



## **Real Warriors - Reaching Out Makes a Real Difference**

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Booz Allen Hamilton and Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), Real Warriors Campaign, Jan 1, 2013

**Summary:** 2013 Silver Anvil Award Winner — Integrated Communications — Government

The Real Warriors Campaign is a multimedia public awareness campaign designed to encourage help-seeking behavior among service members, veterans and military families coping with invisible wounds. Launched in 2009, the campaign uses a variety of communication strategies to reach service members and key stakeholders around the world with its messages of strength and resilience. The campaign is an integral part of the Department of Defense's overall effort to encourage warriors and families to seek appropriate care and support for psychological health concerns.

Integrated communications includes any program that demonstrates leadership of public relations strategies and tactics in a creative and effective integrated campaign, along with other marketing or communications. The program must demonstrate the clear leadership of public relations, along with its integration with other disciplines. The government subcategory includes all government bureaus, agencies, institutions or departments at the local, state and federal levels, including the armed forces, regulatory bodies, courts, public schools and state universities.

### **Full Text: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

To date, more than 2.3 million service members have deployed in support of combat missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Military leadership has grown increasingly concerned with the psychological health care of service members and veterans, as well as use of and access to available resources. The Real Warriors Campaign is an integral part of the Defense Department's overall effort to eliminate the stigma associate with seeking psychological health care. The campaign uses a variety of communication strategies, including an interactive website ([www.realwarriors.net](http://www.realwarriors.net)), production and placement of radio and television public service announcements (PSAs), traditional media outreach, social media engagement, collateral materials dissemination, event outreach and a partnership network to reach service members, veterans and military families coping with invisible wounds and encourage them to seek appropriate psychological health care or support.

### **RESEARCH**

The team conducts ongoing research to identify motivators and barriers to receiving psychological health care in the military community, changes in perceptions about help-seeking behavior, and the messages and tactics that are most likely to positively influence behavioral change. Prior to the campaign's launch, the team conducted primary research, including 11 focus groups and 49 key informant interviews, and secondary research, including a communications audit of more than 15 key studies and reports related to psychological health issues in the military and a situational analysis of more than 50 current programs and outreach efforts. The research revealed that:

- Service members are often in denial and don't associate their symptoms with any psychological health concerns, but rather the "cost" of deployment.
- Service members perceive the severity of their invisible wounds to be less than physical wounds and therefore not deserving of attention.
- There is a perception that leadership does not acknowledge a continuum and sees deployment stress as a dichotomy, where you either return "fine" or you have PTSD and are unable to serve.
- Any psychological healthcare treatment is widely perceived as a sign of weakness and a "career ender".
- Service members want proof. They want to see service members like themselves carrying out successful military or veteran careers after receiving care.

To build on research conducted prior to the campaign's launch, the campaign team conducted a situational analysis and review of literature in 2012 to identify new trends in attitudes, beliefs and barriers to care related to psychological health care in the military and to assess the current state of existing anti-stigma and health promotion campaigns. Qualitative and quantitative research planning began in 2012 (to be completed in 2013) to help the team gain additional insights from target audiences.

## PLANNING

The campaign is based in social marketing and behavior change theories and was designed using the Health Belief Model, a framework for motivating people to take positive health actions, using the desire to avoid a negative health consequence as a prime motivation, and using the belief in positive outcomes as a reinforcing principle. Using the HBM framework and research findings, the team developed a campaign centered around real service members who have proven that seeking care is a sign of strength that benefits warriors, their families and communities. The goals of the campaign were defined as:

- **Creating awareness** about the resources available for psychological health care and support among service members, their families, their commanders and the public at large.
- **Creating understanding** regarding the psychological obstacles service members may feel prevent them from seeking care or support for psychological health concerns.
- **Creating awareness** of the concepts of resilience and early intervention as well as the roles they play in successful care, recovery and reintegration for returning service members and how they strengthen overall force readiness.

The target audiences of the campaign are service members (including members of the National Guard and reserve), veterans, military families and the health professionals who care for them. The geographic scope of the campaign is worldwide with an emphasis on geographic location with large military populations. The campaign started with a budget of \$3.6 million and the current contract year has a budget of \$2.89 million.

## EXECUTION

With such a large and varied target audience, it was vital that the campaign used a diverse and integrated set of communication tactics. To date, examples of tactics leveraged by the campaign include:

- **Media Outreach:** Produced 27 radio and television public service announcements (PSAs), 3 Bloggers' Roundtables and 10 audio news releases.
- **Social Media:** Developed a robust social media platform, partnering with 150 social media managers within the Defense Department, services, Department of Veterans Affairs and campaign partners to help share campaign messaging.
- **Collateral Materials:** Produced and distributed 58 campaign products.
- **Events:** Participated in 117 conferences and events.

- **Partner Engagement:** Partnered with more than 200 credible, like-minded organizations, including federal, military, national, and local organizations.
- **Interactive Website:** Published 115 online articles, featured online live chat and message boards.
- **Multimedia:** Produced 16 video profiles featuring personal stories of warriors; and 31 podcast episodes.

Additionally, the team engaged target audiences through communication strategies anchored around national and military observances (such as Veterans Day and Month of the Military Child), a method proven to generate increased interest in the campaign.

## EVALUATION

Through the team’s targeted efforts, the campaign has reached service members and key stakeholders around the world with its messages of strength, resilience and reintegration. For example, in 2012 alone, highlights include:

- The team partnered with the NFL Players Association to produce five “Game Day” events in January 2012, in which former NFL players joined service members and their families at military installations across the country to watch NFL games, socialize and discuss common reintegration challenges faced by service members and the resources available to address them. Highlights include: direct interactions with more than 350 warriors and families; 29 unique news stories featuring the campaign garnering 9.3 million impressions; increased mentions and shares of the campaign on social media networks; and dissemination of more than 6,500 campaign materials.
- Actors Mark Harmon and Pauley Perrette featured the campaign’s website in a PSA following the Nov. 20, 2012 episode of “NCIS,” which was potentially seen by 16.47 million viewers. The PSA resulted in the campaign earning significant milestones within the 48 hours immediately following the show’s original airing, including: 8,112 visits to realwarriors.net; 400 new Facebook fans and more than 500 interactions on Twitter; and more than 30 orders for more than 10,000 campaign materials.
- The media team facilitated an in-person interview in 2012 between campaign volunteer Maj. Jeff Hall and *People* magazine. The story featured the campaign’s website and was published in February 2013 to a circulation of 3.6 million subscribers.

Overall, the campaign has exceeded each of its goals, as shown by snapshots of campaign metrics:

Campaign Goal	Snapshots of Campaign Results
Creating awareness of resources available for psychological health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributed more than 1.9 million campaign materials to target audiences.</li> <li>• Potentially reached more than 135 million individuals through 222 campaign articles in partners’ blogs, newsletters and publications.</li> <li>• Website has received 450,503 unique visitors, 618,138 visits and 3,902,134 page views.</li> <li>• Shared campaign messages with more than 36,201 Facebook fans and 12,066 Twitter followers, garnering 267,598 interactions, 27.4 million Facebook impressions and more than 70,000 social media mentions. In 2012, campaign interactions increased by 1,258 percent.</li> </ul>

<p>Creating understanding regarding obstacles to care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video profiles of campaign volunteers have been viewed 54,267 times.</li> <li>• Shared social media messaging with more than 150 social media managers garnering more than 65,000 social media mentions, and online audiences engage with the campaign 453 times every day.</li> </ul>
<p>Creating awareness of the concepts of resilience and early intervention and the roles they play.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 50,000 clips have been produced worldwide, resulting in more than 3.2 billion media impressions, 100 percent of which have been positive or neutral in tone.</li> <li>• Produced and aired PSAs 334,086 times on television and radio channels.</li> <li>• Campaign articles have been viewed more than 1.1 million times.</li> </ul>

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