



COMMANDER'S CALL TALKING POINTS

AUGUST 2020



How Leaders Can Support Airmen and Space Professionals with Invisible Wounds

"The United States Air Force is committed to supporting Airmen with invisible wounds by ensuring there are a wide range of treatments available and reducing barriers that might prevent them from seeking out the help they need."

– Chief of Staff of the Air Force David Goldfein, June 2018

The Air Force recognizes the importance of supporting Airmen and Space Professionals living with invisible wounds, defined as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); traumatic brain injury (TBI); or other cognitive, emotional, or behavioral conditions associated with trauma experienced by an individual. The Air Force [Invisible Wounds Initiative](#) aims to improve the continuum of care and positively influence the culture around invisible wounds across the Total Force.

As part of efforts to improve care, a state-of-the-art facility opened in June 2020 at Eglin Air Force Base to treat service members diagnosed with TBI or PTSD. The Intrepid Spirit Center at Eglin Air Force Base offers [cutting-edge therapies and equipment](#) to treat invisible wounds.

Leaders can take steps to create a supportive environment for their Airmen and Space Professionals and improve the perception of invisible wounds. Leaders can learn about common causes and signs and symptoms, know and share available resources, remove barriers, and encourage help-seeking behavior.

Know Common Causes

Identify Airmen and Space Professionals who may be at increased risk of developing invisible wounds by becoming familiar with common causes of trauma:

- Sexual assault
- Exposure to death
- Serious accident
- Combat exposure
- Blast exposure
- Blow to the head
- Physical or emotional abuse
- Stressful/distressing life events (e.g., terrorist attacks, natural disasters)

Recognize Signs & Symptoms

Learn the signs and symptoms of invisible wounds to recognize an Airman or Space Professional in need and encourage them to seek treatment:

- Flashbacks
- Irritable, frustrated, angry
- Trouble with memory and attention
- Sensitivity to light and sound
- Headaches, migraines
- Fatigue
- Poor self-care
- Feeling anxious
- Trouble sleeping, insomnia
- Feeling depressed
- Chronic pain

Know the Resources

Know the available resources to direct Airmen and Space Professionals to seek help:

- Trusted advocates
- Chaplains
- Military & Family Counseling Program (MFLC)
- Military OneSource
- Vet Centers
- Military Treatment Facility (MTF)
- Director of Psychological Help (DPH)
- Military Crisis Line

Create a Supportive Environment

Use the following tips to help create a supportive environment for Airmen and Space Professionals:

- **Share Recovery Stories:** Tell your own story of resilience and overcoming challenges, encourage Airmen and Space Professionals to share their experiences, and share other invisible wounds recovery stories, like those of [Maj. Chris Harmer](#) and [Master Sgt. Jessica Clayton](#)
- **Establish a Culture of Trust:** Regularly check in and talk with your Airmen and Space Professionals to create a culture of trust so that, if needed, they feel comfortable reaching out for help
- **Encourage Airmen to Seek Treatment:** Encourage Airmen who exhibit potential signs and symptoms of invisible wounds to seek support in order to maintain mission-readiness
- **Communicate Positively:** Speak positively about invisible wounds and seeking care to create a supportive environment for your Airmen and Space Professionals

Resources



The [Intrepid Spirit Center](#) at Eglin Air Force Base offers PTSD and TBI treatment for service members.



WOUNDED WARRIOR
carebeyond duty

The [Air Force Wounded Warrior Program](#) provides resources and supports wounded Airmen, Veterans, and their families in their recovery journeys.



[AF Resilience](#) offers tools for Airmen and Space Professionals to maintain resilience.



The [Blue Grit Podcast](#) features interviews with current and former military leaders, mental health experts, and veterans to highlight the techniques they used to overcome adversity.