



Michigan Army National Guard Buddy to Buddy (B2B): Peer Support and Resilience Teams

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B2B Mission

To provide training and resources to Michigan Army National Guard Soldiers in order to enhance Soldier-to-Soldier support and resilience, and to facilitate access to Systems of Care (community resources).



B2B Goals

- ❖ Provide training in order to facilitate Soldier-to-Soldier support
- ❖ Foster social support networks of Soldiers and Veterans in order to increase resilience
- ❖ Improve access to care and resources for our Citizen-Soldiers
- ❖ Reduce stigma associated with accessing care and resources
- ❖ Contribute to promoting Soldier and Family resilience
- ❖ Increase Soldier Retention



Psychosocial Challenges and Concerns for Citizen-Soldiers

- Re-entry into civilian job market
- Economic difficulties
 - Foreclosures
 - Debt
- Family/civilian work reintegration
- Balancing military/civilian social norms
- Increased substance abuse
- Increased anger
- Disturbances in sleep/poor sleep hygiene



Reducing stigma=increased resilience

- The good news: 50% of MIARNG soldiers with need sought help
- Strategy to reach the remaining half
- Treatment seeking, entry, and adherence are crucial barriers that **MUST** be overcome



Why don't the remaining 50% seek help? Stigma

- Survey reasons among MIARNG:
- Do not want it in military records (27%)
- Unit leadership might treat me differently (20%)
- Too embarrassing (17%)
- Harm career (17%)
- Costs (15%)
- Do not know where to go to get help (6%)
- No providers in my community (6%)
- Transportation (5%)



Who will Soldiers talk to?

- Soldiers were asked if they “were struggling with stressors, problems, or symptoms of depression, PTSD, anxiety, or substance use”, how likely they would be to talk to a number of different individuals
- Soldiers more frequently endorsed being “highly likely” to talk to:
 - their spouse (47%)
 - [in-unit military peer \(30%\)](#)
 - military chaplain (25%)
 - an officer (17%)
 - civilian doctor (17%)
 - military doctor (15%)
 - civilian social worker (13%)
 - military social worker (12%)



Buddy to Buddy: Peer Support and Resilience Teams

- Peer Team Objectives
 - Trained peer support teams
 - Reduce stigma and change cultural beliefs on seeking assistance
 - Early Identification, Intervention and Prevention
 - Improve Access to Care
 - Resource identification and navigation
 - Increase protective factors of Resilience
 - May build and maintain social support
 - Promote Retention



What are Buddy to Buddy Teams?

- First Line of Defense (Trained Soldier Peer Mentor – B1)
 - Trained Soldiers/Leaders within unit
 - Two models of execution for unit leadership to choose from
 - Developed, trained and executed by the MIARNG
- Second Line of Defense (Volunteer Veterans)
 - Veterans outside of MIARNG
 - Overseen by University of Michigan staff



Buddy One Training

- 3 hours
- Didactic, interactive, Soldier driven
- Manual supplied to unit
- Quick Reference card
- Support and retraining
- Command leadership and buy-in is crucial



What Soldiers are saying about B1 Peer Support and Resilience training!

“Right level of content...”

“Informational!”

“Ideal Training!”

“Interactive”.

“Succinct and Efficient...right amount of
content!”

“No PowerPoint presentation – Sustain!”

“Good information provided”.

“Good Handouts”

“Train Pre-deployment!”

“Sustain teaching basic communication skills”.



Selection of Volunteer Veterans

- Veterans
 - All eras
 - Different combat experiences/non-combat
 - Within geographic area of MIARNG armory
 - Not currently serving in MIARNG
 - Motivated, approachable, good communication skills
- Willing to commit to and participate in weekly supervision with the University of Michigan
- No current or personal family issues interfering with responsibilities
- Evidence of high level of flexibility and commitment (business success, college degree, community service, etc.)
- Experience with mental health and substance use treatment is helpful
 - Either professional or personal



Volunteer Veteran Responsibilities and Training

- Liaison with Buddy Ones / public outreach
- Learn advanced communication techniques (MI)
 - soldiers have mixed feelings about seeking help
- Become highly familiar with local treatment resources
- Complete calls to assigned soldiers
- Visit *Armories at least once per month*
- Help connect to resources



Buddy to Buddy Progress Report

- **34 Active Volunteer Veterans (B2s)**
- **>250 Soldiers in units trained (B1s)**
- **25 (60%) Armories Currently Staffed**
- **Goal of 44(100%) Armories and >80 Volunteers by end of FY11**
- **238 Soldiers have received assistance from a B2 (2.5%) of the Michigan Army National Guard Jan 2010 – present**



Buddy to Buddy: Impact Summary

January 2010 – Present

Issue	# times addressed	Percentage of total contacts
1. Health Problems	66	13.23%
2. Education Problems	34	6.81%
3. Substance Abuse	33	6.61%
4. Legal Problems	30	6.01%
5. Suicidal Thoughts	14	2.81%
6. Anger Problems	21	4.21%
7. Risky Behaviors	28	5.61%
8. Depression/Anxiety	64	12.83%
9. Financial Problems	66	13.23%
10. Employment Problems	48	9.62%
11. Relationship/Family Problems	37	7.41%
12. Sleep Problems/Nightmares	9	1.80%
13. Other	49	9.82%



THANK YOU!

