

## 6<sup>th</sup> MCD CO's Policy Letter on Suicide Prevention

Our goal in the 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Corps District is to not lose one single Marine, Sailor, Civilian Marine, Applicant, or family member to the tragedy of suicide.

Accomplishing this will take the concerted effort, personal involvement, availability, and approachability of every individual in our command. As the Commanding Officer of the 6<sup>th</sup> MCD, I take personal responsibility and accountability for establishing an environment in which every individual – without hesitation - can approach their leaders with an expectation that there will be an eagerness to help solve problems without judgment or retribution.



Preventing suicide will require us to be active (not passive), have empathy (not sympathy), be proactive (not reactive), and take a personal interest in improving the lives of others balanced with a sense of accountability when a wrong has been committed. This will require a hyper-vigilant approach in which we are ready to ask the difficult questions to help identify at-risk individuals, and then to provide immediate intervention, if required, to prevent losing an irreplaceable part of our team. If you see, hear, or think anything implying someone has lost hope, swift action is necessary; never assume you are over-reacting. Do not minimize the matter and never promise you will keep it a secret. Get help immediately. Use your chain of command to inform them of the situation. Find someone. Never leave a person alone who is even remotely contemplating suicide. Talk to him or her and let them know that you care and want to help.

Suicide is a permanent 'solution' to a temporary problem. Every one of us has deep roots, and it must be emphasized to anyone at-risk there are people who care about them; who will be left behind if they act on a passing impulse; and will have all of the associated guilt and doubt as to what they missed or did wrong. We must further discard some of our misconceptions regarding those who contemplate suicide, even in jest -- particularly that people who joke about suicide are not serious about acting. The exact opposite is true! Almost everyone who attempts suicide has given some sort of indication in the past.

Make no mistake: preventing suicide is a challenge that will require a serious intellectual, individual, organizational, and leadership commitment. I am 100% "All-In" to meeting this challenge, and expect and require everyone in the 6<sup>th</sup> MCD to be equally committed. Do not hesitate to help someone who is in a downward spiral. Get involved – a mad friend is better than a dead friend. If you are the one experiencing depression or thoughts of suicide – do not hesitate to talk to someone. No one is in a one-man fighting hole – have the courage to ask for help! Do NOT keep a problem that is eating away at you to yourself. Chaplains are always available. They are an integrated part of the unit with unique trust and confidence. Being outside the chain of command and having 100% confidentiality make them especially valuable as an adviser if you are unsure on what course of action to take. We must keep strings on each other, pay attention to the micro-details of our surroundings, and take care of each other. This is who we are!

Available resources include the Dstress hotline (1-877-476-7734), MCCS MCAS Beaufort Clinical Counseling Center located in the MCAS Beaufort IPAC building (843-228-6126), the MCRD Parris Island Branch Medical Clinic (843-228-4237), the Beaufort Naval Hospital Emergency Room (843-228-5400), Military Onesource 24 Hour Hotline (1-800-342-9647), National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK), and the 6<sup>th</sup> MCD Chaplain, LT Shaw (843-228-4414) or email: Jason.shaw@marines.usmc.mil. For more information on suicide prevention, contact the MCRD/ERR Force Preservation Office at 843-228-2704 or the MCCS Suicide Prevention website:  
<http://www.usmcmccs.org/suicideprevent/index.cfm?sid=ml&smid=1>.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. J. Bowers". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

W. J. BOWERS  
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commanding Officer