



# Ohio Adjutant General's Department

Major General John C. Harris Jr., Adjutant General

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## September is National Suicide Prevention Month

Every Ohio National Guard Soldier and Airman is a valued member of the team – a 16,000-member team that is in many ways, also a Family. That's why it saddens me every time I hear of a suicide death among our ranks. It also makes me pause and think, "Could we have done more or become more involved in that National Guard member's life to identify any problems and help that Family member before it was too late?"

This is a serious matter across the military. So much so that Gen. David Goldfein, Air Force chief of staff, ordered active-duty commanders to conduct a resilience tactical pause this month to focus on Airmen and their well-being. In his letter, he calls suicide "an adversary that is killing more of our airmen than any enemy on the planet."

I share Gen. Goldfein's feeling that we must focus our attention on the importance of mental health and suicide prevention, and do everything possible to support our battle buddies and wingmen who may be struggling in the face of life's challenges.

We cannot stand silently on the sidelines and let this adversary take another one of our own.

If you or someone you know is having trouble with depression, alcohol or drug abuse, or has experienced recent relationship or financial problems – talk to someone immediately and get help. There is no shame in getting treatment.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24/7 at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

There is also valuable information and resources for unit commanders, service members, and their families through OHIOcares, which has a non-crisis line at 1-800-761-0868 and a website, [OHIOcares.ohio.gov](http://OHIOcares.ohio.gov).

While September is National Suicide Prevention Month, this should be a year-round effort to change the conversation from suicide to suicide prevention.

We have to get past any false ideas that asking for help is a sign of weakness. It's time we all take action to provide support and direct help to those who need it in order to prevent suicides and save lives.

Major General John C. Harris, Jr.  
Ohio National Guard, The Adjutant General