



# LETHAL MEANS SAFETY TOOLKIT

## Tiplist for Commanders



To prevent death by suicide, PAOs and Command Teams may use the following tiplist to effectively communicate how to secure and safely use lethal means.

- Start the Conversation**  
If you notice a Soldier's unusual behavior, try the following approach:
  - 🔒 "I've had a rough day. How's yours going?"
  - 🔒 "Visiting the Chaplain really helped clear my mind. Have you thought of stopping by?"
  - 🔒 "Are you having thoughts of suicide? Let's talk."
  
- Use Adaptive Messaging**  
Even on the same installation there are different living/working environments and populations – each with unique lethal means safety requirements and challenges. Adapt your communications for each specific audience.
  
- When Developing Messaging Consider**
  - 🔒 Housing arrangement: Barracks, On-post, Off-post
  - 🔒 Single, Family or Roommate status
  - 🔒 Component; Active, Guard, Reserve
  - 🔒 Rank
  - 🔒 Age/time in service
  - 🔒 Exposure to discussions on suicide and mental health
  - 🔒 Background
  
- Communicate Safe Storage Options in a Positive Manner**  
Anything that disrupts a suicide attempt can save an individual. Every second counts. Safe storage of lethal means can provide these life-saving seconds.
  - 🔒 Highlight safe storage options for all lethal means: firearms, drugs, and weapons
  - 🔒 Options in the home: gun locks, safes, storage of ammunition, drugs out of reach of young Family members
  - 🔒 Promote options for storing firearms outside the home: police departments, firearms shops, armory, or shooting range
  
- Normalize the Conversation**  
Make lethal means safety discussions a part of your organization's normal conversations.
  - 🔒 Include lethal means topics in all weekend, drill, and holiday safety briefs
  - 🔒 Routinely post lethal means safety content on social media platforms
  - 🔒 Share what you are doing as leader to address lethal means safety
  - 🔒 Promote through installation newspapers and magazines
  - 🔒 Discuss with unit Family organizations
  
- Address Misconceptions with Facts – not Opinions or Perceptions**  
DOD studies indicate that over half of service members believe that if someone wants to act on suicide, they will find a way. This is not true. Other misconceptions exist, both locally and Army-wide. Address them using statistics and research from credible sources.
  - 🔒 Focus messaging on evidence-based recommendations
  - 🔒 Show correlation between securing lethal means and suicide prevention

### Resources

- 🔒 Army Resilience Directorate website: <https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/suicide-prevention/index.html>
- 🔒 DSPO Leaders Suicide Prevention Safe Messaging Guide: <https://go.usa.gov/xJ6Kb>
- 🔒 DOD Lethal Means Communication Guide: <https://go.usa.gov/xJ6KN>



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