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## Army plans new training after record number of suicides

- Story Highlights
- Service-wide training to help soldiers identify those at risk of suicide
- 2008 was record year for U.S. Army suicides, service reports
- Army: 128 soldiers confirmed to have committed suicide in 2008

From Mike Mount  
CNN Senior Pentagon Producer

**WASHINGTON (CNN)** -- On the same day that it announced record suicides among its soldiers, the U.S. Army said Thursday that it will soon conduct service-wide training to help identify soldiers at risk of suicide.

The program, which will run February 15 through March 15, will include training to recognize behaviors that may lead to suicide and instruction on how to intervene.

The Army will follow the training with another teaching program, from March 15 to June 15, focused on suicide prevention at all unit levels.

Earlier Thursday, the [Army](#) reported the highest one-year level of suicides among its soldiers since it began tracking the rate 28 years ago.

The Army said that 128 soldiers were confirmed to have committed [suicide](#) in 2008, and an additional 15 were suspected to have committed suicide that year in cases under investigation among active-duty soldiers and activated National Guard and reserves.

The Army's confirmed rate of suicides in 2008 was 20.2 per 100,000 soldiers.

The nation's suicide rate was 19.5 per 100,000 people in 2005, a figure considered the most recent, Army officials said last month.

In 2007, the Army reported 115 confirmed suicides, which was then the highest level since 1980, when it began tracking suicides.

Suicides for Marines were also up in 2008. There were 41 in 2008, up from 33 in 2007 and 25 in 2006, according to a Marines report.

In addition to the training the Army announced Thursday, the service has a program called Battlemind, intended to prepare soldiers and their families to cope with the stresses of war before, during and after deployment. It also is intended to help detect mental-health issues before and after deployments.

The Army and the National Institute of Mental Health signed an agreement in October to conduct research to identify factors affecting the mental and behavioral health of soldiers and to share strategies to lower the suicide rate.

The five-year study will examine active-duty, National Guard and reserve soldiers and their families.

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