



# FOCUS Project

## Building Military Family Resiliency: Targeted Prevention for Families Facing Combat Operational Stress

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NCTSN  The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network

  
**F·O·C·U·S**

# FOCUS Project Background

## Military and University Partnership:

In March 2008, the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and USMC Combat Operation Stress Control Program built a partnership with UCLA to implement the FOCUS Project for USN and USMC service members and their families in order to address:

- Impact of multiple combat deployments
- Effects of combat operational stress, including psychological and physical injuries
- High operational tempo on children and families

# Why build a partnership?

*“There are unforeseen demands not only on individual military service members and their families, but also on the Department of Defense itself, which must expand its capabilities to support the psychological health of its service members and their families.”*

(DOD Task Force on Mental Health, 2007)

- Enhances existing systems of care
- Integrates into the continuum of care resources
- Brings existing and current best practices from an evidenced based application
- Integration with a broader array of resources: MFRI, NCTSN, USUHS, NMFA, Duke University, Zero to Three

# Collaboration and Flexibility:

Through collaboration, education, promotion and leadership support, FOCUS is established at the installations within the context of “family friendly settings” offered at flexible delivery hours.



# Trauma-Informed Family-Centered Model to Support Families Affected by Combat Operational Stress

- Understanding the Impact of Multiple Deployments on Families, Parenting and Children
- Research Foundation for Family Centered Prevention Science
- Customizing Evidence Based Models

# Adapting Evidence Based Family-Centered Interventions

- Children with a depressed parent
  - (Beardslee et al., 2003)
- Children with medically ill parent
  - (Rotheram-Borus et al., 2001, 2004, Lester et al 2008)
- Children affected by war
  - (Layne, Saltzman, Pynoos 2008)
  - Children affected by USMC parental combat deployments  
(Saltzman & Lester, 2006)

# FOCUS Resiliency Training Core Components: Mitigating Risk and Promoting Resiliency

- Family level education: Combat Operational Stress Contium, developmental guidance, and trauma-informed psychoeducation
- Family level resiliency skills (goal setting, problem solving, emotional regulation; managing combat/deployment reminders)
- Family deployment timeline
  - Link skills to family (and child) experience
  - Develop shared family meaning
  - Bridge estrangements
- Enhancing social support
- Addressing new challenges

# Web Based FOCUS Family Check-Up

- Real time assessment to individualize intervention to family needs
  - Identifies strengths and challenges
  - Based on COS Continuum and Decision Matrix
  - Immediate feedback to providers on family, adult, and child assessment results
  - Psycho education about combat stress, child development, cycles of deployment and typical family reactions

# FOCUS Project for NSW Families

Parents only



Children only



Parents only



Family Sessions



Sessions 1 & 2

Sessions 3 & 4

Session 5

Sessions 6 – 8

# Sharing the Family Narratives: Enhancing Family Resiliency

- Appreciate children's experiences
- Make meaning out of adversity
- Normalize distress
- Clarify confusion and misunderstandings
- Promote perspective taking
- Enhance shared understanding
- Increase positive interactions
- Encourage family-level problem solving and goal setting through family plans.



# FOCUS Evaluation Plan

- **Real-time family check-up:**
  - Entry, Exit, and follow-up
  - Assessment-driven intervention
  - Customized to individual family goals and needs
- **Program evaluation**
  - Family member satisfaction
  - Perception of impact
  - Psychological impact
  - Multiple reporters
  - Impact over time



# FOCUS Sites Through 9/09: Service Implementation Summary

<b>Community Outreach and Education</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
Total Community Group Briefings	438	23,599
Provider Group Briefings	216	4,642
Indirect Outreach/Presentations	225	22,061
FOCUS Consultations	293	1180
FOCUS Educational Workshops	84	3181
<b>FOCUS Resiliency Training</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
FOCUS Family Skill Building Groups	228	2,291
FOCUS Individual Family Training		Adults 639
		Children 736

# FOCUS Services: Family Satisfaction Ratings

## *Individual Family Resiliency Training*

Adults reported mean scores between **6.48-6.81** on a scale of 1-7 (7 highest satisfaction)

## *Group Family Resiliency Skill Building*

Adults provided strongly positive feedback on the response items, with mean responses ranging from **1.19 to 1.57** on the scale of 1-5 (1 highest rating).



# Feedback From Families

## Would you recommend FOCUS Resiliency Training to other families?

*“Definitely, because it’s skills based and not counseling. Every family could benefit from it. How else does a military family have an opportunity to learn how to build a strong family?”*

*--FOCUS Family*

*“Yes, you guys are great. The program is wonderful. For the environment you work in you have to be open and welcoming, and you are. I have lots of friends that come here. We appreciated the flexible schedule especially when my husband returned from deployment.”*

*--FOCUS Family*

*“Yes! Anyone that has a family and deploys can benefit from this program even if you don't think there is a problem.”*

*--FOCUS Family*

# Feedback From Families

*“Preparation for deployment and the entire process was great. The individual and family meetings were excellent. Seeing things from a different perspective and getting in sync as a family before deployment. All families that have a spouse that deploys should know about FOCUS. I think you should attend all pre-deployment briefs and let all know that you are here to help.”*

*--FOCUS Family*

*“For the kids, learning “hands on” with different skills and activities. The feeling thermometer was great. For the adults having a place to talk with someone about challenges/issues going on is important.”*

*--FOCUS Family*

*“The trainer’s ability to help each of us see situations from each other’s vantage points as parents, teenagers, and children. I feel we gained valuable insights and tools– and ended up with more acceptable expectations and understanding.”*

*--FOCUS Family*

# FOCUS Impact on Family Functioning McMaster Family Assessment Device

Assesses key domains of family functioning including: ***problem solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behavior control and general functioning***, all of which have been empirically linked to family psychological health.



FOCUS families had **highly significant improvements** between initial and exit FAD subscale scores on all domains ( $p < .0001$ ).

# FOCUS Impact for Children: Child Coping Skills

## Kidcope

- *Standardized self-report inventory to assess coping strategies in children (6-18 years).*
- **Children** completing FOCUS family training endorsed increased use of positive coping strategies in dealing with stressful events compared to program entry, including **significant increases in all assessed positive coping strategies**, such as problem solving ( $p = .0001$ ), emotional regulation ( $p = .005$ ), and cognitive restructuring ( $p = .016$ ).



# FOCUS Impact for Children: Child Behavioral and Emotional Adjustment *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire*

- **Reductions in conduct problems** ( $p < .0001$ ), such as disruptive behaviors.
- **Reductions in emotional symptoms** ( $p = .001$ ), such as anxiety and depressive symptoms, from program entry to time of follow-up.
- **Improvements in child Prosocial behaviors** ( $p = .01$ ) indicating increases in positive behaviors over time.

# FOCUS Impact for Parent Psychological Health

## Brief Symptom Inventory

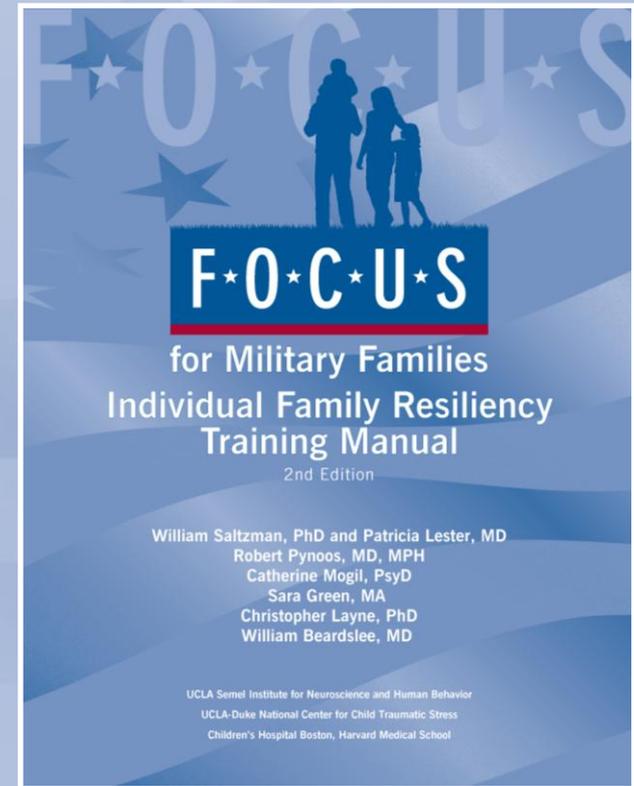


Standardized self report assessments (1-4 months after intervention), parents completing FOCUS indicated:

- Significant **reductions in overall parental emotional distress** ( $p < .01$ ).
- Significant **reductions in depression** ( $p < .01$ ), **anxiety** ( $p = .002$ ) and **somatic complaints** ( $p < .001$ ).

# FOCUS Family Resiliency Training Foundation for Sustainability

- Best Practice Interventions
  - Require program standardization
  - Feasibility and portability
  - Implementation flexibility
  - Integration into a collaborative system of care
  - Program evaluation for quality improvement/quality control
- Program Standardization
  - User friendly manuals and training
  - Rigorous training and supervision standards
  - Process for customization to address unique needs of individual family, military branch, and individual installation



# Program Milestones: Foundation for Sustainability

- ***FOCUS Resiliency Training Manuals (Individual and Group)*** provides standardized delivery of core components.
- ***Web-Based FOCUS Introductory Training*** provides an on-line FOCUS introductory training developed through the ***National Child Traumatic Stress Learning Center***.
- ***FOCUS Training Curriculum and Trainer's Manual*** provides the training curriculum for face-to-face FOCUS training based on SAMSHA Learning Collaborative model for training on evidenced-based practice.
- ***FOCUS Project Website*** ([www.focusproject.org](http://www.focusproject.org)) provides outreach, resources, and education. Development of web-based family resiliency training underway.
- ***FOCUS Advisory Board*** comprised of key military, family, policy and academic leadership has provided programmatic and implementation guidance.

# FOCUS Partnerships: Adaptations in the Field

- USUHS and FOCUS: Combat Injured Families RCT
- MFRI and FOCUS: Couples Resiliency Training
- NMFA Operation Purple Family Retreats and FOCUS

# Meeting the Needs of Military Families: Scalability, Training and Technology

- FOCUS for Army and Air Force
- NCTSN-FOCUS: Enhancing systems of care through technology and training
- Reaching families at a distance: Web based family services