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## DoD Programs Address Combat Stress

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Posted by: [Dr. Jeff Cook, Psychologist, Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury](#)

Monday, July 26, 2010

With the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, our nation's service members are often repeatedly called to duty in dangerous places and exposure to combat is a common reality. The Department of Defense's (DoD) scientific understanding of combat stress reactions has advanced rapidly to meet these new demands. These advances have allowed the department to enhance and refine its efforts to minimize the adverse effects of combat exposure and provide cutting-edge assessment and treatment when service members develop reactions. DoD programs address combat stress-related problems at all levels, including prevention, training, treatment and continued research.

In an effort to prevent the development of combat stress conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), select programs are aimed at building resilience to the potentially damaging effects of combat exposure. Examples of DoD resilience efforts include:

- the Marine Corps [Combat Operational Stress Control \(COSC\)](#) program
- the Army's [Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program](#), which is a resilience training program (formerly known as Battlemind)

These programs seek to provide personnel with resources and tools to prevent the development of combat stress reactions and/or PTSD.

Additional emphasis has been placed on education and training for the providers who identify and treat combat stress reactions and PTSD. Several [DCoE](#) component centers are working directly to address this need.

- The Center for Deployment Psychology provides training to military and government-employed psychological health providers in evidence-based interventions for PTSD.
- The Deployment Health Clinical Center has created a treatment model which enhances the recognition and effective management of PTSD in primary care settings ([Respect-mil](#)). Additionally, the DHCC provides an intensive, three-week, evidence-based intervention [program](#) for deployment-related stress conditions that includes multidisciplinary evaluation and treatment.

A major barrier to care associated with poor outcomes in combat stress-related conditions is the reluctance to seek treatment for these problems. DCoE has launched the [Real Warriors](#) campaign in an effort to reduce the negative connotations of psychological health evaluation and treatment. If service members get help early, the impact of combat stress on their careers, family and psychological health can be greatly reduced.

In addition to existing DoD programs, the [National Intrepid Center of Excellence \(NICoE\)](#) will provide state-of the art, comprehensive evaluation of service members who have PTSD, a traumatic brain injury, or both. Besides being a center of excellence for holistic evaluation and treatment planning, NICoE will also serve as a focal point for research and will guide the development of new best-practices for military medicine.

The Defense Department encourages service members and health professionals to participate in such programs. With heightened deployment and combat exposure rates, programs such as these are essential to warrior resilience and readiness.