



## ABRAHAM LINCOLN CARRIER STRIKE GROUP FEATURE

Lt. Cmdr. Chelsea Irish, Public Affairs Officer

Phone: (619) 545-7075

Email: [chelsea.irish@cvn72.navy.mil](mailto:chelsea.irish@cvn72.navy.mil)

### **Sailors Supporting Suicide Prevention**

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Karli Wilkerson

PACIFIC OCEAN — Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) observed Suicide Prevention Month Sept. 29 with a suicide prevention resource fair and ice cream social. Hosted by the command's suicide prevention team.

Every September, the Navy observes Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month in support of all Sailors who struggle with mental health. Lincoln provides a comprehensive support system for suicide prevention along with resources for Sailors who may need them.

"Prevention starts with awareness," said Information Systems Technician 1st class Stephen Dumornay, one of the command's drug and alcohol program advisors. "The more our Sailors know, the better."

The Suicide Prevention Program aims to ensure Sailors always have someone to talk to by providing a compassionate network of Sailors who are dedicated to helping those struggling with suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

"I joined the suicide prevention program during a deployment that got extended multiple times and was really tough for a lot of people," Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 2nd

Class Charles Gilbert, a member of the Suicide Prevention Program. “During that deployment, the program had an event in the mess decks so Sailors could go meet members of the program and talk about their struggles.”

The Suicide Prevention Program strives to create a sense of community aboard Lincoln by hosting events where Sailors can connect and safely talk about their problems. The event, held on Lincoln’s aft mess decks, included support personnel who answered questions and provided resources about stress navigation, drug and alcohol abuse and suicide prevention.

“I joined to be a part of a program that has a strong sense of community and helps other Sailors,” said Gilbert. “I think it’s good for our Sailors to have a presence of safety on the boat, and know that there’s people that care and can help provide resources.”

Deploying on a ship for the first time — especially being far away from home, family and friends — can be very difficult for Sailors and tends to be a drastic change from daily life making it easy for people to feel lonely.

“Sometimes feelings of loneliness can progress in severity — this is important to understand because as a mental health provider, we know suicidal thoughts and ideations come from a lack of a sense of belonging and feelings of hopelessness,” said Teresa Mendoza the ship’s acting deployed resiliency councilor. “I remind Sailors that part of suicide prevention is connection; The best gift you can give someone is your time because you are giving them something you can never get back.”

Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month designates a section of the year that encourages Sailors to become more aware of signs and resources. It also encourages more compassionate response methods by setting aside time to have the tough conversations.

“Very few people understand what it’s like to be immediately affected by suicide,” said Chief Hospital Corpsman Matthew Siruchek, the Suicide Prevention Program coordinator. “Even fewer know what it’s like to be that person that’s going through it.”

On September 10, 2022 the President of the United States, Joseph R. Biden Jr. made a proclamation on World Suicide Prevention Day. The proclamation states what has been, and will be done for suicide prevention.

“Last November, my administration released a comprehensive public health strategy for reducing military and veteran suicide, which we are now working to implement,” said Biden. “In March, the Department of Defense established the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee to prevent suicide in the military and address suicide risk for service members who have experienced sexual assault.”

During the last two years, the president has also worked to provide an easier way to get in contact with the Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The new resource changed a 10-digit number to a 3-digit number. The newest number provided is 988, and it is available for call or text from anywhere in the U.S.

“As we look ahead, we must advance equity in mental health and transform how mental health is understood, perceived and treated,” said Biden. “We also remain committed to expanding mental health research and services around the world.”

The first actions someone should take if they suspect that a Sailor is suicidal, is approach them and ask if they are suicidal, according to Gilbert. If the person suspecting is scared to ask, they can always talk to someone in the chain of command to help ask the question. When the response is a yes, someone should stay with the Sailor and bring them to the chaplain or ship’s medical.

“Doing the right thing isn’t always easy and someone might get mad that you brought someone else in the conversation,” said Siruchek. “Maybe it’s uncomfortable, or damages a relationship, but you probably saved a life.”

If a Sailor is feeling suicidal or having suicidal behaviors, they can talk to someone they trust and access the needed resources. Some resources Abraham Lincoln has onboard are chaplain services, ship’s medical, ship’s safety, ship’s drug and alcohol program advisors, the behavioral health technician, ships psychological officer and the deployed resiliency councilor.