

PURPOSE OF THE AIRMAN'S GUIDE

In a **letter** dated 6 August 2012, signed by the United States Air Force, Vice Chief of Staff, General Larry O. Spencer, a new web-based tool was announced that was designed to help all Airmen perform their “Wingman” responsibilities. He specifically states that our Wingman culture encourages all Air Force community members to be vigilant for signs of distress or problems in themselves and their fellow Airmen, and to take swift action when those signs are apparent. Our Wingman culture is a 24/7/365 responsibility. The web-based tool he referenced is “The Airman’s Guide for Assisting Personnel in Distress” – aka, the “Airman’s Guide”.

This web-based guide has become more than just a tool – it’s evolving into a tool box! Because each situation is unique, responses to address distress should be individually tailored to meet specific needs. Information in the Airman’s Guide is intended to be general in nature and could not possibly cover every possible situation that causes distress. It can, however, provide readily accessible and practical guidance that can orient Airmen to stressful situations and potential supportive actions. All Air Force community members should consider saving this web page as a “Favorite link” to assist you when you need help or to assist other when they need help.

Throughout the Airman’s Guide, there is a strong emphasis on prevention. Leaders are encouraged to maintain vigilance for potential stressors and to take immediate action to mitigate negative impact before it occurs. Focus should be placed, not only on helping personnel whose distress had already resulted in work and personal problems, but also on proactive intervention to prevent minor stressors from progressing to a point where there was negative impact on the individual’s physical, emotional, spiritual and social health (resilience) or reduced duty performance or mission readiness.

The Airman’s Guide also serves to strengthen each individual’s effectiveness at recognizing distressed personnel by providing brief overviews of a wide range of potential stressors personnel may encounter as well as the symptoms they may display. It contains general guidance for actions to take with distressed personnel, summaries of relevant policy and a list of helping resources/agencies that are available. Lastly, each section includes a checklist that contains recommendations for responding to distressed personnel. Checkboxes are provided for the user to “check off” steps that are completed. The checkboxes do not serve any other function. Though content in the written sections may go well beyond that contained in checklists, information the checklists overlaps significantly with that contained in the text of the Airman’s Guide.

In general, the purposes of the Airman’s Guide are to:

- Provide information on a wide range of topics related to distress.
- Enhance knowledge of available helping resources and how to access them.
- Enhance ones capacity to tailor support to specific situations.
- Enhance peer support and self-care strategies.
- Enhance Force Health Protection and mission readiness.

The Airman’s Guide is not intended to act as a replacement for the guidance that can be provided by local mental health, legal or other professionals who could offer more detailed advice on

specific situations. This Guide is also not intended to replace official Air Force or DoD guidance and is not intended to be directive, except in the sense that it references or summarizes official policy. Where applicable in this guide, relevant policy pertaining to the topic being discussed is referenced at the end of each section.