



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR
MILITARY PERSONNEL/QUALITY OF LIFE
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR
MILITARY PERSONNEL POLICY
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR
RESERVE AFFAIRS AND AIRMEN READINESS

SUBJECT: Use of the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale

Suicide is a complex problem that requires a multi-strategy public health approach for prevention. While psychotherapeutic and pharmacologic interventions administered by medical and mental health professionals housed in hospitals and clinics are critically important our data and surveillance points toward the majority of Service members never choosing to access behavioral health. As a result, a broader-scale, public health approach to suicide prevention is warranted. A public health approach addresses the problem of suicide from a community perspective. It involves training of multiple gatekeepers on how to identify risk factors and warnings signs for suicide, and to assess for suicide risk,

The Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) supports the use of the Columbia – Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) - Screening Version for use within military communities, and more specifically, with military commands, community counselors, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response victim advocates, chaplains, law enforcement, firefighters, first responders, attorneys, peers, and other gatekeepers. The C-SSRS is already in wide utilization across all branches of the military.

The Centers for Disease Control has adopted the Columbia definitions in the context of their Self-Directed Violence Surveillance Uniformed Definitions, and the National Institutes of Mental Health has acknowledged the C-SSRS's capacity to identify those most at risk for suicidal behavior.

For more information on the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale – Screening Version, please visit the following website: <http://www.cssrs.columbia.edu>. Please see <http://cssrs.columbia.edu/the-columbia-scale-c-cssrs/evidence/> for information on the Columbia's psychometric properties.

For further questions about Suicide Prevention tools, please contact DSPO at 703-614-8840.

Keita Franklin, PhD, LCSW
Director
Defense Suicide Prevention Office