



### DoDEA Psychologist Adapts Battlemind for Students

The U.S. Army uses a series of training modules called The Battlemind System to help soldiers transition from the effective behavior needed in combat to peacetime behavior. The Walter Reed Army Institute for Research developed the Battlemind curriculum to teach soldiers and spouses what to expect before soldiers deploy and what common problems to look for during homecomings. Researchers at Walter Reed say the program has raised awareness of the potential signals that a soldier may need help with reintegration.



Because children can also face transitional issues when a parent returns, Rebecca Bialopotocki, Ph.D., a DoDEA psychologist supporting schools in Mannheim and Heidelberg, adapted Battlemind to address the differing needs of students. “In preparing the student presentation, I tried to focus on how reintegration might affect the day to day lives of each student. I also attempted to break the complexity of Battlemind down into an easy-to-follow format that fits the developmental level of high school students, while at the same time not changing any of the core points presented in the military’s curriculum.”

Using groups of 20-30 students and/or teachers, Dr. Bialopotocki conducts Battlemind workshops that include a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, video clips, and group discussion. “My goal is to empower students by providing them some knowledge that may help explain to them why their parent may respond in certain ways when they return from being downrange.” With this empowerment, says Dr. Bialopotocki, come teachable moments in student leadership, resiliency, and communication.

Students have responded positively to the workshops. Dr. Bialopotocki noted that the workshops made the students and staff more aware that they have access to a school psychologist should they need one. “When I walk down the hallway, now, I frequently hear the students call out, “Hey Dr. B! How’s it goin’? They know I’m there to help if they need it.” The core Battlemind materials are available at [www.battlemind.army.mil](http://www.battlemind.army.mil). DoDEA psychologists interested in using Dr. Bialopotocki’s student adaptation can contact her via the DoDEA Global directory. ■

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## Study: Teen Inhalant Abuse Linked to Depression

A recent study, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), indicates that inhalant abuse (i.e., sniffing glue, computer keyboard cleaner sprays, or other household cleaners) could be a sign of serious mental health issues, such as depression. The study also found the converse to be true; students experiencing depression are more likely to experiment with inhalants.



According to SAMHSA, “Inhalant use and abuse constitute a public health problem that disproportionately affects youth.” In August 2008, the University of Michigan published a report based on the findings of the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). The report, *Inhalant Use and Major Depressive Episodes among Youths Aged 12 to 17: 2004 to 2006*, indicated that the prevalence of inhalant use in the past year was nearly four times higher among teens ages 12-17 than young adults ages 18-25. The data also indicated that students who have never used inhalants were three times more likely to use them if they had suffered from a major depressive episode within the previous year.

Inhalant abuse can damage major organ systems and cognitive processes. “When combined with a major episode of depression,” SAMHSA warned, “inhalant

use can have devastating consequences for adolescents and their families.” The American Academy of Pediatrics provides the following warning signs for inhalant abuse:

- ▶ Breath or clothing smells like chemicals.
- ▶ Anxiety or irritability.
- ▶ Dazed or glassy look.
- ▶ Spots/sores around the mouth.
- ▶ Paint stains on body or clothing (from spray paint or solvents).
- ▶ Nausea or loss of appetite.

The NSDUH report suggests that parents observing signs of depression among their children remain mindful of potential signs of inhalant abuse. The research indicates that the opposite applies as well: teens using inhalants might benefit from “screenings” to determine whether they are suffering from depression.

Experts warn that there are some 1400 available household products that can be inhaled to “get high.” One of the most dangerous is the aerosol spray used for cleaning keyboards. Manufacturers of some brands of this product are now adding peppering agents to deter inhalant abuse. However, education and awareness remain the first line of protection. For additional information on inhalant abuse prevention, visit:

- [National Inhalant Prevention Coalition](#) (NIPC)
- [Alliance for Consumer Education](#) (ACE)
- [Partnership for a Drug-Free America](#) (PDFA)
- [Office of National Drug Control Policy](#) (ONDCP)
- [American Council for Drug Education](#) (ACDE)

For more information on Substance Abuse prevention, visit the DoDEA Safe Schools Program Web site at [www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/safeSchools.cfm?sid=5](http://www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/safeSchools.cfm?sid=5). ■

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## Back to Basics: Understanding Force Protection Conditions

Signs posted on military installations state the Force Protection Condition (FPCON) at which that location is operating. Educators new to DoDEA may not immediately recognize how these terms affect schools within the installation. However, familiarity with FPCONs, and their implications for schools, can help educators support installation security measures and remain prepared for unexpected changes in the local conditions.

FPCONs describe security measures that are implemented at military installations in response to various levels of terrorist threats. Military Commanders adjust FPCONs as necessary to respond to the local threat environment. Sometimes the FPCON status is raised or lowered just to practice the more stringent measures briefly or to keep potential terrorists from being able to predict how tightly an installation will be protected on any given day.

There are five Force Protection Conditions: Normal, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta. For each condition, there are several security measures stipulated. At each progressively higher FPCON, all of the security measures for the previous condition are implemented, and a few more measures are added.

District Safety and Security Officers (DSSOs) assist administrators in determining how the elevated FPCONs will impact schools. Understanding how a change in the overall installation FPCON affects individuals can help administrators adapt to changes in the FPCON as they occur. For example, if the force protection condition is raised from Bravo to Charlie, the installation will strictly enforce control and entry. This could mean that vehicles will be searched; purses and bags inspected; or that normally accessible parking areas will be closed. Military personnel may erect additional barriers and obstacles to control traffic flow through the installation.

At FPCON Delta, the military installation might receive a Non-Combatant Evacuation Order (NEO). In some areas, the military installation officials require schools to review their plans to determine what procedures they need to implement if the school has to respond to a NEO with limited notice.

Security is not always convenient. It can be arduous for individuals to continue to operate at heightened FPCONs for an extended period of time. However, understanding why individuals might encounter stringent security procedures helps everyone work together to ensure students and staff are protected in all threat environments. For additional information on Force Protection Conditions, consult your Area or District Safety and Security Officer. ■

### FPCONs in DoDEA

The FPCON system is mandated by Department of Defense Instruction 2000.16: DoD Antiterrorism (AT) Standards. DoDEA Regulation 4700.1: Antiterrorism Program provides guidance and establishes standards for implementing FPCONs in DoDEA. Local commanders determine which FPCON is appropriate.

#### **DELTA**

Localized, specific terrorist threat or attack.

#### **CHARLIE**

Imminent threat of terrorism.

#### **BRAVO**

Increased and predictable threat of terrorism.

#### **ALPHA**

Possible threat of terrorist activity.

#### **NORMAL**

No known enemy or threat.

The graphic above describes each condition and the type of threat that might prompt commanders to implement that FPCON. Sometimes Random Antiterrorism Measures deter attacks simply by showing potential adversaries that they cannot predict the defensive posture of an installation.

## The Magic of Anger Management

*Expecto Patronum!* Fans of the popular *Harry Potter* series will immediately recognize this phrase. Others may not know that this simple phrase can protect Harry and his fellow young wizards by sending a stag, or other animal, to chase away frightening adversaries. But students, even those who are not wizards, can also use the magic of words to control their anger. The key to effective anger management is teaching students to recognize the signs that they are growing angry and interrupt those thought processes. Offering students a special phrase which they can use when they feel angry can help them internalize the lessons of successful self-management.

Anger management programs help students learn how to understand and manage their feelings. They provide tools to help them avoid serious confrontations with students, teachers, and administrators. A review of more than a dozen anger management programs conducted for the U.S. Department of Education indicated that “effective anger management programs can teach students how to decrease their disruptive and aggressive behaviors both at home and in the classroom.”

In the March 2000 report by the Safe and Responsive Schools Project, *Early Identification and Intervention*, Russell Skiba, Ph.D., of Indiana University, and Reece Peterson, Ph.D. of the University of Nebraska, described the psychological theory underpinning anger management programs. Effective anger management programs teach students these four skills:

- 1) Understand and avoid the emotional triggers that provoke them,
- 2) Recognize physical cues that signal that they are becoming agitated (i.e., clenched fists, racing pulse),
- 3) Interrupt the angry thoughts to allow time to choose a different outcome, and finally,
- 4) Select the chosen response from a variety of strategies.

Once students interrupt the anger pattern, they can respond in a manner that minimizes negative consequences and maximizes feelings of self-control. Strategies for dissolving tension and reducing anger include:



- ◆ **Communicating clearly** – Use “I-statements” and the proper vocabulary to describe to the other person in a confrontation how their actions or words upset the speaker. Often the offense was unintentional and the other person apologizes as soon as they understand the speaker’s perspective.
- ◆ **Problem solving** – Identify the needs of each party and work through the conflict together.
- ◆ **Visualization** – Students can visualize how they will respond appropriately to an agitated situation or confrontation.
- ◆ **Humor** – Interrupt the situation with a humorous exclamation.
- ◆ **Calming techniques** – Techniques such as “counting backwards from 10,” or picturing a relaxing setting, enable students to regain self control.

The researchers concluded that students who received anger management training showed decreased drug and alcohol usage, increased self-esteem, and decreased problem behaviors. For additional information on the study, visit [www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/AngerManagement.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/AngerManagement.pdf). Contact [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com) for tips on effective anger management programs. ■

## Signs of Suicide (SOS) Program Teaches Awareness and Prevention

In an effort to provide an unintrusive method for service members and their families to learn about and protect their own mental health, the Department of Defense (DoD) implemented the Mental Health Self-Assessment Program (MHSAP) in 2006. The program educates service members and their dependents about the signs of mental health disorders and encourages them to take an anonymous online screening to determine whether they have any symptoms. Ideally, an assessment would encourage proactive and early treatment before a mental health disorder becomes debilitating.

In addition to the self-assessment, one specific objective of the MHSAP program was to provide “Outreach to Adolescent Children of Service Members.” The goal of this component was to extend mental health awareness to the entire military family, especially children. Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, William Winkenwerder Jr, M.D., stated in a January 2007 report that, as part of this initiative, the “Signs of Suicide Prevention Program was modified to meet the specific needs of military children and is being offered to middle and high schools located on military installations in the U.S. and overseas throughout DoDEA.”



SOS is designed for implementation in school assemblies and workshops. The program has different components for middle and high school students, and is presented in a manner that is appealing to teenagers. SOS is an action-oriented approach instructing students how to respond in the face of a mental health emergency using the acronym ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell).

The centerpiece of the program is a 20-minute video entitled *Friends for Life: Preventing Teen Suicide*. The video emphasizes the importance of responding to the potential suicide of a friend or family member using the ACT technique: **Acknowledge** your friend has a problem, show that you **Care**, and **Tell** a trusted adult. Parents and school staff also receive education materials that reinforce the ACT message given to students.

Signs of Suicide received the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s highest possible rating using their new numerical system (a score of 4.0 out of a possible 4.0). In a 2002 study by the *American Journal of Public Health*, SOS students were 40 percent less likely to report attempting suicide than those in a control group. A 2007 replication study found that schools participating for the first time experienced a 150 percent increase in students seeking help.

DoDEA administrators say they appreciate the accessible language of the program and the fact that it encourages students to communicate with a trusted adult when they suspect a friend is in trouble. “So often the kids have information and this program reinforces our message that it’s always okay to tell if you are worried about someone,” says Tricia Cassiday. “This program is just one of the many tools we use to keep kids healthy and safe.”

Information on MHSAP can be found at [www.pdhealth.mil/mhsa.asp](http://www.pdhealth.mil/mhsa.asp). For more information on suicide prevention, visit the DoDEA Office of Safety and Security Web site at [www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm](http://www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm). ■

## Best Practice: “Bully Boxes”

Teachers and counselors rely on information from students when investigating bullying in their schools. However, both bystanders, and the victims of bullying, are often unwilling to speak out for fear of reprisal. “Bully Boxes” provide an innovative solution to this impasse. A simple wooden ballot box allows students to submit information anonymously, yet directly, to administrators.

Counselors who have used bully boxes say the program works best in combination with a bullying awareness effort in the school. Once students have the language to describe what they are seeing, they can submit anonymous notes about any bullying incidents that they witness or experience. This allows administrators to investigate and take appropriate action without inhibiting students from speaking up.

Mary Ann Byrne, an Olweus-certified anti-bullying trainer and 20-year veteran counselor, offered three practical considerations to consider when handling an accusation of bullying:

- 1) Adults need to investigate each incident.
- 2) Talk with the alleged bully, victim, and bystanders separately.
- 3) Explain to the victim and bystanders that it is their responsibility to tell an adult if the bullying behavior continues.

Some U.S. public schools have also produced electronic versions of bully boxes by creating an e-mail address or on-line form that allows students to alert administrators to bullying behavior. For further information, contact [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com). ■

## Program Uses Knowledge to Empower Children Online

The United States Department of Justice (DoJ) has joined the array of federal and state agencies creating programs to enhance online safety and security for children. The Cyber-Crime and Intellectual Property Theft Prevention and Education Project endeavors to educate the public about cyber-crime and intellectual property theft. The project develops “educational tools designed to reach school-age children.”

The site, which is called Play It Cyber Safe, was developed in partnership with the Hamilton-Fish Institute on School and Community Violence, an academic organization that researches effective violence prevention strategies. A trade organization dedicated to educating consumers on the subject of software management and copyright protection was also involved in the project.



Unlike other sites which emphasize social networking, Play It Cyber Safe is a Web site that takes educating students about online safety a step further. “The goal of this Web site is to empower children, parents, and teachers to prevent cyber crime through knowledge of the law, their rights, and how to avoid misuse of the internet.”

The DoJ resources are available online at [www.playitcybersafe.com](http://www.playitcybersafe.com). A curriculum about sharing information online is available for free, along with a teacher guide and posters. For more information about cybersecurity for students, visit the DoDEA Office of Safety & Security Web site at [www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm](http://www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm). ■

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