

# The Army Suicide Prevention Program

Suicide Prevention and Awareness  
Training for the United States Army

*Prepared by*

The American Association of Suicidology

*and*

The U. S. Army Center for  
Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine

# Our Mission

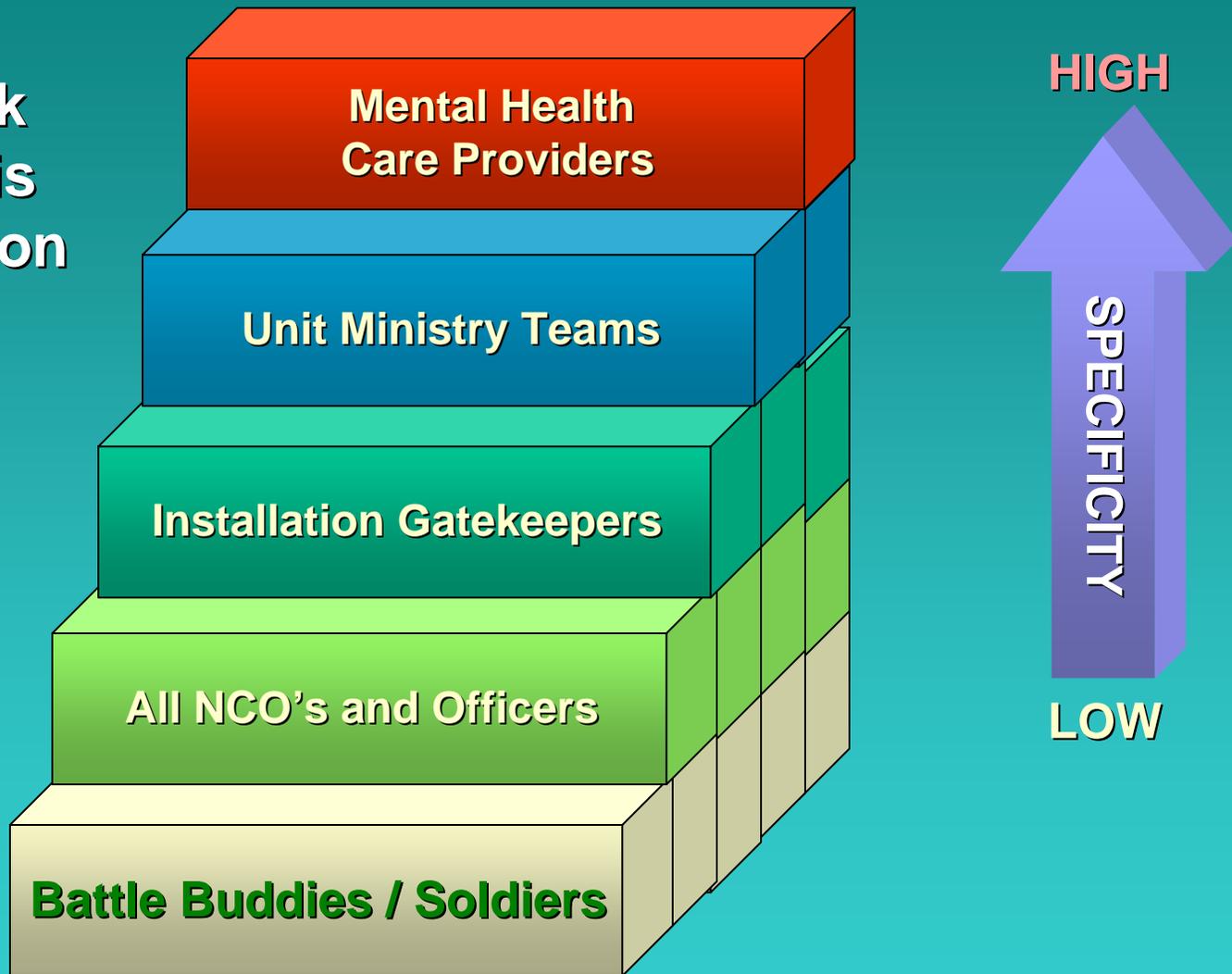
**Minimize Army suicidal behavior by encouraging help-seeking and providing “Buddy Care.”**



The Army Suicide Prevention Program is based on trained and ready personnel at all levels. The mission of all personnel is to encourage help-seeking behaviors and to attain proficiency in the “Buddy Care” principles in this training module.

# Levels of Training

Individual Suicidal Risk Awareness is the foundation for all subsequent levels of Suicide Prevention Training.



# Support: Learning Objectives

1. Describe primary, secondary, and tertiary suicide prevention
2. Identify personal and environmental protective factors
3. Know information about local support resources and programs

# Support: Learning Objectives

4. Promote cohesion and a sense of belonging
5. Encourage help seeking behavior

# Army Suicide Prevention and Awareness Training

## TERTIARY

Recognizing and treating psychiatric disorders that result in acute suicidal Behaviors.

Mental Health Care Providers

Unit Ministry Teams

Installation Gatekeepers

All NCO's and Officers

Battle Buddies/Soldiers

## SECONDARY

Recognizing the obvious signs and symptoms of distress/crisis and potential emotional/mental disorder while providing caring support and needed Interventions.

## PRIMARY

Anticipating potential times of crisis and structuring pre-emptive support systems.

Soldier/Family Support Systems and Well-being Screening

# Structure

Screen (Primary)

Spot (Secondary)

Secure (Tertiary)

SUPPORT

# Personal Protective Factors

- ◆ Easy temperament
- ◆ Previous experience with self-mastery, problem solving, and crisis resolution
- ◆ Optimistic outlook
- ◆ Social/emotional competence
- ◆ High self esteem, self worth

# Personal Protective Factors

- ◆ Decision making, problem solving skills
- ◆ Sense of personal control, self efficacy
- ◆ Sense of belonging to a group and/or organization
- ◆ High and realistic expectations
- ◆ High spiritual resiliency

# Environmental Protective Factors

- ◆ Strong family relationships
- ◆ Models of healthy coping
- ◆ Encouragement of participation
- ◆ Opportunities to make significant contributions

# Environmental Protective Factors

- ◆ Available social supports
- ◆ Available helping resources
- ◆ Healthy spiritual/religious affiliation
- ◆ Cultural and religious beliefs against suicide and in support of self-preservation

# Support

- ◆ **The Reasons for Living Inventory, Linehan, Goodstein, Nielsen & Chiles (1983)**
- ◆ **Spirituality and Resilience Assessment Packet, Version 4.2, Kass (2000)**

# Connections save lives.

- ◆ Spiritual connectedness
- ◆ Unit cohesiveness

**Seeking help is a sign of effectively dealing with problems, and of strength rather than weakness.**

**A good leader does not  
expose those under his/her  
command to unnecessary risk.**

# Support

- ◆ Promote a norm of mutual Buddy Care among all military personnel: “We *are* our brother’s keepers!”
- ◆ Pay attention to warning signs and respond to those who need help

# Support

- ◆ Pay close attention to the personal needs of your people and be on the lookout for signs of stress
- ◆ Communicate in your words and actions that it is not only acceptable, but a sign of strength, to recognize life problems and get help to deal with them constructively

# Support

- ◆ **Support and protect to the fullest extent possible those courageous people who seek help early, before a crisis develops**

# Support

- ◆ Create a responsive, caring, and responsible environment where individuals are motivated to seek help with personal struggles without fear of being singled out

# Support

- ◆ Foster a social climate in your unit that communicates to everyone, “You belong here.”

# Our Mission

**Minimize Army suicidal behavior by encouraging help-seeking and providing “Buddy Care.”**



The Army Suicide Prevention Program is based on trained and ready personnel at all levels. The mission of all personnel is to encourage help-seeking behaviors and to attain proficiency in the “Buddy Care” principles in this training module.

# Screen: Learning Objectives

- ◆ Understand the benefits of gated screening
- ◆ Be informed about the confidentiality of screening results
- ◆ Be informed about secondary screening instruments

# Screen

- ◆ **The Army Structure makes screening viable**
- ◆ **Screening must be gated**
- ◆ **The Suicide Prevention Standing Committee collects and reports anonymous data**

# Screen

## Goldberg Well-Being Scale (1972)

Please circle the most appropriate response:

In the last two weeks have you:	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>No more than usual</i>	<i>A little more than usual</i>	<i>A lot more than usual</i>
1 Been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?	1	2	3	4
2 Lost much sleep over worry?	1	2	3	4
3 Felt that you are playing a useful part in things?	1	2	3	4
4 Felt capable of making decisions about things?	1	2	3	4
5 Felt constantly under strain?	1	2	3	4
6 Felt that you couldn't overcome your difficulties?	1	2	3	4
7 Been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?	1	2	3	4
8 Been able to face up to your problems?	1	2	3	4
9 Been feeling unhappy and depressed?	1	2	3	4
10 Been losing confidence in yourself?	1	2	3	4
11 Been thinking of yourself as a useless person?	1	2	3	4
12 Been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?	1	2	3	4

# Screen

- ◆ Goldberg Well-being Scale information will be disclosed only to the individual and will be used only to assess and assist personnel during of times of distress.
- ◆ Unit Trends may be reported to the Unit Commander as a gauge of his/her unit well-being.

# Screen

- ◆ **Multidimensional Health Profile (MHP) Ruehlman, Lanyon & Karoly**
- ◆ **Life Stressors and Social Resources Inventory (LISRES-Adult), Moos**

# ***Gatekeeper Lesson 1***

**All Personnel**

# ***Gatekeeper Lesson 1***

## **Learning Objectives**

- 1. Understand The Suicide Model.**
- 2. Answer general questions about suicide.**
- 3. Identify common precipitants of suicide.**
- 4. Identify symptoms of depression.**
- 5. Identify myths about suicide.**
- 6. Identify warning signs of suicide.**
- 7. Take appropriate action in response to at-risk individual.**

# Main Points

- ◆ The Suicide Model
- ◆ What is suicide?
- ◆ Why should we know about suicide?
- ◆ Why do people commit suicide?
- ◆ Some stressful situations that can trigger suicidal feelings in the Army
- ◆ Who commits suicide?

# Main Points

- ◆ Special problems that can cause suicidal feelings
- ◆ Misconceptions about suicide

# Main Points

- ◆ How can you tell if someone is thinking about committing suicide?
- ◆ Common symptoms of depression and hopelessness

# Main Points

- ◆ Referral procedures

# The Army Suicide Prevention Model



## INDIVIDUAL READINESS

Normal Life Stressor or Disorder

## PREVENTION

- Identifying "High Risk" Soldiers
- Caring and Proactive Leaders
- Encouraging Help Seeking Behavior
- Positive Life Coping Skills

Awareness Training

## INTERVENTION

- Suicide Awareness and Vigilance
- Integrated & Synchronized Unit and Community-wide support Agencies
- Assured Problem Resolution

Referral

Life Crisis

Outpatient Care

Suicidal Ideation

## SECURE

- Safeguard
- Psychiatric Treatment
- Psychiatric Assessment

Inpatient Care

Follow on Care

Suicide Behaviors

**DEATH**

Postvention

**Continuity of Care**  
(Installation Standing Committee)

# Suicidal Behavior

- ◆ Serious suicidal thoughts or threats
- ◆ Self destructive acts
- ◆ Attempts to harm, but not kill oneself
- ◆ Attempts to commit suicide
- ◆ Completed suicide

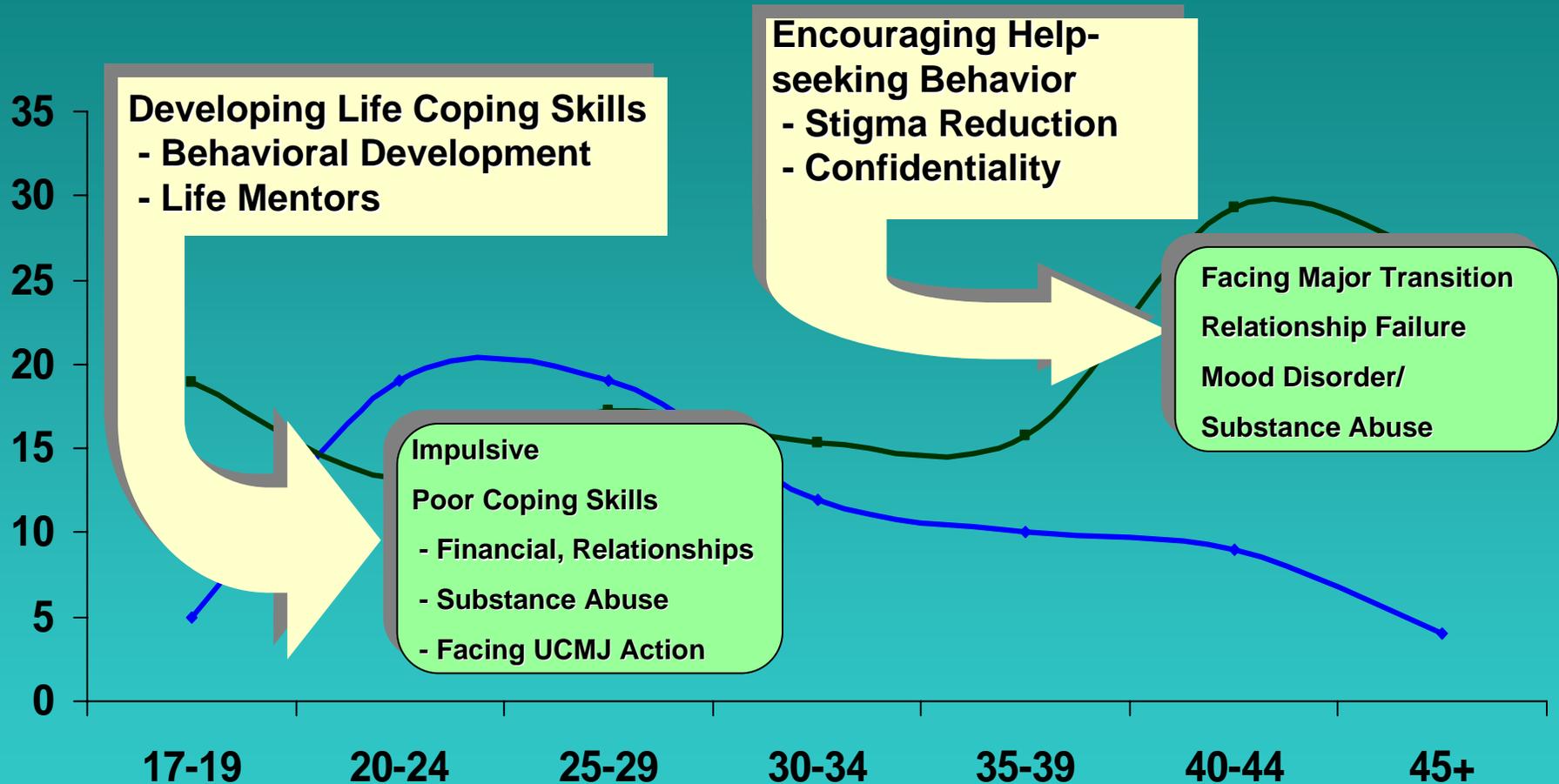
# Triggers of Suicidal Behavior

- ◆ A bad evaluation for an enlisted soldier or officer
- ◆ The breakup of a close relationship
- ◆ Drug or alcohol abuse
- ◆ Reunion from a long field training or isolated tour
- ◆ Leaving old friends
- ◆ Being alone with concerns about self or family
- ◆ Financial stressors
- ◆ New military assignments

# Triggers of Suicidal Behavior

- ◆ Recent interpersonal losses
- ◆ Loss of esteem/status
- ◆ Humiliation
- ◆ Rejection (e.g., job, promotion boy/girlfriend)
- ◆ Disciplinary or legal difficulty
- ◆ Suicide of a friend or family member
- ◆ Discharge from treatment or from service
- ◆ Retirement

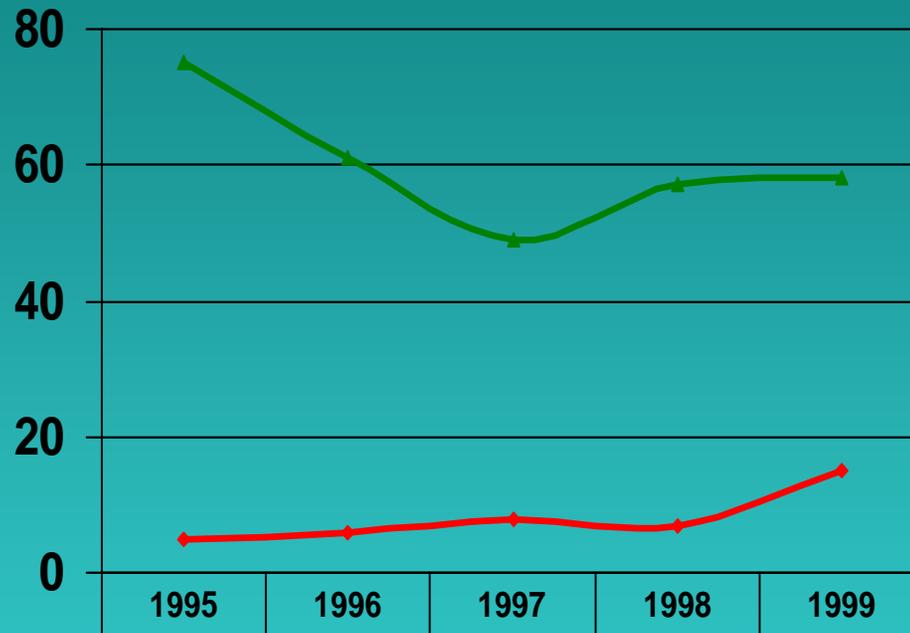
# “Bimodal” Distribution



•Numbers based upon U.S. Army Casualty Reports confirmed suicides for active duty RA, ANG, USAR for CY 99

—●— TOTAL —■— RATE PER 100K

# Suicide Totals by Force

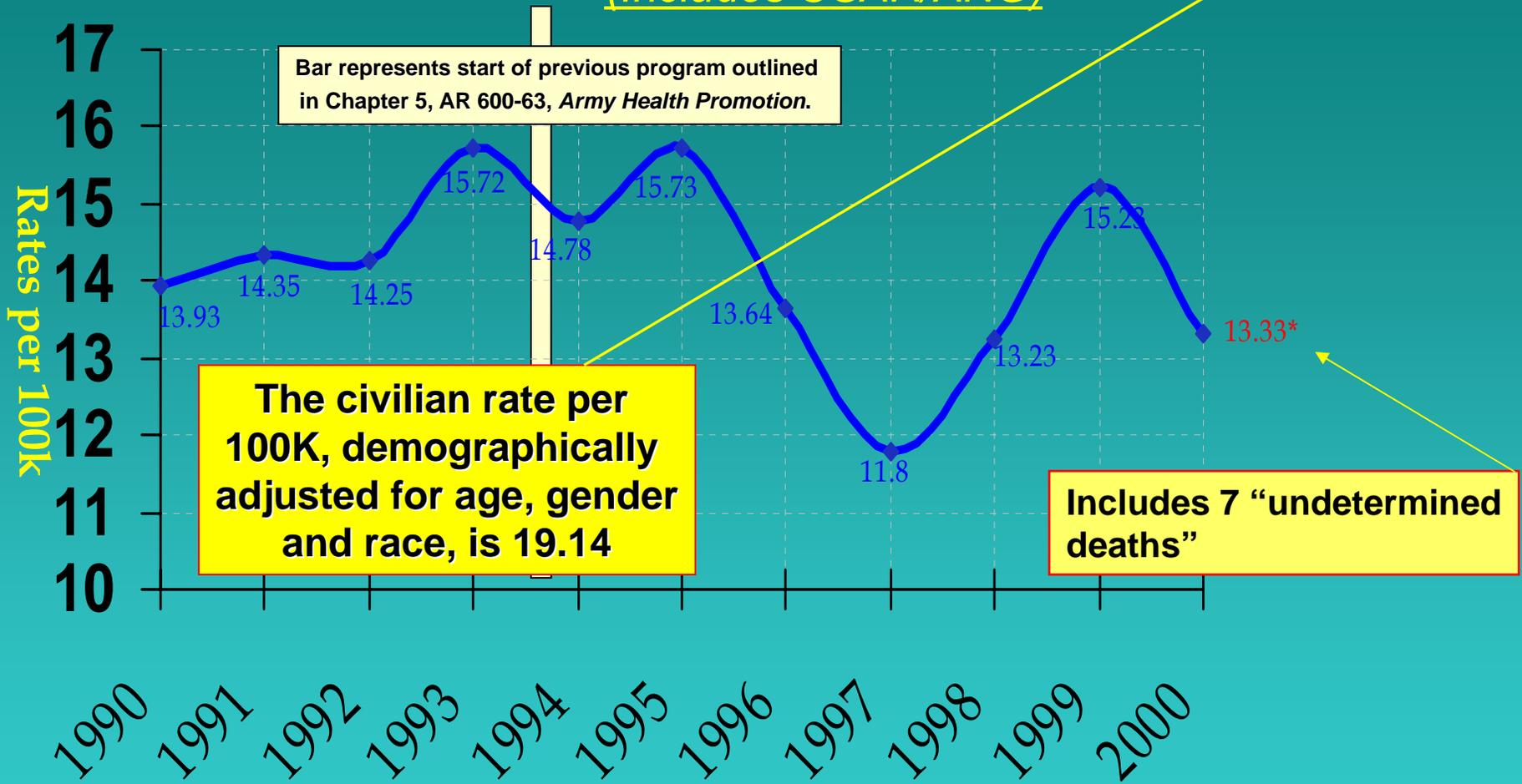


	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
ANG/USAR Suicide Totals	5	6	8	7	15
RA Suicide Totals	75	61	49	57	58

ANG/USAR Suicide Totals RA Suicide Totals

# Suicide Rate Trends \*

(Includes USAR/ANG)



102 87 90 80 80 67 57 63 74 66 63

In the 1990's, the Army lost a battalion's equivalent (800) to suicide

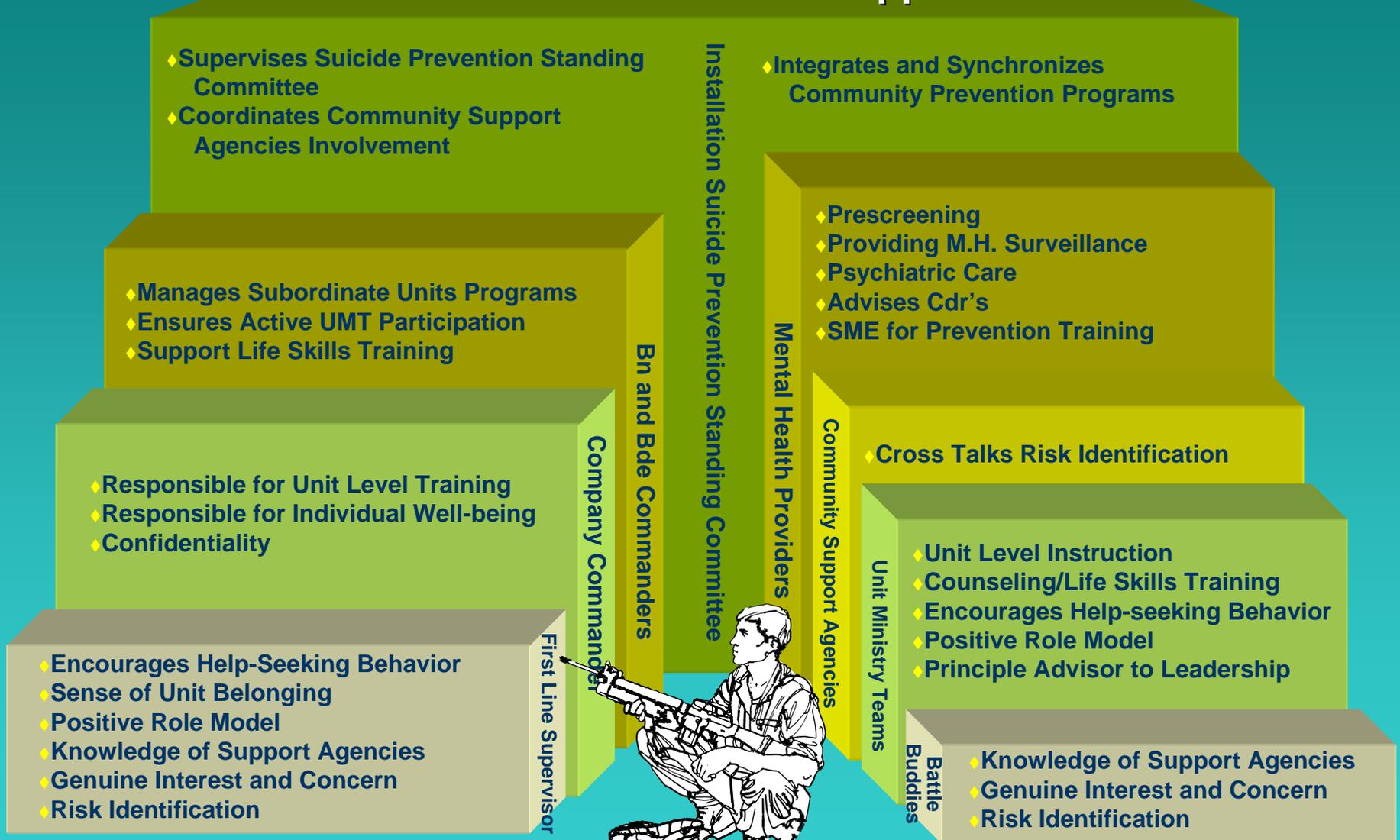
# *Gatekeeper Lesson 2*

## Officers and NCOs

# Synchronized Prevention Measures

## Leader Involvement

## Support Measures



# *Gatekeeper Lesson 2*

## **Learning Objectives**

- 1. Inquire about suicide**
- 2. Respond to phone callers**
- 3. Obtain help for suicidal individuals**

# Responding to Statements or Threats

- ◆ Stay calm
- ◆ Send someone for help
- ◆ Do not leave alone
- ◆ Buy time

# Responding to Statements or Threats

- ◆ Acknowledge
- ◆ Listen
- ◆ Convey

# Responding to Statements or Threats

- ◆ Secure
- ◆ Note the time
- ◆ Take action

# Asking About Suicide

- ◆ Review your evidence
- ◆ Inquire or state about feelings
- ◆ Persist
- ◆ “Sometimes” approach

# Asking About Suicide

- ◆ Ask directly
- ◆ Get help
- ◆ Convey concern

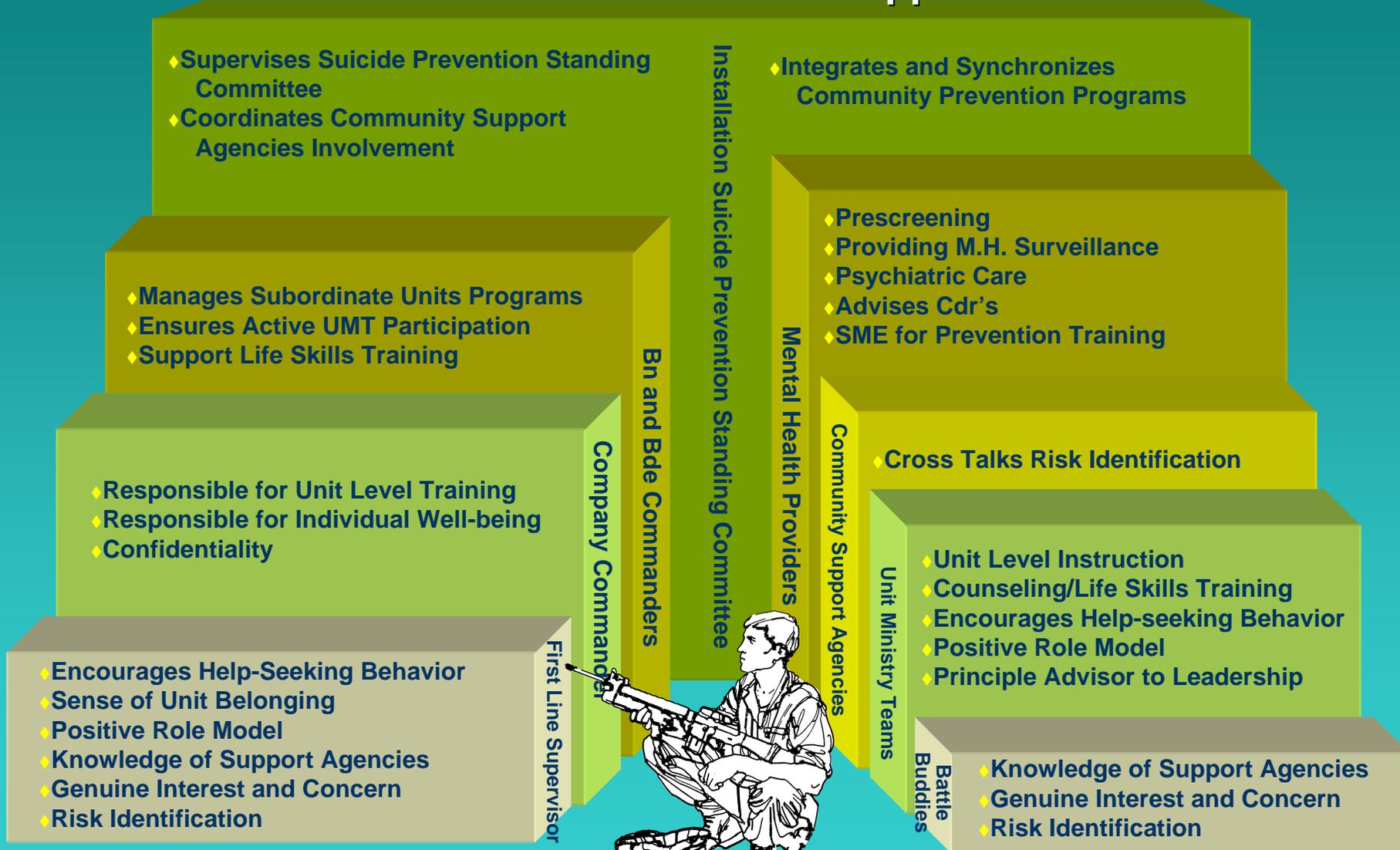
# *Gatekeeper Lesson 3*

## Formal Gatekeepers

# Synchronized Prevention Measures

## Leader Involvement

## Support Measures



# Gatekeeper Lesson 3

## Learning Objectives

- ◆ Identify risk factors for suicide
- ◆ Conduct basic risk assessment

# Risk Assessment Questions

1. Have you been thinking of killing yourself?
2. What has happened that makes life not worth living?
3. How will you do it?
4. How much do you want to die?

# Risk Assessment Questions

5. How much do you want to live?
6. How often do you have these thoughts?
7. When you think of suicide, how long do the thoughts stay with you?
8. Have you ever attempted suicide?

# Risk Assessment Questions

9. Have you been drinking heavily lately or taking drugs?
10. Has anyone in your family committed or attempted suicide?
11. Is there anyone or anything to stop you?
12. On a scale of 1 to 10, what is the probability that you will kill yourself?

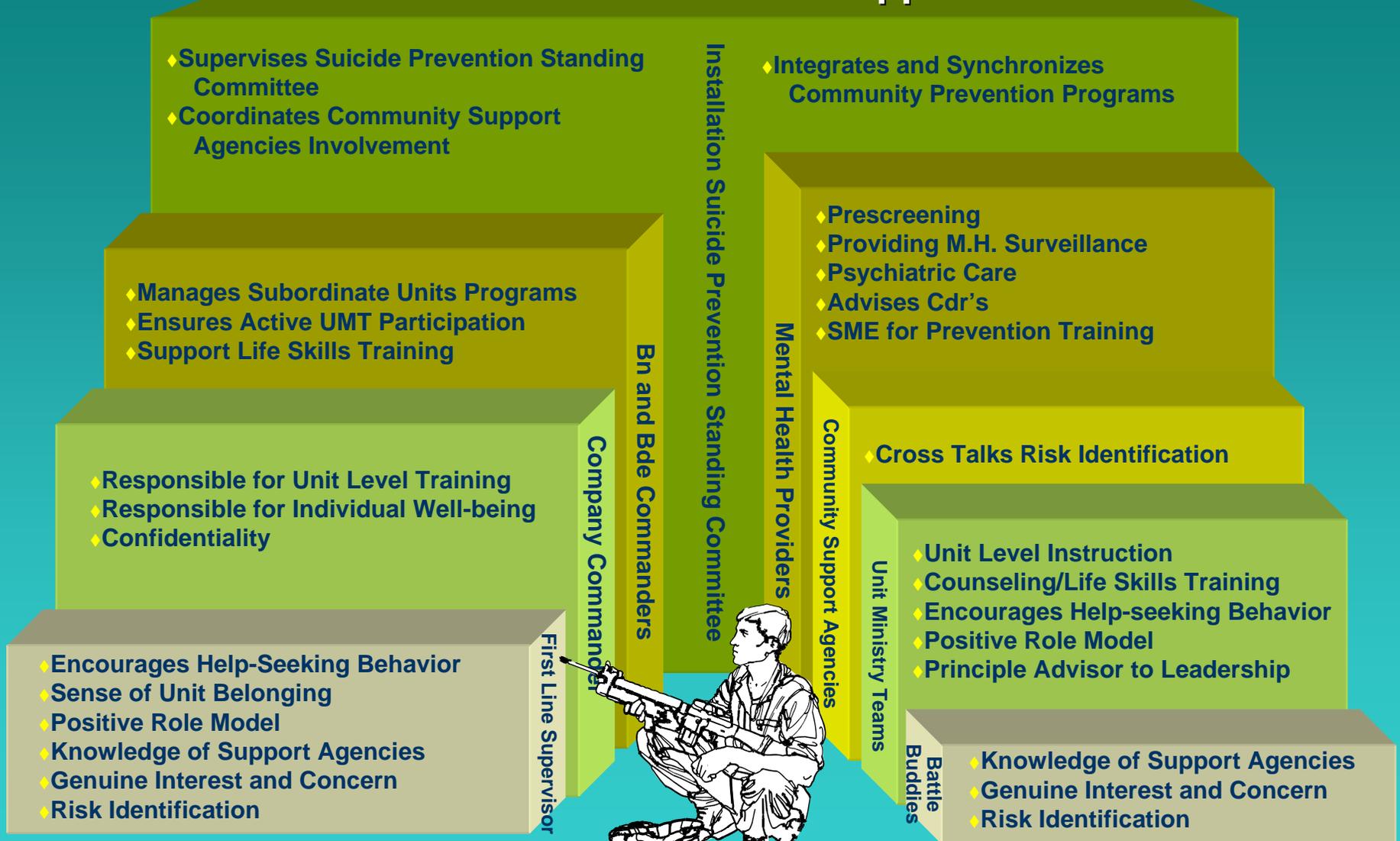
**Secure**

**Health Care Professionals**

# Synchronized Prevention Measures

## Leader Involvement

## Support Measures



# Secure: Learning Objectives

1. Become knowledgeable about Army suicide policies and procedures
2. Conduct advanced risk assessment

# The Suicide Prevention Standing Committee

- ◆ Sets local policies and procedures for:
  - ◆ Individuals suspected of being at risk for suicide
  - ◆ Individuals who are talking about/threatening suicide

# The Suicide Prevention Standing Committee

- ◆ Sets local policies and procedures for:
  - ◆ Individuals who attempt suicide
  - ◆ Completed suicides

# Steps in Suicide Assessment

1. Set the stage for the interview
2. Assess for risk factors and warning signs for suicide
3. Inquire about suicidal ideation
4. Determine the level of suicide risk

# Assessing the Suicide Plan

- ◆ **Perturbation**
- ◆ **Cognitive construction**
- ◆ **Intentionality**
- ◆ **Lethality**

# Assessing the Suicide Plan

- ◆ Specificity
- ◆ Method
- ◆ Means

# *Questions*