



# DCoE IN ACTION

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## From the Director

What a difference a couple of months make! Our Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) have had a busy summer indeed.

In June we held our second strategic planning summit. With over 200 participating experts and leaders, we had a wonderful opportunity to build bridges, reinforce partnerships, establish connections to other organizations, and gain momentum for the upcoming months. These local and national collaborations will help us identify best practices and resources in the care and support of our Warriors and Families and also permit us to reach out faster and with more effectiveness.

June also marked the groundbreaking for the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) on the campus of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. Thanks to the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, and the generous donations of the American people, this DCoE component center is accelerating the construction timeline by three years. The NICoE is projected to be operational by October 2009 and to become the military's premiere institute for the study and care of traumatic brain injuries and psychological health matters.

We established our initial web presence in July with [www.dcoe.health.mil](http://www.dcoe.health.mil). It is in its early development, but promises to be a wellspring of resources, a venue to connect and collaborate, and a way to highlight many of the impressive military and Federal programs, activities, and resources. Please also note the "Tools You Can Use" box at the back of this newsletter and send forward more tools

that we can include for reference on our Team DCoE website.

We are very excited to support the Department of Labor's America's Heroes at Work Campaign, an exemplary program by one of our Federal partners. This national education campaign, launched in August, will help to dispel the stigma around Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and other "invisible" wounds of war that sometimes leads employers to be reluctant to hire veterans with psychological health and/or TBI concerns. America's Heroes at Work will provide employers the tools they need to help those affected by TBI and/or PTSD and to help them succeed in the workplace.

Other articles in this newsletter highlight the accomplishments that emerged as a result of the various Federal/DoD task forces and commissions that were established a little over a year ago regarding the needs, care, and support of our Warriors and their Families. We embrace collaboration and communication as enduring themes to guide our efforts. The quality of our collaborative efforts depends upon teamwork. To this end, I encourage us all to openly share and be transparent, which will serve to fortify our team and strengthen our contributions on behalf of those we are so privileged to serve.

One Team!

Loree K. Sutton  
BG, MC, USA  
Director, DCoE



**DEFENSE CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE**

For Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury

<http://www.dcoe.health.mil>

## Reducing Stigma and Fostering a Culture of Support for Psychological Health

There has been an encouraging swell of activity within the Department of Defense to address the problem of stigma, or the negative perceptions, shame, or discrimination around psychological disorders. Stigma presents a significant barrier to seeking out mental health care, particularly in the military, where many service members have concerns about the impact of documented mental disorders or mental health care on their careers. In May 2008, Defense Secretary Gates announced the change to Question 21 on the National Security background questionnaire (SF-86), which asked security clearance applicants to indicate whether they had ever received mental health care. For many, this contributed to further wariness of being suspected of having psychological issues and had been an impediment to seeking mental health care. The change to Question 21 permits applicants to answer "no" if the mental health care was "strictly related to adjustments from service in a military combat environment."

In addition to the change of Question 21, there are a number of other efforts within the DoD to dispel stigma, normalize seeking mental health care, or facilitate access to psychological health resources. For example, DoD Force Health Protection & Readiness funds and supports the Mental

Health Self-Assessment Program (MHSAP), which offers anonymous online self-assessment tools to help Warriors and their Families identify their own mental health symptoms and how to find assistance. A new component of this program promotes an educational video, *A Different Kind of Courage: Safeguarding and Enhancing Your Psychological Health*, which combats stigma by highlighting the courage involved in seeking professional help for oneself or encouraging friends or family members to seek care. The MHSAP website and the new video can be accessed at [www.mentalhealthscreening.org/military](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/military). Further, on August 5, the DoD launched a behavioral health web resource, "Afterdeployment.org," a congressionally mandated web portal focused on behavioral health problems. This program facilitates greater access to psychological health resources by offering anonymous access to web tools that help service members and families address and learn more about depression, stress, alcohol and drug use, anger, sleep, relationship problems, and oth-

er topics (see [www.afterdeployment.org](http://www.afterdeployment.org)).

In addition to these efforts to roll out resources to combat stigma and encourage seeking mental health resources, the DCoE will soon launch a national outreach campaign, "Real Warriors. Real Battles. Real Strength." This campaign will not only acknowledge the extensive impact of the war beyond the Warrior but will actively promote the vital importance of psychological health, psychological resilience, and the demonstration of strength involved in the pursuit of care and support resources.

These programs are in direct response to the published findings of the DoD Task Force on Mental Health, which identified the need to address the pervasive stigma around psychological problems and the barriers stigma poses to seeking mental health care. The Task Force, more broadly, advised promoting a culture of support for psychological health, emphasizing the value of building psychological resilience, fostering awareness of the importance of psychological health, and encouraging individual and leadership responsibility for taking care of psychological health needs.



## DCoE Component Centers



DHCC Staff & DCoE Deputy Director

The DCoE integrates several DoD agencies as components of the Centers of Excellence. Over the next several issues of *DCoE in Action*, we will highlight each one. This month's featured center is the **Deployment Health Clinical Center (DHCC)**.

- First chartered in 1994 to care for Gulf War veterans with war-related symptoms and concerns, the DHCC provides clinical support, tools, and guidance to care providers of Warriors and Families. In 1999, DHCC's mission expanded to include direct clinical care to tri-service personnel with war-related conditions

from all deployments.

- Currently located at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, DHCC's Warrior-focused medical treatment programs span a wide spectrum from referral care of complex post-war health issues to primary care treatment protocols and guidance.
- DHCC's Specialized Care Program, a three-week intensive outpatient process, has two versions: "Track I" for medically unexplained physical symptoms after deployment and "Track II" for trauma and stress spectrum conditions. Completion of the program is followed by 40 weeks of facilitated distance care as they transi-

tion to continued local services and life in military and civilian settings.

- Over its nearly 15-year history DHCC has provided training to thousands of military and VA healthcare providers and providers-in-training.
- Since 2002, DHCC investigators have published nearly 100 scientific papers and 200 scholarly abstracts and have delivered over 150 invited presentations in six countries. Research topics include medical program implementation and evaluation; systems, clinical, informatics, psychological, behavioral, clinical communication, and biomedical intervention trials; screening tools; cost analysis; and primary care improvement.
- DHCC leads the implementation of RESPECT-Mil (Re-Engineering Systems of Primary Care Treatment in the Military), a program integrating psychological health services into military primary care. RESPECT-Mil employs an enhanced continuity of care model and helps pre-



pare primary care clinics to monitor and assess the psychological health of their patients. Currently active at 32 CONUS primary care clinics and 4 OCONUS sites, the program is preparing to expand to 17 additional sites around the globe and to 12 Army Warrior Transition Units.

- DHCC website, [www.pdhealth.mil](http://www.pdhealth.mil), pro-

vides comprehensive deployment health practice information for clinicians and patient education.

- DHCC operates a toll free phone line for Warriors and Families in the U.S. (1-800-796-9699) and in Europe (00800-8666-8666), and offers clinical assistance to healthcare providers on post deploy-

ment health issues (1-866-559-1627).

- *Deployment Health News* is a daily email digest of news, science, and continuing education opportunities sent to PD-Health.mil subscribers.
- Contact DHCC at 202-782-6563, or visit via the web at [www.pdhealth.mil](http://www.pdhealth.mil)

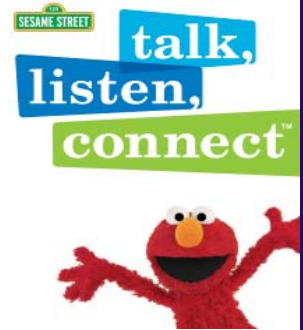
## TLC from Sesame Workshop

The DCoE has worked with Sesame Workshop to create and release a program entitled, Talk Listen Connect: Deployments, Homecomings, Changes (TLC). TLC provides support and resources for military families with young children (ages 2 – 5) who are experiencing the effects of single deployments, multiple deployments or when a parent returns home either physically or psychologically changed due to a combat-related injury. Talk, Listen, Connect: Deployments, Homecomings, Changes seeks to:

- Reduce the level of anxiety children may experience during homecomings after multiple deployments
- Help parents with ways to cope with multiple deployments
- Help young children gain an age-appropriate understanding of a parent's injury by including them and the entire family in the rehabilitation process

The Sesame Workshop TLC materials are available as DVD kits or as streaming video and can be accessed via the DCoE website or directly at [www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc](http://www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc).

Kits are being distributed at no cost to individual families, schools, family support programs, as well as other organizations serving the needs of military families.



## TBI Training Opportunities and Resources through DVBIC

D CoE's primary operational component on TBI matters, the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) has an educational mission that includes multiple stakeholders: clinicians, patients, families, military command, and community. The keystone of this effort is our annual Military Training Conference on Traumatic Brain Injury at which 800 healthcare providers in DoD and VA are educated on the state of the art in the assessment and care of service members who sustain a TBI injury. This training conference developed from increasing requests for specialized training between 2004 – 2006, when DVBIC staff provided training at 14

Military Treatment Facilities.

DVBIC staff presented at over 20 conferences in the past 6 months. DVBIC is working closely with the Army Proponency Office for Rehabilitation and Reintegration in the development of a training module series on TBI which will address the learning needs of enlisted personnel, leadership and medical professionals. When completed, these modules will be available for use by all branches of the service. DVBIC was selected and is facilitating a congressionally mandated family caregiver curriculum. Community activities include sponsoring and a partnership with public television, to produce Brainline and

collaborations with the CDC.

The DVBIC Office of Educational Programs stocks over 50 different print materials for professional, patient and family caregiver education on traumatic brain injury. The office may be reached at 301-589-1175 or [education@dvbic.org](mailto:education@dvbic.org). Please contact this office to learn more about the Military Training Conference or to request a speaker for a professional group.

DVBIC has also been leading the way to develop common definitions, clinical practice guidelines (CPG) for TBI (see DCoE website > Resources > TBI), and is currently leading the effort to develop a CPG for mild TBI in deployed settings.

## Update on the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE)



June 5, 2008, marked the breaking of ground for the highly anticipated NICoE, the new \$70 million, 72,000 sq. ft., state-of-the-art facility, being built and equipped through the philanthropic contributions of the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, Fisher Foundation. The NICoE will be ideally situated on the Bethesda campus,

adjacent to the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, with close access to the Uniformed Services University, the National Institutes of Health, and the Metro transportation system. Additional Fisher Houses are being planned for the Bethesda campus to support Warriors and their Families while receiving care at the NICoE.

At the NICoE, scheduled to open in October 2009, services will include advanced diagnostics, initial treatment planning, family education, and referral and reintegration support for warriors with TBI, PTSD, or other complex psychological

conditions. The NICoE concept features a holistic approach led by an interdisciplinary team harnessing the latest advances in science, resilience, therapy, rehabilitation, education, research and technology while providing compassionate family-centered care for Warriors and their loved ones throughout the recovery process. Further, the NICoE will conduct research, test new protocols, provide training and education, and will strive to be a knowledge leader for TBI, PTSD, and other related Psychological Health conditions.

Defense Centers of Excellence  
For Psychological Health  
& Traumatic Brain Injury  
1401 Wilson Blvd., Suite 400  
Rosslyn, VA 22209

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

## DCoE Vision

*Fulfilling  
America's commitment  
to all who  
support and defend  
our Nation's freedom*

## DCoE Mission

To maximize opportunities  
for Warriors and Families  
to thrive through a  
collaborative global network  
promoting resilience,  
recovery, and reintegration  
for psychological health and  
traumatic brain injury.

### Tools You Can Use

We are collecting "tools you can use" to feature in each newsletter. A more complete and growing collection is available in our online, Team DCoE "toolkit" (Resources) - [www.dcoe.health.mil](http://www.dcoe.health.mil)

#### For Warriors and Families:

New Mental Wellness Resource for Service Members, Veterans, and Families: [www.afterdeployment.org](http://www.afterdeployment.org)  
Free, Personalizable, Family Social Networking Website: [www.websitesforheroes.com](http://www.websitesforheroes.com)  
Fact Sheets on Health and Military Life: [www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html](http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html)

#### For Military Leaders:

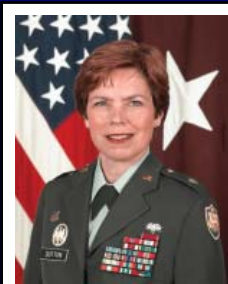
Guide to Managing Warriors in Distress: [www.usmc-mccs.org/leadersguide](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/leadersguide)  
Understanding Combat Stress: [www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/mcrp611c.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/mcrp611c.pdf)  
Battlemind: [www.battlemind.army.mil](http://www.battlemind.army.mil)

#### For Clinicians:

Army's Combat Stress Resources: <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/Population/combat.aspx>  
Iraq War Clinician Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition: [www.ncptsd.va.gov](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov),  
click "published materials" tab for link  
Military TBI Expertise: [www.dvbic.org](http://www.dvbic.org)  
Premier Deployment Health Resource: [www.pdhealth.mil](http://www.pdhealth.mil)

#### For Researchers:

Official Federal Government Stats: [www.fedstats.gov](http://www.fedstats.gov)  
NHRC's Deployment Health Research: [www.nhrc.navy.mil/department164/program.html](http://www.nhrc.navy.mil/department164/program.html)



### **BG Loree K. Sutton**

Special Assistant to the  
Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Health Affairs)  
and Director,  
DCoE for Psychological Health  
& Traumatic Brain Injury

**DCoE In Action** is a publication of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE).

We are committed to delivering the most relevant, useful and timely news on psychological health and traumatic brain injury and, as such, ask for your input and feedback on how to best accomplish this and improve our newsletter. Please [send your input and feedback](mailto:dcoe.outreach@tma.osd.mil) to our editor at [dcoe.outreach@tma.osd.mil](mailto:dcoe.outreach@tma.osd.mil).

Our mailing address is 1401 Wilson Blvd., Suite 400, Arlington, VA 22209. Phone: (703) 696-9460.

Please come visit us on the web at <http://www.dcoe.health.mil>.



*Views and opinions expressed  
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