

DCoE in Action



Call to Action: Real Warriors Campaign Encourages Warriors, Families to Seek Needed Help

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) kicked off a multimedia educational effort, called Real Warriors, to combat the stigma associated with seeking treatment or care for psychological health concerns and traumatic brain injury (TBI) on May 21, 2009. The Real Warriors Campaign promotes the processes of building resilience, facilitating recovery and supporting reintegration for returning service members and their families.

At the center of the campaign is the participation of real warriors, like Marine

Corps Sgt. Josh Hopper, who are sharing their stories of seeking and receiving help while continuing to maintain successful military or civilian careers. By sharing their experiences, these warriors will encourage fellow service members to seek the support they need and deserve. Our warrior profiles are on the Real Warriors Campaign Web site at realwarriors.net/multimedia/profiles.php.

“Going to war is an experience that goes beyond what most humans can even imagine,” said Brig. Gen. Loree Sutton, M.D., director of DCoE. “The Real Warriors Campaign is designed



U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Josh Hopper

to help tear down stigma and make it easier for service members to reach out for the treatment they may need after deployment.”

“Getting treatment is an act of courage and strength. With the Real Warriors Campaign, we hope to make it easier for warriors and their families to ask for and receive the care they need and deserve,” said Dr. Sonja V. Batten, DCoE deputy director.

Continued on bottom of page 2

to help tear down stigma and make it easier for service members to reach out for the treatment they may need after deployment.”

In addition to the warrior profiles, the campaign Web site, www.realwarriors.net, includes targeted information for all of the services and other key audiences, which include active duty service members, National Guard and Reserve,



From the Director



Brig. Gen. Sutton, M.D. DCoE Director

May marked the kick-off of the Real Warriors Campaign, a multimedia public education initiative designed to combat the stigma associated with seeking psychological health care and treatment and to encourage service members to increase their awareness and use of these resources.

For many of our warriors, coming home does not mean that the battle is finished.

The battle often continues — in hearts and minds, relationships and communities — after deployment. Families and loved ones often find themselves fighting a battle, too, striving to understand and support the person they care for after a life-changing experience that the service member may not want to remember, let alone talk about.

Reintegrating to home, work, family and community can be arduous. As one sergeant put it, "It's tough to move from being a target to shopping at Target!" Some find that memories can be even more disturbing than the actual experience, because what they once believed could touch them only on the battlefield has now followed them home.


Treatment is available, but for many warriors, the barrier to getting that treatment is stigma: they may perceive bias or discrimination against those who ask for help. The Real Warriors Campaign is being launched to combat that stigma with a broad-based call to

action, including information for families and employers on what to expect when service members come home and how to support and encourage them to get the help they need.

The campaign also includes stories of real service members who have sought treatment and are continuing to maintain successful military or civilian careers. These profiles will let our warriors know that they are not alone in dealing with a psychological wound or traumatic brain injury and that reaching out does make a difference.

I invite you to check out these profiles — read them, watch them, take them to heart. The remarkable warriors you will meet have amazing and enduring stories to tell. It takes real strength to fight these real battles.

To the journey ~

Loree K. Sutton, M.D.
Brigadier General, MC, USA
Director 

Call to Action: Real Warriors Campaign Encourages Warriors, Families to Seek Needed Help (Continued from page 1)

To reach the broadest audience, the campaign uses a variety of communication and social networking tools, including radio and TV public service announcements, posters and flyers and a highly interactive Web site.

Since the kick-off at the end of May, the campaign has reached millions of people through the media, including interviews with Brig. Gen. Sutton on CNN, NBC's "Today Show" and NPR's "Here and Now." You can download and watch Sutton's CNN interview at <http://newsroom.blogs.cnn.com/2009/05/23/>


[real-warriors-campaign-military-combats-stigma-associated-with-ptsd/](#).

The positive media response to the campaign has been overwhelming, with 98 percent of coverage accurately reporting campaign messages, goals and facts. To date, it has not received any negative coverage.

In its first two weeks, the campaign Web site had nearly 80,000 page visits by more than 7,000 unique visitors, and the campaign has reached more than 500 people through

social networking tools Twitter and Facebook.

On June 9, Military One Source's Troop Tube resource named the campaign's "From the Hearts of Heroes" video as one of their Videos of the Day.

The Web site is updated monthly, so visit www.realwarriors.net regularly for new articles, profiles and more. To view our campaign materials, including fact sheets, public service announcements and posters, visit <http://www.realwarriors.net/materials>. 

An Inside Look: Why DCoE Launched the Real Warriors Campaign



To address the unique needs of each of its audiences, the Real Warriors Campaign looked at the specific challenges facing active duty service members, National Guard and Reserve, veterans and military families.

The stigma surrounding psychological health concerns and accessing needed care can be a significant barrier to seeking mental health services for both military personnel and civilians.

Studies by the Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT) from 2004-2007 spotlighted some of the beliefs that discourage service members from seeking psychological health services:

- “It would be too embarrassing.”
- “It would harm my career.”
- “Members of my unit might have less confidence in me.”
- “My leaders would blame me for the problem.”
- “I would be seen as weak.”

The 2007 MHAT V survey also showed that there is an increased risk of serious combat stress or depression with each deployment:

- 12 percent of service members exhibit signs of combat stress or depression during their first deployment.
- 19 percent of service members exhibit signs of combat stress or depression during their second deployment.

- 27 percent of service members exhibit signs of combat stress or depression during their third deployment.

According to Purdue University’s Military Family Research Institute, children can react differently to a parent’s deployment based on their age. For example, children who are 5 or younger may exhibit a fear of separation, whimpering and excessive clinging. Children ages 6 to 11 may experience withdrawal, inattentiveness, sleep problems or outbursts of anger. Adolescents ages 12 to 17 may exhibit symptoms similar to adults, such as anxiety, depression and substance abuse.

For members of the National Guard and Reserve, the post-deployment experience can be especially isolating. A January 2008 CRS Report for Congress showed that there are several factors that can make the period after deployment particularly difficult for the National Guard and Reserve:

- Service members are not surrounded by the unit with which they served.
- Guard and Reserve face the immediate expectation of reintegrating into their “old life.”
- They may be seen as having taken “time off” to serve.

The Real Warriors Campaign built on existing research by facilitating nine small group discussions and key informant interviews with more than 80 individuals to gain a greater understanding of the complexities and individual experiences behind information from


surveys, articles and studies such as those mentioned previously.

Using the key findings garnered through all of the collective research, the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) designed the campaign and its Web site, www.realwarriors.net, to address the needs of each of its target audiences, including service-specific information.

One of the campaign’s most important messages is that our warriors and their families should reach out because it does make a difference. The Web site includes a live chat feature for visitors to connect to the DCoE Outreach Center, which hosts a variety of round-the-clock resources to answer questions about psychological health and traumatic brain injury concerns for members of all the military services — including active duty, the National Guard and Reserve and veterans as well as families and health care providers.

The DCoE Outreach Center is staffed by health consultants and nurses with advanced degrees and expertise in psychological health and traumatic brain injury issues. In addition to answering questions, the consultants refer callers to centers in other parts of the Department of Defense, other federal agencies and outside organizations when appropriate.

All calls, e-mails and interactions remain confidential. The DCoE Outreach Center can be contacted via the 24/7 toll-free hotline: 866-966-1020, by email: resources@dcoeoutreach.org, or by using the live chat connection on the Real Warriors Campaign Web site: <http://realwarriors.net/livechat>.

For more information on DCoE and the DCoE Outreach Center, please visit www.dcoe.health.mil. 

The Power of Partnership: Real Warriors Campaign Partners to Promote Psychological Health

The Real Warriors Campaign Partnership Program allows organizations and programs to demonstrate support of the campaign mission and provides a forum for collaboration toward shared goals.

Since the kick off of the Real Warriors Campaign, our partners and affiliates have played an integral role in our ability to reach the widest audience possible. For example, the Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2), posted a blog by Brig. Gen. Sutton about the campaign (https://www.aw2.army.mil/_blog/post/2009/05/21/Join-Us-in-The-Real-Warriors-Campaign!.aspx).

Our partners and affiliates continue to distribute campaign materials at events, include the profiles in their training sessions, mention the campaign and its highlights in their newsletters, blog on their Web sites about it, and distribute campaign materials locally to help others find the necessary resources to getting care.


Partners and affiliates were also asked to support the campaign through a variety of more targeted activities, including:

- Establishing a link to the Real Warriors Campaign Web site on the partner Web site.
- Publishing a news brief or article about the campaign launch, using DCoE press releases and ready-to-publish copy.
- Distributing the Real Warriors Campaign announcement in an e-blast, e-newsletter and/or blog to employees, members and stakeholders — and encouraging them to forward the news.
- Displaying Real Warriors posters and distributing hard copy and Web versions of campaign materials to offices and clinics and through seminars and other events.
- Logo, link and organization featured in the “Partner Spotlight” on the Real Warriors Campaign Web site Partner page.
- A partnership toolkit that includes campaign information, partnership information, an official partnership recognition certificate and collateral materials such as fact sheets and brochures.
- Collateral materials for distribution to their members/potential participants and ready-to-print copy about campaign issues for newsletter/publication content.
- Quarterly e-newsletter featuring partner highlights and campaign updates.



- Invitation to participate in DCoE monthly video teleconferences, focused on timely psychological health issues within the military.
- The opportunity to participate in the annual Real Warriors Partner Roundtable, a collaborative forum to discuss future partnership initiatives that will unite leaders of partner organizations and DCoE leadership.

Additionally, the Real Warriors Network offers an interactive opportunity for those interested in staying apprised of the campaign’s initiatives. Those who join the network will receive regular updates on campaign activities and will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on campaign materials. There are currently 188 campaign network participants. To become a part of the Real Warriors Network, please visit <http://www.realwarriors.net/listserv>.

The 24 partner and affiliate organizations confirmed to date include military and other federal organizations and programs, nonprofit organizations, advocacy organizations and local groups. To learn more about our existing partners, or to find out how to become a Real Warriors Partner, visit www.RealWarriors.net/Partners or e-mail realwarriors.partners@tma.osd.mil. 

Disclaimers

Partners and affiliates are not-for-profit organizations who support the mission of the Real Warriors Campaign. The appearance of organizations in any communications does not constitute endorsement by the United States Department of Defense of the organizations, linked Web sites, or the information, products or services contained therein. All partnerships are informal and do not involve any financial support. The Real Warriors Campaign reserves the right to refuse any partnership/affiliate request that is deemed not appropriate or to terminate any partner relationship at any point.

Bridging the Gap: Understanding Military Culture and Psychological Health Stressors

Providing civilian health care professionals with insight into the unique culture and psychological health stressors that service members and veterans experience is an important part of the Real Warriors Campaign.

Fundamentally different from other organizations, the military has several factors that set it apart. Some of them include a high standard of discipline that helps organize and structure the active duty armed forces; a professional ethos of loyalty and self-sacrifice that maintains order during battle; a distinct set of rules for ceremony and etiquette that helps create shared rituals and common identities; and an emphasis

on group cohesion and esprit de corps that connect service members to each other.

These cultural basics make it challenging for providers to help returning warriors who may be experiencing traumatic brain injuries and psychological health issues. Health professionals need to understand the unique cultural aspects of the military and stay abreast of new initiatives to decrease stigma in order to effectively counsel returning service members and their families.

Health care providers can access tools and resources designed for military audiences, including clinical practice

guidelines, from the Real Warriors Campaign Web site: www.realwarriors.net.



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Caption: U.S. Army Spc. Richard Reyes, right, 315th Psychological Operations Company, and a Soldier from B Troop, 5th Cavalry, 73rd Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James Selesnick/Released)

TOOLS YOU CAN USE

More useful links are available at www.dcoe.health.mil under Resources

Support for Service Members

- National Institute of Mental Health (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/complete-index.shtml#pub13>)
- National Center for PTSD (http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/fact_shts/ptsd_and_your_family.html)
- DCoE Outreach Center toll-free at 866-966-1020 or by e-mail inquiry to resources@dcoeoutreach.org
- Department of Veterans Affairs (<http://www.oefoif.va.gov/>)
- Department of Defense (<http://www.ourmilitary.mil/index.aspx>)

Military Family Resources

- Sesame Workshop “Talk, Listen, Connect” (<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/initiatives/emotion/tlc/>)
- Military HOMEFRONT (<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/>)
- National Center for PTSD Guide for Families of Military Members (<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/manuals/GuideforFamilies.pdf>)



DCoE In Action is a publication of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE). Please send us your comments on this newsletter and story ideas to dcoemedia@tma.osd.mil. Our mailing address is 1401 Wilson Blvd., Suite 400, Arlington, VA 22209. Phone: (877) 291-3263.

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