



## THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1200 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

HEALTH AFFAIRS

June 21, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (MANPOWER AND  
RESERVE AFFAIRS)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (MANPOWER AND  
RESERVE AFFAIRS)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE (MANPOWER  
AND RESERVE AFFAIRS)  
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY

SUBJECT: Clarification of Policy Established in DoD Instruction 6490.08, "Command Notification Requirements to Dispel Stigmas in Providing Mental Health Care to Service Members," September 6, 2023, Sections 3.1.b.(1)(b) and 3.1.b.(2)(b)

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide clarification to Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 6490.08 "Command Notification Requirements to Dispel Stigmas in Providing Mental Health Care to Service Members." Sections 3.1.b.(1)(b) and 3.1.b.(2)(b) of the DoDI establish policy regarding when command notification by health care providers may be necessary. This memorandum provides clarifying guidance on when health care providers should notify command in certain exigent circumstances.

To encourage help-seeking behavior and reduce the stigma for help-seeking in the provision of mental health care, the following additional clarification is provided for the implementation of sections 3.1.b.(1)(b) and 3.1.b.(2)(b) of DoDI 6490.08 as follows:

- As a general rule for providers, if a provider believes there is a serious risk of harm to self or to others by the Service member, consistent with clinical best practices, the situation rises to a level where the command should be notified.
- Member-specific safety plans can be beneficial in reducing suicide risk for any Service member enrolled in mental health care. As a general rule, the development of a member-specific safety plan, in the absence of a provider's belief that there is serious risk of harm to self or to others by the Service member, does not warrant a command notification.
- If the provider is uncertain whether command notification is warranted, then consultation with another health care provider or clinical supervisor is highly recommended. Ultimately, ensuring the Service member's safety and well-being should be the overriding priority.

This clarifying guidance will be incorporated into the next update to DoDI 6490.08. In the interim, this memorandum reaffirms the DoD's efforts to promote mitigating stigma in obtaining mental health care services by promoting the confidentiality of mental health care services provided to members who voluntarily seek such services, except in a case in which there is an applicable exigent circumstance.

MULLEN.SEILEEN.  
MARIE.1519853007

Digitally signed by  
MULLEN.SEILEEN.MARIE.15198  
53007  
Date: 2024.06.21 13:54:21 -04'00'

Lester Martínez-López, M.D., M.P.H.,

Attachments:

As stated

cc:

Joint Staff Surgeon