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FM COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC
TO ALCOAST
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ALCOAST 124/24

SSIC 6000

SUBJ: BRANDON ACT IMPLEMENTATION AND UPDATE TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH,
COMDTINST 6000.5

A. 10 U.S.C § 1090b

B. Office of the Secretary of Defense Directive-Type
Memorandum 23-005

C. Behavioral Health, COMDTINST 6000.5

1. This ALCOAST provides direction in relation to REF (A) updates required from the National Defense Authorization Act of 2022 that is commonly known as the Brandon Act. The Brandon Act was drafted in response to the death of Brandon Caserta, a U.S. Navy service member who died by suicide, and resulted from the steadfast advocacy of his parents and the establishment of a foundation to increase proactive command support and assistance when service members seek behavioral health services.

2. While REF (A) expressly applies to the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Coast Guard (CG) fully support the spirit of the Brandon Act and intend to implement applicable elements of it to mature our behavioral health program and reduce suicide-related behaviors in the CG.

3. It is recognized that many CG leaders, as well as most CG members, are already providing this level of support informally. REF (B) describes how DoD will implement the Brandon Act; however, the CG requires a slightly different implementation strategy, and this policy update will formalize the CG's approach in the above situations.

4. The new policy requires that when a service member requests assistance gaining access to behavioral health services, commanding officers and supervisors (E6 and above) are now required to refer the member to a behavioral health provider for an evaluation, as soon as practicable. The recently promulgated Behavioral Health Playbook includes significant details and support for command leadership and supervisors on how to handle situations related to behavioral health and is another good resource to assist in these types of situations. "So Others May Live" is the CG Rescue Swimmers' creed and reflects the highest calling of our Service. Each of us must remain willing and able to do all that is required to save another's life. Enacting this principle of Service and Safety begins with how we acknowledge, treat, and care for our shipmates and families. Each member of the CG family (from most junior to most senior, Active Duty, Reserve, Auxiliarists and civilian) are trained and expected to recognize a person in distress and take appropriate action to ensure a warm handoff occurs whenever needed. The playbook can be found on the following website:

(Copy and Paste URL Below into Browser)

<https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for->

5. The Brandon Act also requires all employees to receive annual training on identifying individuals who may need a behavioral health assessment due to a risk of imminent harm to themselves or others, often referred to as suicide-related behaviors. The Suicide Prevention mandatory training has been decoupled from the Sexual Assault Prevention training and can be found on the Learning Management System (# 100643) as a stand-alone course.

6. In addition, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and safeTALK training is available to compliment the LMS #100643 training. Class schedules and details can be found on the following website:

(Copy and Paste URL Below into Browser)

https://uscg.sharepoint-mil.us/sites/hswlsc/work-life_division/SitePages/Work-Life%20Training.aspx

As a further opportunity to help command leadership address these types of situations, details related to Operational Stress Control can be found on the following website:

(Copy and Paste URL Below into Browser)

<https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Human-Resources-CG-1/Health-Safety-and-Work-Life-CG-11/Office-of-Work-Life-CG-111/Health-Promotion-Resources/Operational-Stress-Control/>

7. These requirements will be included in the next revision of REF (C), which will be released within the next year.

8. This message will be cancelled on 14 MAR 2025.

9. POC: CAPT Jerald Mahlau-Heinert, Mental Health Integrator, Email: gerald.l.mahlau-heinert@uscg.mil, (202) 475-5155.

10. RADM Dana L. Thomas, Assistant Commandant for Health, Safety, & Work-Life (CG-1K), sends.

11. Internet release is authorized.