



Office of Military Chaplain Services
1451 S. Sherbourne Dr. #1
Los Angeles, CA 90035

Mr. Michael Berry
2001 West Plano Parkway #1600
Plano, TX 75075

12/17/14

Dear Mr. Berry

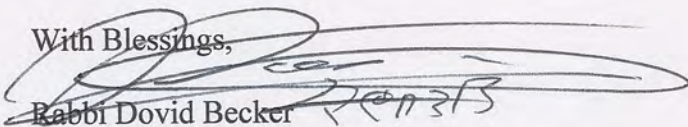
Yeshiva Pirchei Shoshanim (YPS) is a Department of Defense-authorized endorsing agency for Observant Jewish chaplains serving in the United States military. We write to express our concern and outrage at a recent incident involving United States Army Chaplain (Captain) Joseph Lawhorn. Chaplain Lawhorn received a Letter of Concern because he “used Christian scripture and solutions” during a suicide prevention training class. Under these circumstances, we believe the Letter of Concern is inappropriate and will have negative consequences on all military chaplains.

The duty of the military chaplain is to provide spiritual support on all matters that can encourage our forces in fulfilling their mission. This includes spiritual support in the Army’s battle to prevent suicides. The chaplain has a unique and critical role in the prevention of suicides. Chaplains add the dimension of a supportive community to help soldiers deal with crises. Chaplains also facilitate the spiritual component of soldier resiliency, which is critical to reducing and preventing suicides. Indeed, our chaplains exist to emphasize the importance of spiritual health and connectivity with a faith community. Often chaplains are the first to notice the warning signs of mental health issues, which, if left unchecked, may lead to suicide.

YPS supports the right of all Army chaplains, regardless of their faith background, to incorporate faith and spiritual health into suicide prevention training. Therefore, we object to any adverse action, administrative or otherwise, against a chaplain who wishes to incorporate faith and spiritual health into their suicide prevention training.

Yeshiva Pirchei Shoshanim stands with Liberty Institute in their defense of Chaplain Lawhorn. We also support Liberty Institute’s efforts to protect the religious freedom of all service members and chaplains, regardless of faith background.

With Blessings,


Rabbi Dovid Becker
Director, Chaplain Services
JFAAF/Pirchei Shoshanim