

Obama Reverses Condolence Letter Policy for Soldier Suicides

The Obama administration announced last week it will reverse a long-standing, unwritten policy of not sending condolence letters to families of soldiers who die by suicide in combat zones. The military said the previous policy was based on a concern that recognizing such deaths might encourage more suicides. President Obama said sending the letters might help prevent them by reducing the stigma against mental health counseling and thereby encouraging troops to seek help. Groups that had advocated for the change applauded the move but urged that letters be sent to families of all troops who die while serving. They noted that two-thirds of military suicides occur outside of combat zones. ([The New York Times](#), 7/6/11)