength as being our strength as a community and how we build that strength during our time of competition so if there is a time of conflict, we are ready to not only be the strongest version of ourselves but support each other as we go through that time," said Izaguirre.

## Defense Department Recognizes Army Personnel for Prevention Work

By Chet Curtis, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Various prevention professionals from around the Army received recognition for their efforts this year from the Defense Department.

Earlier this year, the DOD recognized several individuals for their outstanding contributions in the field of sexual harassment and sexual assault response and prevention. Master Sgt. Veronica Green received the prestigious 2025 Liz Blanc Exceptional Sexual Assault Response Coordinator of the Year Award. Sgt. 1st Class Jacody Lewis received the 2025 Liz Blanc Exceptional Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Victim Advocate of the Year Award, while Sgt. 1st Class Laniece Pettis received the 2025 Promoting Excellence in Prevention Award.

These prestigious honors recognize outstanding individuals for their exceptional contributions to the sexual assault prevention and response and integrated primary prevention, specifically in the roles of SARC, SAPR VA and Prevention Specialist. The individuals exemplify the highest standards of professionalism, commitment and innovation in their efforts to prevent sexual assault and other harmful behaviors.

Additionally, in August, Cynthia Ballagh, a New Parent Support Program Nurse at Fort Rucker, Alabama, received the DOD Family Advocacy Program Domestic Abuse and Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Recognition Award.

Ballagh was recognized for significantly increasing participation in playgroups, boosting awareness and interest in NPS offering and consistently



In support of the 2024 Suicide Prevention Month theme "Connect to Protect," the North Dakota Army National Guard partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Health and Human Services and the North Dakota Governor's Office to create a proclamation that was signed by the Governor and Secretary of State. Left to right: Dr. Merlynn Carson, Amy Ruff and Lt. Col. Steven Bohl. (Photo courtesy of the Defense Suicide Prevention Office)

supporting both Army Community Service and installation-wide events. Her outreach helped educate the public on how NPS can support parenting success and prevent negative outcomes such as neglect and abuse. She played a key role in Child Find events, partnering with Educational and Developmental Intervention Services and coordinating with on-post housing community centers to ensure broad accessibility. Her ability to connect, educate and inspire makes her not only a vital asset to Fort Rucker but also a role model for what it means to serve with heart and purpose, according to her award citation.

Additionally, Charlie Washington and Tiffany Simms from Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Amy Ruff and Lt. Col. Steven Bohl, from the North Dakota Army National Guard; and Stacey Hill and Dr. Jack East, from the Army Reserve's 84th Training Command at Fort Knox, Kentucky, were recognized Sept. 4 by the Defense Suicide Prevention Office at a Pentagon ceremony for their suicide prevention programs and for outstanding contributions to their communities from Sept. 1, 2023, through Aug. 31, 2024. This award recognizes the innovative and impactful work the organizations accomplished in support of Soldiers, their Families and Army Civilians.

# AROUND THE FORCE

- ▶ R2
- ▶ DVAM
- ▶ BOSS
- ▶ SHARP



## 10th Mountain Division Artillery Hosts Annual Trunk-or-Treat Halloween Event for Army Families

FORT DRUM, N.Y.—A festive group of eventgoers show their Halloween spirit during the 10th Mountain Reception Company's annual trunk-or-treat celebration on Oct. 24. Participants wore costumes, decorated their vehicles and passed out treats to promote connection and resiliency within the installation. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Oshon Trowbridge)



## Lee Hoffman Spirit Award Recipient Recognized During SHARP Academy Intermediate Commencement

FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan.—On Nov. 7, 10 students graduated from the SHARP Intermediate Course. During the ceremony, individuals were recognized by the academy staff and their peers for their exceptional performance. Maj. Keenan M. Franklin, Transformation and Training Command, receives the Jay Lee Hoffman Spirit Award for outstanding service. (U.S. Army photo)



**Team Visit to Redstone Arsenal Focuses on Sexual Harassment Prevention**  
HUNTSVILLE, Ala.—Shermona Hart, Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Policy and Oversight Branch Chief, supports a staff assistance visit to Redstone Arsenal on Aug. 4–7. The team met with command teams and reviewed SHARP processes to identify strengths and areas needing improvement. (U.S. Army photo)



## Fort Drum Community Members Run 5K in Observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month

FORT DRUM, N.Y.—Soldiers with E Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, gather for a photo after crossing the finish line Oct. 2 at the Domestic Violence Awareness Month 5K, hosted by the Fort Drum Family Advocacy Program. (U.S. Army photo by Mike Strasser)



## Fort Buchanan Provides Groceries to Support Soldiers, Families During Government Shutdown

U.S. ARMY GARRISON BUCHANAN, Puerto Rico—Members of the Fort Buchanan Religious Support Office and the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation organized a free grocery distribution event on Nov. 14. The team distributed nearly 400 bags of groceries to assist Soldiers, Army Civilians and their Families affected by the federal government shutdown. (U.S. Army photo by Carlos Cuevas)



## Family Readiness Division Evaluates South Dakota National Guard Support Programs

CAMP RAPID, S.D.—Staff from the Army Soldier and Family Readiness Division enjoyed the stunning views of waterfalls and huge rock formations at Falls Park in Sioux Falls after touring the South Dakota National Guard Service Member and Family Readiness offices. The purpose of the visit was for division employees to ensure compliance with Defense Department certification standards. (U.S. Army photo)



## Camp Humphreys Ruck March Remembers Those Lost on 9/11

U.S. ARMY GARRISON HUMPHREYS—The Camp Humphreys BOSS Program hosted a Remembrance Ruck March at Camp Humphreys' Balboni Field on Sept. 11. Soldiers and community members from across the installation walked 9.11 miles in honor of those who lost their lives 24 years ago. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Philemon Tan)



# Army OSTC Now Prosecutes Domestic Violence Cases

By Cynthia Bell, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The [National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022](#) directed military services to establish the [Office of Special Trial Counsel](#) to independently handle the prosecution of certain serious crimes, referred to as "covered offenses," such as murder, sexual assault, kidnapping, child abuse and domestic violence, among others. This NDAA transfer of prosecutorial decisions for covered offenses from Commanders to independent judge advocates marked a significant reform in military justice with the goal of enhancing accountability, fairness and trust in the military justice system and ensuring that decisions about legal proceedings are unbiased.

The Army's OSTC comprises specially trained military lawyers, legal professionals and support staff. Headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, OSTC has eight regional offices that oversee 28 field offices across the U.S., Europe and Korea.

As of Dec. 28, 2024, the OSTC's first fully operational year, prosecutors reviewed more than 9,500 criminal investigations and exercised authority over 5,600 of those cases, according to OSTC. While the case review process remains an ongoing effort, OSTC prosecutors initiated court-martials in 514 cases and prosecuted 138 cases to completion, with the rest continuing into 2025. Sixty-three of the completed cases were domestic violence cases.

[Article 128b of the Uniform Code of Military Justice](#), which specifically addresses domestic violence, became effective on Jan. 1, 2019. Domestic violence involves the use, attempted use or threatened use of force or violence against a person who is a spouse, immediate Family member or intimate partner, or a violation of a lawful order used for the protection of that person.

"One point I would like to emphasize is that the relatively new offense of Article 128b of the UCMJ has allowed us to see domestic violence offenses more clearly," said Lead Special Trial Counsel Brig. Gen. Christopher A. Kennebeck.

"Before the establishment of 128b, all domestic violence was typically recorded as an assault mixed in with all other types of assault."

While OSTC has independent prosecutorial authority, it collaborates with commanders, law enforcement and other support services to ensure comprehensive support for victims.

Kennebeck explained that in addition to better oversight of domestic violence cases, OSTC also coordinates more fully with the [Army Family Advocacy Program](#) to ensure prosecutors are aware of all offenses, because victims often do not fully disclose domestic abuse to law enforcement.



The Army Office of Special Trial Counsel supports the Army community by pursuing justice with fairness and integrity. (U.S. Army photo)

In addition, he stressed that specialized training is essential.

"We also believe we can be more effective as prosecutors because our personnel are specially trained to evaluate and try these cases," Kennebeck said.

"We manage two key courses each year that are specific to domestic violence cases."

Kennebeck acknowledged that prosecuting domestic violence cases is uniquely difficult. These crimes involve relationships and Families where children are often witnesses, which makes talking about these crimes difficult.

"Anytime a Family member or anyone in a relationship is asked to testify against a partner, spouse or parent, it is difficult," he said.

"Domestic violence has been a focus area for us because it is one of the most sensitive types of cases we see. These cases affect Families, and they affect the readiness and discipline of our Army. By having specially trained prosecutors efficiently review each case, we are better at identifying cases that warrant prosecution and better at perfecting the evidence required to obtain and sustain a conviction," Kennebeck said.

"Through our specialized training, close coordination with law enforcement and continued integration of Army Civilian best practices, I am confident we have the right tools and the right people to successfully prosecute domestic violence and achieve justice for victims."

Domestic Abuse Victim Advocates are able to support victims regardless of whether they file a Restricted or Unrestricted report.

**The following domestic abuse resources are available to assist Soldiers and their spouses or partners:**

- [Family Advocacy Program](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Victim Advocate Locator](#)
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)
  - 800-799-SAFE (7233)
  - 800-787-3224 for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing
- [Military OneSource](#)
  - 800-342-9647
- Installation's military law enforcement office or civilian law enforcement if in immediate danger

FAP can assist with filing a Restricted or Unrestricted report of domestic violence.

If a Restricted report is filed, military law enforcement and command will not be notified, and information will be kept confidential.

If an Unrestricted report is filed:

- Law enforcement will be notified and will investigate the incident.
- Command will be notified.
- Victims can seek a military or Army Civilian protective order.
- Victims will have access to the full range of FAP services.
- Victims will have access to legal services on military installations.
- Victims can receive assistance when applying for transitional compensation, if applicable.



# Restricted Reporting Options Expand Support to Army Civilians

By Cynthia Bell, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Department of the Army Civilians can file Restricted reports, which allow them to confidentially disclose a sexual assault to a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator or Victim Advocate without notifying command or law enforcement. Although perhaps not widely known, the policy went into effect in 2024. The victim is eligible for medical treatment to meet their immediate needs, counseling, chaplain services, legal advocacy and victim advocacy.

While Army Civilian complaints of sexual harassment are handled through the Equal Employment Opportunity Office, the [Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program](#) is responsible for directing efforts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and sexual assault and now provides services to Army Civilians who are victims of sexual assault. Previously, the only reporting option available for Army Civilians was the Unrestricted reporting option, which requires command notification, law enforcement reporting and an official investigation. That is no longer the case.

"The Restricted reporting option for Army Civilians allows us to offer them many of the same services that are available to Soldiers," said Stacey Hale, former SHARP Plans and Operations Branch Chief. "Army Civilians who are sexually assaulted may be more likely to file a report because the Restricted option is available to them, their Commander will not be notified



Army Civilians can file Restricted reports for sexual assault, ensuring confidentiality and access to vital support services without command or law enforcement notification. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Austin May)

and supportive services will be available to them." Access to critical services to support their healing journey is available without having to go through an investigation or adjudication or having others in the unit know about the sexual assault. These changes remove barriers that discouraged the reporting of sexual assaults by providing newly available victim assistance and reporting opportunities to Army Civilians.

According to Hale, a Restricted report can be filed even if the sexual assault has been previously disclosed to command by the victim,

suspect or third party; reported to law enforcement by anyone other than the victim; or if an investigation has been initiated, is in progress or has been closed. A Restricted report cannot be filed in a case where the victim personally reported the incident to law enforcement or previously filed an Unrestricted report and signed a Victim Reporting Preference Statement (DD Form 2910). A Restricted report can be changed to an Unrestricted report at any time; however, an Unrestricted report cannot be changed to a Restricted report.

In 2024, there were 265,000 employees in the Army's workforce, serving in more than 500 career paths, according to the [Department of the Army](#). Some commands have a relatively small Army Civilian employee population, while others are made up entirely of Army Civilians.

"Making the decision to report a sexual assault is difficult. If they make it to a SARC or VA, it's huge," said Hale. "They are placing a great deal of trust in the individual to whom they disclose; that SHARP professional will assist them as they navigate the medical, legal and justice systems. It's our duty and honor to provide these services."

SARCs and VAs are available and can provide responsive care and services for Survivors of sexual violence. For more information, visit the SHARP program webpage: [www.armyresilience.army.mil/sharp](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/sharp).

# Suicide Prevention Program Coordinators Course Now Available Online

By Antonieta Rico, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The Army Installation Management Command is set to launch an online version of the Suicide Prevention Program Coordinator course Dec. 17 and, initially, all new and current SPPCs will be required to take the course.

Suicide Prevention Program Coordinators are responsible for supporting Commanders by implementing the Army's Suicide Prevention Program at the installation, state and command levels, said Derek Ferrell, Suicide Prevention Program Manager at Headquarters, Installation Management Command. The SPPC course familiarizes new SPPCs with their roles and responsibilities within their respective locations and provides them with foundational knowledge to effectively perform those duties.

The new online course provides a mechanism by which new SPPCs can meet the Army regulatory requirement of completing the SPPC course within 120 days of assuming their position, Ferrell said.

"(The online course is) just a great baseline for us, especially as new SPPCs that come in, to give that understanding of everything that we should be doing in this position," said Christa Zayas, who has worked as an SPPC for four years and

beta-tested the course, which is being offered through the Army Training Information System, or ATIS.

Traditionally, the course has been held in person once a year in San Antonio.

"I typically run the (in-person) course in June—if a new person was hired in July after the course ran, they would have to wait a whole calendar year... to be formally trained," Ferrell said.

"So, the benefit of having a foundational course online is that as soon as a person is hired, (there won't be) lag time in getting accurate baseline information about their functions and responsibilities."

Although intended for new SPPCs, all current SPPCs will have a one-time requirement to take the online course, too, Ferrell said.

"It was a good refresher—it felt like a check on learning of where we are for those of us who have been in the position for a while," said Miguel Sierra, who has served as an SPPC for four years and also beta-tested the ATIS SPPC course.

"It was a lot of information...that I was glad to have in that setting where I could also test my knowledge base."

The ATIS SPPC course consists of eight modules and is asynchronous, meaning SPPCs can access the course 24/7 and complete it at their own pace. Students will have about two weeks to finish the course once they start it.

Sierra said the online course can serve as a stopgap measure for new hires, and it complements the additional mentorship, connection and experiential knowledge offered by the in-person course once new hires are able to attend.

SPPCs who take the online course can always reach out to Ferrell or other SPPCs at installations or Army commands to ask questions and get support in their new role, said Zayas.

"We're in the people business, and there's only so much we can do via Microsoft Teams or online training," Zayas said.

"Having that interaction face to face...and connectedness goes a long way."

Army Substance Abuse and Program Specialists who serve in a risk-reduction or suicide-prevention role are also eligible to take the course. SPPCs with questions about the ATIS course should reach out to Derek Ferrell at IMCOM for assistance.



# Strengthening Bonds Among Soldiers Through Intramural Sports

By Mia Holloman, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Intramural sports are more than just games for Soldiers; they are powerful tools for building trust, unity and resilience within the Army community. On the playing field, Soldiers discover new ways to connect, break down barriers and strengthen bonds that often carry over into their personal and professional lives.

"I think this goes back to trust and unity among the players," said Lori Smith, Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation Chief of Sports, Athletics and Aquatics at Fort Benning, Georgia.

The Garrison Intramural Sports program, offered by MWR, provides Soldiers and their Families with broad-based team and individual sports activities. The year-round program is tailored to participants at all levels of athletic ability. Unit-level intramural leagues promote group participation in sports with mass appeal, such as volleyball, basketball and soccer.

"Soldiers on a team build strong bonds by working together on a common goal and shared purpose, which builds a sense of belonging. Leaders and Soldiers alike can strengthen these bonds by playing sports as a regular part of their unit culture," Smith said.

The strength of intramural sports comes through in the simple, practical ways they unite Soldiers and reinforce Army Values. Leaders can motivate Soldiers by sharing schedules, celebrating wins and emphasizing the role of sports in unit pride. Smith suggested that Soldiers who play together and share victories can also share a sense of pride and belonging with others in their unit.



Intramural sports foster camaraderie among Soldiers, promoting teamwork, trust and resilience that extend beyond the field. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Chandler Coats)

Teamwork can translate into unit readiness. Unit members should talk openly about how lessons learned in games, like handling pressure or lifting up a teammate, can apply to Army tasks.

Soldiers can even build resilience through competition, using their experiences on the field to prepare them for real-world challenges.

Smith said, "Our goals are about creating opportunities for Soldiers to build trust, develop team cooperation, troop morale, self-confidence and leadership qualities all through athletic competition."

The impact also extends beyond benefits to Soldiers. Maj. Kyle A. Griffin, Space Control Planning Team 6 Officer in Charge, 2nd Space Control Support Company, 1st Space Battalion, said intramural sports helped him feel more equipped to approach his junior enlisted

Soldiers by enhancing his communication skills. "Competing together in an activity where rank takes a back seat to skill, and hustle somewhat humanizes leaders," he said.

Griffin, an enthusiastic sports advocate, took the initiative to organize sign-ups for his Soldiers to participate in Fort Carson's intramural sports program. He actively encourages their participation.

"It takes someone to start the process, and he did that. (It) gives his Soldiers something to do together," said Smith.

Intramural sports may begin with a game, but their true power lies in the unity, resilience and pride they build throughout the Army community. To learn more about intramural offerings near you, visit the MWR [website](#).

## PERSONAL READINESS: GOAL SETTING IN THE NEW YEAR

The new year is a time to identify and attain new goals. Remember to follow these tips when creating your New Year's resolution.



**Define Your Goal**  
Set a goal that is clear and concise.



**Identify Obstacles**  
Determine potential obstacles that might prevent you from achieving your goal.



**Take S.M.A.R.T Action**  
Make sure your goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.



**Maintain Motivation**  
Use power statements that are purposeful, to keep yourself motivated.



**Stay Committed**  
Keep visual cues to remind yourself of your goal, or enlist a Family member or friend to keep you accountable.



To learn more about goal setting, visit [www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/smarter-goal.html](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/smarter-goal.html)



# Advancing Holistic Health

## FAMILY AND SOLDIER WELL-BEING

During the third general session, "Army Senior Leader Fireside Chat: The Soldier and Family Experience," Soldiers and leaders alike were empowered to voice concerns and push for change. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy A. George stressed that one size doesn't fit all when onboarding Families across different installations, stating that each base has unique needs and challenges. He mentioned the [My Army Post App](#), built by Soldiers and designed to provide localized information for each installation. Having faced bureaucratic obstacles during development, the app demonstrates how innovation in the Army can overcome inefficiency.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael R. Weimer doubled down on the technology piece, discussing the impact of technology vs. leadership and sharing that while tech tools are important, they do not

replace real connection through human-led welcoming efforts.

"We now have QR codes on your orders so that you can expedite the PCS process . . . we're in this space right now where we are going to change and become more efficient," said Weimer.

The panel unanimously agreed that child care remains one of the Army's toughest challenges. Army [Child Development Centers](#) rank among the nation's best, yet they face staff shortages the Army is actively addressing. The panelists discussed the efforts underway to incentivize child care workers with higher pay, hiring flexibility and commissary privileges. The Army is testing partnerships with local YMCAs to potentially expand child care for off-installation Families, noting that between 60% and 70% of Families live off installation. The panelists also discussed a push

to standardize spouse employment credentials so that, once approved for work in child care or other base positions, spouses wouldn't need to restart the approval process at every new installation.

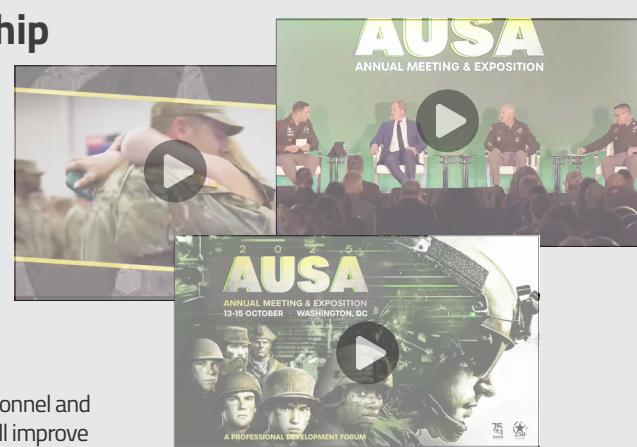
They also shared that the Army is forming a task force with other services to fix systemic issues in barracks management. The panel discussed proposed solutions, including exploring privatization models, citing a figure of \$250,000 per Soldier as the average cost per barracks room.

The Warfighter and Family forums demonstrated how strong, supported Families directly contribute to a strong, lethal Army. By providing integrated resources, innovative programs and responsive support, the Army continues to invest in Families as a critical component of mission readiness and national defense.

## Army Gives New Name to Total Army Sponsorship Program: Onboarding and Integration

What to expect:

- Command-led onboarding.** Senior Commanders and NCOs are now responsible for leading onboarding efforts. They have greater flexibility in tailoring the process to fit the needs of their Soldiers and units.
- Unified effort to enhance the experience for Soldiers and Families.** With more efficient onboarding practices, Army Families can benefit from streamlined access to housing, financial support, spouse employment opportunities, child care and other critical resources.
- Modernized system changes.** Onboarding and Integration will use the Integrated Personnel and Pay System to manage sponsorship, replacing the Army Career Tracker. The change will improve access, enhance timeliness and allow leaders to better understand the talents of the Total Force.



Click the play button to watch the forum recordings.

## Fostering Support for Army Families

### DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

created by Soldiers, for Soldiers. With themes of belonging, resilience and hope, the initiative continues to inspire connection beyond the month, reminding us that prevention is a year-round mission. In addition, Suicide Prevention Program teams from Fort Campbell, the North Dakota Army National Guard and the Army Reserve's 84th Training Command were honored by the Department of War during a Pentagon ceremony.

October was a month of outreach and engagement. We commemorated the Army's first official Domestic Violence Awareness Month with an Army-wide campaign. DPRR Soldiers staffed the Family Advocacy Program Hooah Tent at the Army Ten-Miler, raising awareness of domestic abuse prevention and response resources available for our Army community.

DPRR's FAP team also put together the "FAP on the Run" Army Ten-Miler team, led by Sgt. Maj. Ruben

Murillo Jr., DPRR Senior Enlisted Adviser, and Charlene Sanchez, Family Advocacy Program Specialist, along with runners from the DPRR extended Family.

Also in October, DPRR took part in the Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting and Exposition, hosting three Warfighter & Family Forums. Topics included Building a Healthy Homefront, Relocation Readiness, and the Army Senior Leaders Fireside Chat. Sgt. Maj. Murillo, who participated in the Relocation Readiness forum, provided reflections on PCS moves during his 29 years of Service, underscoring the importance of supporting Soldiers and Families through transition. These forums provided vital opportunities to share updates and challenges with leaders across the Army.

As the holiday season approaches, it is more important than ever to emphasize connection and care. Seasonal stress, winter PCS moves and spouse

employment challenges remind us that resilience is built through networks of support. Resources such as [Army Emergency Relief](#), the [Financial Readiness Program](#), and the Quality of Life website remain critical lifelines. DPRR also developed messaging to reinforce resilience and coping skills during seasonal stressors, available on the Products on Demand site. Register for a free account here: <https://marcomcentral.app.pti.com/Ironmark/ARDMaterials>.

Throughout the year, you have shown that caring for Soldiers and Families is not just our mission—it is our identity.

It is a privilege to serve alongside such an outstanding team. Thank you for your hard work, resilience and compassion throughout 2025.

Wishing you and your Families Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Dee Geise, DPRR Director



# Army Exempts Soldiers Who Score 465+ on AFT From Body Fat Standards

By U.S. Army Public Affairs

The U.S. Army has [published a new directive](#) exempting all Soldiers who score 465 points or more on the new [Army Fitness Test](#) from body fat standards. Soldiers must score 80 points or more in each event, and no alternative events are permitted.

"This is a welcome continuation of our previous policy under the former Army Combat Fitness Test," said Sgt. Maj. Christopher Stevens, Senior Enlisted Advisor, U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1.

"It rewards Soldiers who consistently demonstrate high levels of fitness, which supports readiness, health, and creates a culture that values performance."

All Soldiers must still undergo a height and weight screening, and their data must be recorded on a

Department of the Army Form 5500 or 5501. Soldiers who do not meet the height and weight standards but qualify for an exemption will not be required to undergo a circumference-based tape assessment.

The directive is effective immediately, applying to all Army components and to the general and combat variants of the AFT.

Exemptions are valid until the next record test, not to exceed eight months for Regular Army and Active Guard Reserve Soldiers, or 12 months for National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers. Soldiers who fail to revalidate within these timelines are subject to body fat assessments and flagging actions for body fat assessment failures.



U.S. Army Pfc. Rayna Mendez, a Joint Fire Support Specialist, runs in the 2-mile run portion of the Army Fitness Test. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Kadence Connors)

# What's Zone 2 Training, and Why Does It Matter?

By Human Performance Resources by CHAMP at the Uniformed Services University

You may have heard that harder training always means better results. But one of the most overlooked tools for building both performance and long-term health is moderate-intensity conditioning, often called Zone 2 training.

Zone 2 training builds the aerobic foundation that drives endurance, recovery and resilience. Over time, it can lower your resting heart rate, improve cardiovascular health, balance the stress response and reduce long-term health risks. Just as important, it strengthens the brain—supporting focus, memory and decision-making under pressure. Zone 2 training helps you perform better now and stay healthier in the future.

Military research shows that a well-developed aerobic base is essential for physical readiness. Enhanced [cardiorespiratory endurance](#) improves tolerance for high workloads while reducing fatigue and the risk of musculoskeletal injuries during demanding activities.

A higher aerobic capacity lowers the relative cardiovascular cost of physical activity, meaning such tasks place less strain on your body, enabling you to handle more work with less fatigue and recover

faster between bouts of physical exertion. The higher your level of aerobic fitness, the greater your ability to tolerate high workloads and remain minimally stressed by low ones.

Zone 2 training is one of the most effective ways to build this foundation. It improves how efficiently the heart pumps blood, how well muscles use oxygen for energy and how effectively the body uses fat as fuel. These adaptations reduce the effort required to perform physical tasks, whether you're carrying equipment, moving long distances or performing repeated bouts of work. A stronger aerobic base helps you sustain output, recover faster, reduce musculoskeletal injury risk, enhance physical performance and maintain resilience under stress.

Zone 2 training benefits both your body and your brain. Higher levels of cardiorespiratory fitness support better memory, sharper focus and stronger executive function. It also helps maintain healthier, higher-functioning brains as we age—all of which are critical for operating in high-stress, complex environments.

Regular cardiorespiratory activity increases blood flow, enhances nutrient delivery and supports the

formation of new connections between brain cells. Within weeks to months, consistent training stimulates the growth of tiny blood vessels that nourish brain tissue. The hippocampus, a key brain region for learning and memory, can even grow slightly larger in response to cardiorespiratory activity. This type of training also improves communication within and between brain networks, helping different parts of the brain "talk" to each other more efficiently.

At the cellular level, cardiorespiratory activity increases levels of certain proteins that act like fertilizer for brain cells, helping them grow, repair and connect. Fitter brains also maintain better oxygen saturation during mental tasks, supporting clarity and performance under fatigue.

Over time, these changes make the brain more resilient, so you can think clearly and perform at your best when you're tired or under stress. Without a strong aerobic base, fatigue sets in faster, cognitive clarity declines and mission effectiveness suffers. Zone 2 training helps close that gap by preparing both your body and mind for imposed demands.

Read the [full article](#).

# Practice Mindfulness to Build Self-Awareness

Mindfulness is the ability to fully accept one's feelings and thoughts as a normal part of life. If you realize that your mind is wandering, redirect your thoughts back to the present moment with these techniques.

- Thought log: Write down distracting thoughts when your mind wanders.
- Body scan: Check your body for tension, and observe your breathing.
- 3x3 grounding technique: To anchor yourself in the present, identify three things you can see, hear and feel.

Learn how to build your personal readiness at your nearest R2 Performance Center:  
<https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/R2/R2-Performance-center.html>





# DPRR

DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS

DECEMBER 2025

## HAIL AND FAREWELL

### Hail

- Pai Jogthong, DPRR Resource Management
- Staff Sgt. Vanessa Johnson, DPRR Front Office
- Chris Lowham, DPRR Resource Management
- Master Sgt. Dustyn Rose, R2I&T Division
- Lt. Col. John Schlicht, Deputy Director for Operations
- Col. Debra Stone, Deputy Director for Readiness
- Katrina Strong, DPRR Front Office

### Farewell

- Col. Xavier Allen, Deputy Director for Operations
- Elizabeth Femrite, DPRR Resource Management
- Lt. Col. Jessica Forman, Senior Leader Engagement
- Dr. Beverly Fortson, Chief, Integrated Prevention Division
- Georgina Gould, R2I&T Division
- Stacey Hale, Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention
- Lt. Col. Lucas Harris, Chief, Plans and Operations Division
- Sgt. Maj. Ruben Murillo, Senior Enlisted Advisor (February)
- Col. Blake Witherell, Deputy Director for Readiness

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### JANUARY

Society for Social Work and Research 30th Annual Conference

Jan. 14–18: The SSWR annual conference offers a broad program featuring studies in child welfare, aging, mental health, substance misuse and more.

Location: Washington, D.C. [Learn more](#): Visit the SSWR [website](#).

### FEBRUARY

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

This monthlong effort focuses on advocacy and education for teens and their loved ones to raise awareness about dating violence.

CADCA National Leadership Forum

Feb. 2–5: CADCA's four-day conference will bring professionals together to hear from experts and learn the latest strategies to fight substance misuse.

Location: National Harbor, Maryland. [Learn more](#): Visit the CADCA [website](#).

### MARCH

International Association of Chiefs of Police Officer Safety and Wellness Conference

March 6–8: This symposium for law enforcement professionals will feature experts presenting resources and best practices for developing comprehensive officer safety and wellness strategies.

Location: New Orleans. [Learn more](#): Visit the IACP [website](#).

## Resilience Strengthening

It's helpful to find ways to navigate the stressors that arise this time of year. For winter resilience strengthening resources and self-care tips, visit the [DPRR website](#).



## TOP-PERFORMING POSTS

### FACEBOOK



Impressions: 2,089

## SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

### X



Impressions: 75

### INSTAGRAM



Impressions: 535

### LINKEDIN



Impressions: 1,010

### Follow @ArmyResilience

Please coordinate with your Public Affairs Office to share or retweet @ArmyResilience content on command or installation Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn platforms. Contact Kevin O'Brien for questions regarding DPRR social media at [kobrien@strategyconsultingteam.com](mailto:kobrien@strategyconsultingteam.com).

## Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

### DPRR COMMUNITYLINK

Dec. 19, 2025, Volume 11, Issue 1

The DPRR Community Link newsletter is an authorized bi-monthly publication produced by the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness for the Army community. The contents of the DPRR Community Link are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army. The editorial content of the DPRR Community Link is the responsibility of the Communications & Outreach Division at DPRR. For questions, or to subscribe or submit articles and photographs to DPRR Community Link, please contact the editor at [jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com](mailto:jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com). This publication is available for download at <https://www.dvidshub.net/publication/1102/2-community-link-newsletter>.

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Do you want to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter?



Submit articles and photographs by Jan. 14. For any questions, contact the editor at [jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com](mailto:jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com).



## Connect With DPRR!

Contact DPRR Communications & Outreach at  
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