

# Ready Access to Behavioral Health Care & Suicide Prevention

Fiscal Year 2025 Fact Sheet



# NGAUS



## The Issue

Reserve service members do not have consistent access to timely, quality, and affordable behavioral health services. Barriers to care, such as TRICARE eligibility, frequent activations, and geographic isolation often result in Guard members forgoing behavioral healthcare. Differences between the Active and Reserve component's behavioral health needs must be acknowledged and addressed to reduce suicide rates and improve health within the National Guard.

Psychological health professionals say "connectedness and belonging" are some of the most powerful tools in building resilience. Service members taking time to talk and listen to each other can be a vital tactic in the battle against suicide.

## Background

Our service members continue to face challenges obtaining healthcare, especially while deployed overseas and moving on or off TRICARE. This is a particular issue with behavioral health when intervention at a crisis point is imperative to prevent suicide and acts of violence. In line with the Department of Defense's People First Mission, we must invest in Guard-accessible programs and ensure continuity of care by expanding TRICARE benefits. The 2022 Department of Defense annual suicide report found that 96 National Guard service members died by suicide, which was the highest suicide rate across the military. The National Guard and Reserves are unique in that service members typically only spend time with their units during monthly or annual training events and are otherwise geographically dispersed. Meeting the behavioral health needs of service members is essential to both the readiness of the force and individual well-being. As such, NGAUS supports increased access to quality behavioral health care, effective integration of telehealth, and strengthening the behavioral health workforce overall.

## Recommendation

- Reintroduce the Healthcare for Our Troops Act to provide zero-cost TRICARE.
- Support H.R. 3011 to establish a task force to study the accessibility of care and consistent benefits.
- Support S.456 to provide license reciprocity for non-medical mental and behavioral health counselors.
- Provide funding for behavioral health programs tailored for the Reserve Component within defense appropriations legislation, including the National Guard Preventative Behavioral health program.



Learn more at  
[ngaus.org](https://ngaus.org)

NGAUS Contact **Julian Plamann**  
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS MANAGER, JOINT PROGRAMS  
[julian.plamann@ngaus.org](mailto:julian.plamann@ngaus.org)

