

Overview

In May 2009, the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) launched the Real Warriors Campaign, a multimedia public education campaign to facilitate the resilience, reintegration and recovery of Service members, veterans and military families experiencing the invisible wounds of war and reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health care within the military community. With the tagline "Real Warriors. Real Battles. Real Strengths," the campaign features personal stories of those who have reached out for help to demonstrate that effective treatments are available. These stories encourage Service members and families to increase their use and awareness of the range of resources and support available. In addition to an interactive website, traditional media relations and social media outreach, the campaign has disseminated key messages and information to target audiences through a grassroots partnership program. Partners include federal agencies, military organizations and programs, national non-profit organizations, academic communities and local groups.

Background

Although current military conflicts have lower casualty rates than previous wars, many Service members return from deployment with combatrelated stress injuries and functional adjustment challenges. Service members operate within a heightened culture of stigma associated with seeking and receiving care – often they fear treatment will derail their career and they will be perceived as weak. To address the complex issue of the stigma around seeking treatment for psychological health concerns and encourage help-seeking behavior among Service members, Booz Allen established a partnership program as part of campaign outreach efforts. The partnership program aims to raise awareness about resources available; create understanding regarding the obstacles Service members feel prevent them from seeking treatment; and create investment on the part of military leadership in the concepts of resilience and early intervention. The information presented here describes the lessons learned and best practices on developing a partnership program to expand outreach and communicate key messages of a public education campaign.



227201 Using partnerships to combat mental health stigma in the military

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The Real Warriors Campaign has confirmed more than 115 partners from a variety of organizations that offer mental health, traumatic brain injury and health care resources as support to the military community.

47% of partners with websites are currently linking to the Real Warriors Campaign website and sent 1,222 visits over the past 3 months, an 11.5% increase from the previous quarter.

Top referring partner websites:

Partner Organization	Referrals
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	197
Defense Commissaries Agency (DeCA)	151
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)	101
afterdeployment.org	99
Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center	93
Air Force Warrior Program	74
Anxiety Disorders Association of America	52
Coalition for Iraq + Afghanistan Veterans	49
Army Wounded Warrior Program	39
Deployment Health Clinical Center	38

The Power of Partnerships

The Real Warriors Campaign invites the participation of organizations and programs that share the campaign's mission and can help spread campaign messages. Partnerships are flexible, and partners are asked to support the Real Warriors Campaign through a variety of activities, including:

- Establishing a link to the Real Warriors Campaign website on the partner website.
- Publishing a news brief or article about the campaign, using DCoE press releases and ready-to-publish copy.
- Including Real Warriors Campaign updates 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.
- Disseminating Real Warriors Profiles by using them in trainings, briefings and presentations to the military community; embedding profiles on partner Web and Social Networking sites; and playing PSAs on internal CCTV systems and local television networks.

The Value of Partnership

The campaign provided materials and information to help partners with quick, easy and inexpensive outreach using various methods, including:

- Logo, link and organization to be featured in the "Partner Spotlight" on the Real Warriors Campaign website partner page and monthly newsletter.
- A partnership toolkit that includes campaign information, partnership information, an official partnership recognition certificate and collateral materials such as fact sheets and brochures.
- Educational materials for distribution to military installations worldwide, training participants, briefings and special events and the general military community.
- Ready-to-print copy about campaign issues for newsletter/publication content and social networking sites.
- Quarterly e-newsletter featuring partner highlights and campaign updates to share with partner audiences.
- Invitation to participate in DCoE monthly webinars, focused on timely psychological health issues within the military.
- The opportunity to collaborate on Real Warriors Campaign educational materials and website content, resources and articles.

Exemplary Partnerships

Defense Commissaries Agency (DeCA):

- Distributed 25,000 co-branded shopping bags at Newcomer's Briefings, health fairs and outreach events.
- Displayed 510 posters at 255 commissaries worldwide for at least 4 weeks.
- Established a link to the Real Warriors website on the DeCA website.
- Sent a press release announcing the partnership, which was posted on the DeCA website and picked up by at least 4 media outlets.



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

- Invited Real Warrior Profile volunteers to speak as a keynote presentation, serve on presentation panels and present awards at SAMHSA's2010 Returning Service members, Veterans, and their Families Policy Academy June 2010, World Suicide Prevention Day Press Conference September 2010 and SAMHSA Voices Award October 2010.
- Published 1/3 page article about the campaign launch in SAMHSA News, May/June 2009 with 40,000 print and 100,000 electronic circulation.

• Published a full-page article with campaign messages and imagery in SAMHSA News, July/Aug 2009.

• Established a link to the Real Warriors Campaign website on the SAMHSA website and maintain an active social networking engagement. The site has been a Top 10 Referring Partner websites since the launch.

Military Officer Association of America (MOAA):

- Included a partnership announcement in Military Officer, December 2009.
- Linked to the campaign in 4 posts in their Healthcare blog driving traffic to the Real Warriors website.
- Facilitated opportunity for DCoE Director to update The Military Coalition about the Real Warriors Campaign's one-year anniversary and ongoing efforts.



• Developed a partner roundtable hosted by MOAA to bring partners together to discuss collaboration opportunities to increase reach to and awareness of resources available for Service members, veterans and their families.

Virginia Wounded Warrior Program:

- Facilitated high-visibility event at the Virginia is for Heroes 2010 Conference including an invitation to DCoE Director to present. Included a co-branded Campaign Backgrounder in 400 attendee packets.
- Established a link to the Real Warriors Campaign website on the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program website.
- Sent a press release announcing the partnership, which was posted on their website and picked up by at least 4 regional newspapers and online news briefs.

Conclusions

Through regular communication and collaboration with these organizations, the campaign successfully offers the most relevant and upto-date resources and provides partners with easy and effective outreach mechanisms. A network of 24 partner organizations was established prior to the public launch of the campaign and after one year has grown to more than 115 organizations. These organizations have distributed more than 85,000 materials on behalf of the Real Warriors Campaign and promoted it through 61 newsletters, blogs and announcements potentially reaching over 5,284,000 individuals. The Campaign's partnership base continues to grow, serving as a successful and cost-effective approach to advance the campaign messages, reach the military community and encourage Service members, veterans and their families to seek assistance for psychological health concerns.

Website www.realwarriors.net