



The Air Force's Mission is Dependent Upon Airmen Readiness

No matter the threat, adversary or situation, the Air Force is ready to successfully complete each mission. Airmen readiness is a vital component to each mission and as leaders, you have the responsibility to ensure each Airman is resilient—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually fit. The challenges that Airmen face today are rapidly evolving and for those that have or are experiencing invisible wounds, providing a welcoming and caring environment encourages our Airmen to ask for help.

“We must take the time to listen, connect and address how Airmen move from hopeful to hopeless. As leaders, wingmen, as brothers & sisters in arms -- we must take care of each other.” – Gen Dave Goldfein, [@GenDaveGoldfein \(August 1, 2019\)](#)

Lead Your Fellow Wingmen, Own it

Be a role model. Your attitude and beliefs toward invisible wounds can affect how you interact and provide support to your Airmen experiencing symptoms.¹ This in turn can also affect how your Airmen treat each other, ensuring Airmen with invisible wounds are positively reinforced as they take critical steps to address important issues or seek treatment.

Airmen need to know they are not alone, and that leaders and fellow Airmen are available to support and guide them on their road to recovery. Encourage your Airmen to seek help through an open-door policy, creating a community of active peer support, and establishing an environment of open communication by informing them of [available resources](#).

Provide a positive and supportive environment towards invisible wounds and treatment.² Show your fellow Wingmen they are safe in your care, and [encourage your team to be advocates for each other by creating a supportive culture](#) by talking opening about invisible wounds.

- ❖ **Share your story.** Sharing your story will encourage others to share their stories, empowering fellow Airmen to take charge.
- ❖ **Lead by example.** Talking about invisible wounds is courageous and your Airmen will learn from your example.
- ❖ **Be empathetic towards others' situations and experiences.** Remember that if you haven't faced the same experience, it might be hard to imagine what someone else is feeling or experiencing.
- ❖ **Support your Airmen's resilience and recovery.** Encourage each other through challenges and connect Airmen with resources to enable their resilience and recovery.

“Attitude reflects leaders. Your organization, office, squadron...will go as you go. You're responsible for setting the tone, pace, culture, and environment within your organization.”
– CMSAF Kaleth O. Wright, at [26th Annual National Character and Leadership Symposium](#)

Air Force Leadership Supports Total Force Mental Health Fitness

The Air Force takes readiness seriously including an Airman's mental health. Seeking mental health treatment early, at the first sign of symptoms, can improve job performance and overall quality of life. **94% of Airmen who have received PTSD treatment continued to progress in their career.**³

As leaders, it is important to understand that asking for help can be the hardest part of an Airman's road to recovery and ensuring their readiness. Encourage members of your team to speak up and seek help when needed.

In 2017, the Air Force rolled out their [Employee Assistance Program](#), which provides civilian employees and their families with free, confidential resources and support to help manage normal everyday life challenges that may affect job performance and personal well-being. Services include counseling, financial and legal services.

Additionally, in 2017 the Air Force added a Mental Health Assessment to Airmen's annual care routine to ensure that any Airman experiencing undiagnosed invisible wounds would be more likely to receive a diagnosis and appropriate care. Having this requirement become routine for Airmen will help normalize the importance of mental health and make it easier for Airmen to seek care.⁴ The Mental Health staff's job is not to take an Airman's clearance or weapon away, but rather to ensure that all Airmen are ready for action.⁵

“Most of us know someone who has worked through or is going through mental health issues—it's our responsibility, as leaders, to get them the assistance they need.”
– Gen Dave Goldfein, [@GenDaveGoldfein \(June 27, 2019\)](#)

Resources



Eglin Air Force Base's [Invisible Wounds Center](#) is the first of its kind, and is celebrating its first anniversary on August 30. It will become part of a new, state-of-the-art medical center specializing in traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, and pain.

The Air Force's [Employee Assistance Program](#) provides free, confidential resources and support to help manage everyday life challenges that may affect job performance and personal well-being. For 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year assistance call 1-800-222-0364.



The Air Force's [Behavioral Health Optimization Program \(BHOP\)](#) treatment can help with depression, stress, anxiety, and anger and sleep problems through solution-focused behavior change plans. Appointments last 20-30 minutes and patients receive same-day intervention. To schedule a BHOP appointment, call the central appointments number at your nearest MTF.



The [Blue Grit Podcast](#) features conversations with current and former military leaders, mental health experts, elite athletes, veterans, and other individuals who have overcome significant adversity, highlighting various tactics, techniques and procedures podcast guests used during their recovery.

¹ DHHS, CDC, SAMHSA & NIMH. Attitudes Toward Mental Illness: Results from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. (2012). https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/Mental_Health_Reports/pdf/BRFSS_Full%20Report.pdf
² Psychology Today. 5 Steps to Reduce Stigma About Mental Illness. (2019). <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-recovery-coach/201903/5-steps-reduce-stigma-about-mental-illness>
³ U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine. USAF Public Health Report. Vol 3, Issue 1. (2018).
⁴ U.S. Air Force. New annual Mental Health Assessment requirement begins July 31. (2017). <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1253411/new-annual-mental-health-assessment-requirement-begins-july-31/>
⁵ AFMS. Mental Health team provides care with Airmen in mind. (2016). <https://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/News/Display/Article/1482318/mental-health-team-provides-care-with-airmen-in-mind/>