



Michigan, Kansas lead Guard efforts to stop suicide

The National Guard has taken many steps to reduce the number of suicides within its ranks and has instituted a number of programs aimed at both building resiliency among its members and ensuring that those who need help receive the care they need.

In Michigan, that concept was used for the Buddy to Buddy program.

“It’s an initiative that we came up with (when we) realized that the Army has been around for a long, long time and has an established a chain of command,” said Army Brig. Gen. James R. Anderson during the 2010 Suicide Prevention Conference.

The program provides training on listening skills and warning signs to watch out for and allows squad leaders and others to look out for their Soldiers.

For those who have served overseas, the deployment experience can form strong bonds among unit members.

However, unlike those in the active component who return from overseas and largely still have that unit and those bonds in place, returning Guard members may only see their fellow unit mem-

bers at monthly drills.

The Buddy to Buddy program is an attempt to bridge that gap. In addition to the Buddy to Buddy program, the Michigan Guard has also instituted the Road to Re-integration program, which brings Soldiers and their families together at the 45, 60 and 90 day points after returning from a deployment.

The goals of the program are much the same as the Buddy to Buddy, but provide Soldiers with access to mental health providers and other professional care outlets. The program covers the five components of resiliency training — social, emotional, physical, spiritual and family. “It’s all intertwined,” Gonzalez said. “Family may be a little bit of social, so we’re trying to intertwine it all together.”

TRICARE Reservist retirees To be covered under policy

A new program will offer “gray area” reservists the opportunity to purchase TRICARE health care coverage.

While qualified members of the Selected Reserve may purchase premium-based coverage under TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS), retired National Guard and

Reserve personnel did not have TRICARE health coverage options until they reached age 60.

Under a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2010, that’s all changed.

The new provision will allow certain members of the Retired Reserve who are not yet age 60 (“gray-area” retirees), to purchase TRICARE Standard (and Extra) coverage. TRICARE Extra simply means beneficiaries have lower out-of-pocket costs if they use a network provider.

“Retired reservists should be able to purchase coverage by late summer or early fall of 2010,” said Rear Adm. Christine Hunter, deputy director of the TRICARE Management Activity.

For more information about TRICARE benefits go to <http://www.tricare.mil>.

Air Guard reaches out to separating service members

A new Air National Guard direct-mail recruiting campaign is educating active duty service members leaving the military on the benefits of continuing their service as part-timers.

“This is an awareness piece to get people thinking about the Air Guard,” said Tech. Sgt. Matt Leas from the Air Guard’s marketing office here.

He said the Air Guard’s recruiting and marketing office sent out information packets Jan. 4 to the mail boxes of nearly 100,000 Air Force, Army and Navy service members, who have recently separated or are separating.

The direct-mail packages contain a letter describing the benefits and opportunities of Air Guard service, with special, four-color inserts on the service’s specific needs for health professionals as well as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance professionals. Interested service members can return a postage-paid reply card or call the Air Guard Call Center at 1-800-864-6264 to learn more. The Web site, www.goang.com, is also a good method of contact.



U.S. Air Force Airman Derrick Coakley (left) and Senior Airman Sophia Ramallo perform maintenance on an A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Efen Lopez, U.S. Air Force