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SUBJ/IMPLEMENTATION OF BRANDON ACT//

REF/A/DOC/USDP&RSECDEF/24AUG21//

AMPN/REF A IS THE OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, PERSONNEL AND READINESS, DIRECTIVE-TYPE MEMORANDUM 23-005 - "SELF-INITIATED REFERRAL PROCESS FOR MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATIONS OF SERVICE MEMBERS"//

RMKS/1. Just as physical health is integral to military readiness, so too is mental health. High-performing teams understand that proactively fostering mental health directly translates to more resilient and adaptable Sailors and Marines. We prioritize sleep, exercise, and nutrition as ongoing, preventative measures to maximize physical fitness. In the same vein, we must transform the way we approach mental health: promoting open dialogues, removing barriers to care, and encouraging our Service Members to prioritize mental well-being not just during times of crisis, but as part of their everyday routine.

To empower our naval forces in accessing needed support, I am directing the immediate implementation of the Brandon Act, named after Navy Petty Officer Third Class Brandon Caserta, who died by suicide in June 2018. The Brandon Act honors the life of Navy Petty Officer Third Class Brandon Caserta by allowing Service Members to seek help confidentially for any reason, at any time, and in any environment, thereby reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental health care.

In alignment with Department of Defense Directive-type Memorandum 23-005, "Self-Initiated Referral Process for Mental Health Evaluations of Service Members," I am directing the Navy and Marine Corps to immediately implement the Brandon Act and establish policy, assign responsibilities, and provide procedures for Service Members to request a referral for a mental health evaluation. Commanding Officers and supervisors must:

(a) Ensure Service Members understand the procedures to request a referral for a mental health evaluation (MHE).

(b) Ensure Service Members who request a MHE are referred to a provider as soon as practicable.

(c) Treat referrals for MHEs in a manner similar to referrals for other medical services, to the maximum extent practicable.

(d) Maintain privacy protections and reduce stigma by NOT requesting information from mental health providers regarding the results of the MHE except for information that may be disclosed to command in accordance with DTM 23-005.

(e) Be trained to recognize personnel who may require MHEs based on the individual being an imminent danger to self.

Leaders at all levels should be aware of and promote the many behavioral health and non-medical resources available to Sailors and Marines. Mental health services are available at military medical treatment facilities, within operational units, and virtually. Non-medical mental health resources are available through our Fleet and Family Support Centers, Marine Corps Community Services, Chaplains, Military and Family Life Counselors, and Deployment Resiliency Counselors. Encourage your Service Members to leverage our 'No Wrong Door' Policy, which reinforces Sailors' and Marines' right to access the full continuum of behavioral health resources, a direct connection to a service provider, and follow-through support that ensures those seeking care get the help they need.

Sailors and Marines are empowered and encouraged to directly seek mental health services as desired from any of these resources, including from mental health clinics, and do not need to wait on a referral.

No amount of programs or policies can replace the value and impact of engaged leaders in building teams where mental health is prioritized, normalized, and promoted. High-performing teams start with leaders who role-model trust, connection, respect, and teamwork. Leaders have a disproportionate impact on their followers; sharing positive experiences with the behavioral health system, maintaining the privacy and confidentiality for team members who seek care, and promoting the process for self-referrals can significantly reduce Service Member concerns around help-seeking.

Our ability to maintain naval superiority requires leaders who create psychologically safe environments, team members who promote each other's well-being, and the personal self-awareness to know when we need increased support. We have a duty to normalize mental health conversations and focus on mental fitness with the same determination we use to foster physical health.

2. Released by the Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy.//



Carlos Del Toro