



# READY RELIABLE CARE BULLETIN

DECEMBER 2025



***Resilience is based on compassion for ourselves as well as compassion for others."***

*–Sharon Salzberg<sup>1</sup>*

## **Ready Reliable Care Guiding Principle: Commitment to Resilience**

A culture of resilience is a cornerstone of Ready Reliable Care (RRC). It represents the organization's ability to adapt, recover, and maintain operations during challenges. This principle focuses on building systems and practices that help the organization respond effectively to disruptions, learn from mistakes, and ensure critical functions continue despite obstacles.<sup>2</sup> High Reliability Organizations (HROs) understand that, even with safeguards in place, systems can fail unexpectedly. *Commitment to Resilience* views errors, failures, or service disruptions as opportunities to learn and improve, ensuring that setbacks do not weaken the HRO.

*Continued on next page.*

### Mark Your Calendar



**December Virtual Training Sessions:**  
***All Staff - RRC Continuous Process Improvement (3 hrs)***

02 December 2025: 0900 - 1200 ET  
10 December 2025: 1030 - 1330 CET  
11 December 2025: 1300 - 1600 ET  
16 December 2025: 0900 - 1200 ET

[Register for Training Here](#)

DECEMBER

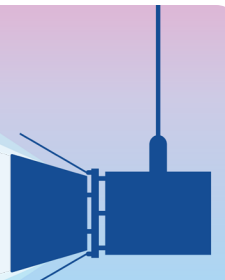


THIS MONTH'S THEME IS  
COMMITMENT TO RESILIENCE

### Reliability in Action Award Spotlights

**Turn to page 3 for the December spotlight on the Lackland Dental Group for their demonstration of the RRC principle Commitment to Resilience.** Following a significant event in 2022, the team transformed adversity into action—achieving an impressive **1,000 days without a Sentinel or Adverse Harm Event**.

**Bonus: Turn to page 4 for our November award spotlight – the 319th Medical Group Mental Health Clinic for their demonstration of the RRC principle Deference to Expertise.**



As we return to normal operations after the recent government shutdown, *Commitment to Resilience* becomes even more important. It reflects the Defense Health Agency's (DHA) dedication to maintaining operational excellence and mission readiness during uncertainty or disruption. Within the RRC framework, resilience goes beyond recovery. It involves actively fostering adaptability, learning, and teamwork across all levels of the Military Health System (MHS). By promoting psychological safety, encouraging open communication, and driving continuous improvement, the DHA ensures its workforce stays capable, connected, and focused on the mission. This commitment helps RRC advance toward high reliability, emerge stronger, and provide quality care for all beneficiaries.





### Ready Reliable Care's Application of Commitment to Resilience


*Commitment to Resilience* focuses on learning from past mistakes to grow and improve processes.<sup>3</sup> Resilience must be taught, practiced, and demonstrated at both individual and organizational levels. An organization cannot be resilient if its people are not.<sup>4</sup> At the organizational level, resilience involves designing systems, processes, culture, and leadership that support High Reliability. It includes redundancy, a proactive safety culture, real-time monitoring, and continuous learning. Resilience is not just a reaction to problems; it is a proactive principle embedded in every level of the organization.<sup>5</sup>


At the individual level, resilience means building psychological strength, adaptability, and the ability to handle stress. It also involves collaborating effectively under pressure, taking responsibility for safety, learning from experiences, and speaking up when something goes wrong. The following actions and behaviors can help develop resilience:


READY RELIABLE CARE PRINCIPLES


 PREOCCUPATION WITH FAILURE


 SELECTION TO CHALLENGE


 DEVELOPMENT TO EXCELLENCE

 RESILIENCE FOR THE FUTURE

 COMMITMENT TO RESILIENCE

 COMPLETION OF MISSION

 RESILIENCE TO SURVIVE

 COMMITMENT TO RESILIENCE

- Learn from mistakes to drive improvement
- Promote transparency and trust to strengthen the "speak-up" culture
- Use simulations to prepare for system breakdowns (e.g., code blue or mass casualty exercises)
- Recognize team members to boost morale and resilience
- Hold ad hoc huddles to restore focus during unexpected events
- Use metrics to stay aligned with organizational goals
- Apply Continuous Process Improvement to address workplace challenges
- Strengthen performance through learning and personal growth
- Identify weak points to improve safety and resilience

## Additional Resources to Support Commitment to Resilience

Subject matter experts offer tools and resources to help staff build a culture focused on resilience. These tools empower teams to become HROs. Below are some key resources:

### TeamSTEPPS®

The [DHA's TeamSTEPPS® program](#) provides strategies to create strong, resilient teams. It focuses on improving communication and training through realistic scenarios.

- **Scenario-Based Training:** This training uses real-life simulations to teach decision-making in a safe environment. Both clinical and non-clinical staff can practice without risking harm to patients, staff, or the organization.
- **DESC:** The DESC method helps resolve conflicts effectively, especially personal ones. It is most useful in situations where hostile or harmful behaviors affect patient care. The DESC script guides communication in challenging scenarios.
- **"I'M SAFE" Checklist:** Being honest about your current state is essential for safety. Use the "I'M SAFE" checklist to assess your ability to perform tasks safely:
  - **Illness:** Am I too sick to do my job?
  - **Medication:** Are my medications affecting my focus or performance?
  - **Stress:** Is stress from work or personal life making it hard to concentrate?
  - **Alcohol/drugs:** Is substance use interfering with my ability to work?
  - **Fatigue:** Am I too tired to respond effectively? Burnout can sneak up over time and impact performance in both emergencies and routine activities.
  - **Eating and elimination:** Have I gone too long without eating or using the restroom? Neglecting these needs can harm focus and physical health.

**D**  
**E**  
**S**  
**C**

**Describe** the specific situation or behavior; provide concrete data.

**Express** how the situation makes you feel/ what your concerns are.

**Suggest** alternatives and seek agreement.

**Consequences** should be stated in terms of impact on established team goals; strive for consensus.

### I'M SAFE Checklist

- ✓ **I = Illness**
- ✓ **M = Medication**
- ✓ **S = Stress**
- ✓ **A = Alcohol and Drugs**
- ✓ **F = Fatigue**
- ✓ **E = Eating and Elimination**

## Additional Resources

### [Commitment to Resilience: HRO Tools That Transform Healthcare Organizations:](#)

Learn how resilience strengthens healthcare organizations. Explore tools and strategies that improve patient safety, support staff well-being, and boost organizational performance. Real-world examples show how resilient systems create safer and more adaptable environments.





## Reliability in Action Award Spotlight

### Lackland Dental Group

Col Carl Bhend and CMSgt Selma Stinson

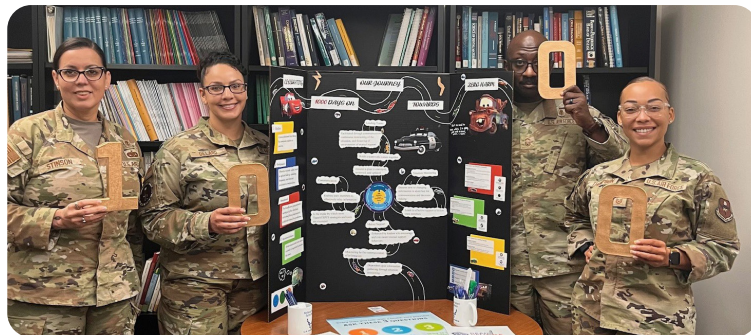
Lackland Air Force Base, Texas

#### Commitment to Resilience: Bouncing Back Stronger at the Lackland Dental Group

On 25 August 2025, the men and women of the Lackland Dental Group were “Living the Dream and Eating Ice Cream” as they celebrated 1,000 days since their last sentinel or adverse-harm event.



Lackland Dental Group recent promotees enjoying ice cream social.

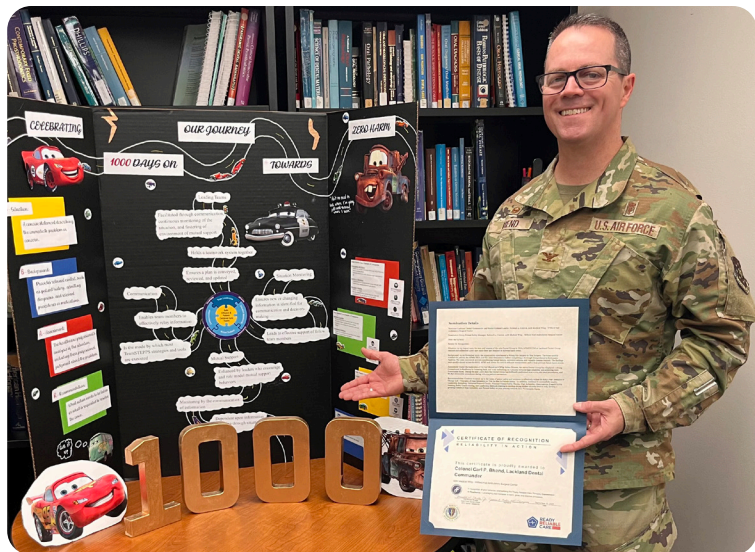


Chief Master Sergeant Selma Stinson along with Lackland Dental Group Senior Enlisted Leaders.

On 29 November 2022, the organization experienced a wrong-site surgery. The team quickly notified the patient, the DHA, and The Joint Commission before completing a thorough Comprehensive Systematic Analysis (CSA). The CSA identified the root cause of the event and revealed several contributing factors, along with corrective actions and valuable lessons learned. The findings were quickly shared across the enterprise to enhance transparency and to help prevent future harm events.

Under the leadership of Col Carl Bhend and CMSgt Selma Stinson, the entire Dental Group displayed a strong Commitment to Resilience by bouncing back and truly embarking on a journey towards High Reliability and achieving Zero Preventable Harm. Over the past 1,000 days, the Dental Group has brilliantly performed over 1,074,062 total procedures, during 168,034 patient encounters.

The team continued to address patient safety by effectively utilizing the MHS Four Domains of Change and 7 Principles of High Reliability. In addition, continue to successfully employ Leadership Rounding, Universal Protocol Audits, National Patient Safety Goal Checks, High Reliability Observations, TeamSTEPPS training, Safety Coach training, and Leadership Methods training to develop strong leaders at every level to help build a thriving Culture of High Reliability and Patient Safety on your organization’s journey towards achieving Zero Preventable Harm.



Colonel Carl P. Bhend Lackland Dental Group Commander holding the Reliability in Action Award.



## Reliability in Action Award Spotlight

November 2025: Deference to Expertise

### Mental Health Clinic

**Capt Alishia Salyer, Tsgt Terrica Sandoval, SrA Emangelyn Wilkins, A1C Tylar Stephens Nelson**  
Network 9. Continental 319th Medical Group - Grand Forks Air Force Base

In September 2025, a patient arrived at the Mental Health Clinic for a routine Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) program intake. The 319th Medical Group at Grand Forks Air Force Base immediately took action. During the evaluation, the team quickly identified signs and symptoms of acute alcohol withdrawal (preoccupation with failure) and escalated their concerns to the provider. Showing a reluctance to simplify the situation, they conducted a thorough assessment and coordinated expedited lab work.

Demonstrating deference to expertise, the team sought a second opinion from a Family Health technician after noticing elevated vital signs during the initial reading. Collaborating closely with the provider, they decided to send the patient to the nearest emergency room for further care. Shortly after arriving at the emergency room, the patient experienced a seizure, highlighting the critical importance of the team's swift and coordinated response. This event showcases exceptional patient-centered care and teamwork, ensuring the patient received life-saving treatment. The actions of the 319th Medical Group exemplify the Ready Reliable Care initiative by applying RRC principles, evidence-based decision-making, and strong interdisciplinary collaboration.



*Mental health clinic team at Grand Forks Air Force Base.*



### Submit a Nomination

Know an outstanding team member or team deserving of a Ready Reliable Care *Reliability in Action* award? [Click here to submit a nomination!](#)







## We Want to Hear from You



1. How has this year's prolonged government shutdown demonstrated the importance of RRC's guiding principle *Commitment to Resilience* to you?
2. Can you give an example of where resilience helped you overcome adversity?
3. How can organizations help build resilience in their employees?

### [Share Your Response](#)

**DHA Ready Reliable Care Point of Contact:**

**Ms. Kelli Tate**

Program Analyst, Strategic Integration Group

### READY RELIABLE CARE LINKS

Learn more about RRC education and resources through the links below.



[Foundations of High Reliability](#)



[RRC Communications and Education Resources](#)

### **\*Important RRC Bulletin Communications Update\***

The RRC Bulletin has moved to a new email platform. Please add [RRC@news.dha.mil](mailto:RRC@news.dha.mil) to your address book or safe sender list to prevent new messages from being moved to your junk folder.

We look forward to staying in touch with you!

### Endnotes

1. Jaime Cantu, et al., "Assessing the HRO: Tools and techniques to determine the high-reliability state of an organization", *Safety Science* 134, (February 2021). Find it [here](#).
2. Ready Reliable Care: DHA's Journey to High Reliability, (May 18, 2023), slide 37.
3. The High Reliability Organization Task Force Report: A Resource Guide For Achieving High Reliability In The Military Health System, (September 15, 2015): 6.
4. Cynthia A. Oster and Jane S. Braaten, *High Reliability Organizations: A Healthcare Handbook for Patient Safety & Quality*, 2nd edition, (Indianapolis: Dustin Sullivan, 2021), 18.
5. Ready Reliable Care: DHA's Journey to High Reliability, (May 18, 2023), slide 37.

