Soldiers have reported concerns about COVID-19 and its impact on the health of their family and friends, their finances, and on unit and mission readiness. Confronted with this historic challenge, leaders have an opportunity to make a difference in the quality of life and readiness of their Soldiers.

Below are a number of leadership steps that can help strengthen and protect the physical and behavioral health of their Soldiers and units.

### LEADER ACTIONS TO PROMOTE UNIT READINESS DURING COVID-19

| Lead by Example | Lead by example by following health guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19 (such as social distancing, handwashing, using mask/face covering).  
|                 | Share with your Soldiers how the COVID-19 pandemic has personally impacted you. |
| Educate         | Share up-to-date, consistent, and accurate information about the COVID-19 pandemic.  
|                 | Provide updates about recent COVID-19 pandemic related developments.  
|                 | Encourage Soldiers to report any symptoms of COVID-19 they might have. |
| Acknowledge the Situation | Acknowledge the stress of uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic.  
|                 | Emphasize taking care of each other during the COVID-19 pandemic.  
|                 | Encourage Soldiers to identify what can and cannot be controlled about the COVID-19 pandemic.  
|                 | Discuss plans to maintain unit readiness during the pandemic. |
| Deal in Optimism | Encourage Soldiers to think positively during this COVID-19 pandemic.  
|                 | Focus on what to be grateful for during the COVID-19 pandemic.  
|                 | Remind Soldiers during the COVID-19 pandemic that we are here to serve with honor, serve a mission, and serve a greater purpose. |
| Set the Conditions | Modify unit tasks to prevent Soldiers from working in close proximity to one another.  
|                 | Ensure Soldiers have basic supplies for daily living (like food, soap, and toilet paper) during the COVID-19 pandemic.  
|                 | Take steps to keep Soldiers socially connected as a unit during the COVID-19 pandemic. |
More than 20,000 Soldiers completed the anonymous Behavioral Health Advisory Team (BHAT) COVID-19 survey in 2020, a collaboration between the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and the Army Public Health Center.

**RESULTS: PREVENTIVE HEALTH PRACTICES**

Soldiers who said that their leaders engaged in COVID-19 leadership behaviors were more likely to engage in preventive medicine practices than those who said their leaders did not engage in COVID-19 leadership behaviors. This relationship held even after accounting for general leadership ratings, COVID-19 concerns, and Soldier rank.

- **Wearing a mask**
  - Low Level of COVID-19 Leadership: 57.2%
  - High Level of COVID-19 Leadership: 77.3%
- **Monitoring self for symptoms**
  - Low Level of COVID-19 Leadership: 48.7%
  - High Level of COVID-19 Leadership: 75.2%

**RESULTS: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

Soldiers who said that their leaders engaged in COVID-19 leadership were less likely to report behavioral health problems than those who said their leaders did not engage in COVID-19 leadership, even after accounting for general leadership ratings, COVID-19 concerns, and Soldier rank.

- Less Loneliness
- Less Depression
- Less Anxiety
- Fewer Alcohol Problems
- Fewer Sleep Problems

**MAKING THE LINK**

These results suggest that it takes more than simply being a good leader—it means you need to be a good leader in managing your unit’s stress related to COVID-19. These results also mean that Soldiers of all ranks stand to benefit from leaders who take action to maximize unit readiness during the COVID-19 pandemic.