

**JOINT NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Jan. 14, 2021

## **ND National Guard and Department of Human Services receive U.S. Army award for suicide prevention efforts**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The U.S. Army recognized the North Dakota National Guard and the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Field Services with the 2020 Army Community Partnership Award during a virtual ceremony on Jan. 13. This award recognizes the collaboration between the two agencies in an initiative to mitigate the risk of suicide by service members.

This award is given to Army agencies and installations that demonstrate partnerships that improve the lives of service members and their families, enhance Army readiness and modernization capabilities and build stronger community relationships. North Dakota was one of 10 national entities recognized with the award during a virtual ceremony that originated from the Pentagon. The virtual ceremony was hosted by the [Honorable Alex Beehler](#), Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and the Environment and [Lt. Gen. Jason T. Evans](#), Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9.

Accepting the award on behalf of the North Dakota National Guard and North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Field Services was Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, adjutant general. Dohrmann was joined by Brad Brown who accepted the award on behalf of Alanna Zeller with the North Dakota Department of Human Services. Brown also serves part-time in the North Dakota National Guard. Also in attendance was Amy Ruff, North Dakota National Guard suicide prevention; and Col. Warren Pauling, director of personnel for the North Dakota National Guard.

"We are proud to partner with the North Dakota Department of Human Services in this important initiative, said Dohrmann. "Partnering with state agencies and our communities is second nature to the National Guard because we are a community-based organization. We serve the communities we live in and this program builds resiliency and helps mitigate suicide within our force and our communities."

This partnership also supports multiple Governor's initiatives (behavioral health and reinventing government).

The Partnership in Prevention initiative began in 2018 as a statewide work group to expand training opportunities and share suicide-prevention strategies and resources to help reduce the stigma around suicide.

One main component of the effort involves providing evidence-based suicide intervention training. Training participants learn to identify risks and build skills to help individuals who are struggling with thoughts of suicide. The training sessions are led by the North Dakota National Guard for its members and their families, team members from the North Dakota Department of Human Services regional human service centers and other community partners. Funding for the training materials is provided by the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division.

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## **N.D. National Guard and Department of Human Services Receive U.S. Army Award for Suicide Prevention Efforts**

**Page 2**

"We are very honored to receive this national recognition for partnering with members from the North Dakota National Guard," said Alanna Zeller, Southeast Human Service Center's assistant regional director and certified intervention trainer. "This collaboration allows us to expand resources to communities across the state to help build safer communities. Building local intervention capacity is now more important than ever, as we see many individuals struggling with isolation and added stress due to the pandemic."

In 2020, 28 people received the suicide intervention training before the in-person trainings were suspended due to the pandemic. Organizers expect to train an additional 122 people in 2021.

The Division of Field Services includes the North Dakota Department of Human Services' regional human service centers located in Bismarck, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Minot and Williston. Each center provides vital community-based behavioral health services either in person, through community outreach or by mobile crisis services.

Anyone experiencing a crisis or struggling with thoughts of suicide is urged to call the 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or call 2-1-1.

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