



DODDEA

# SAFE Schools

## NEWSLETTER



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### Military Crisis Line Available to all Community Members

The Military Crisis line is a 24-hour crisis service operated by the Veteran’s Administration (VA). Caitlin Thompson, Ph.D., Clinical Care Coordinator says the line is not just for military personnel, however. “We want family and friends [of military personnel] to know it is absolutely appropriate to call us if they are concerned about someone. It is also appropriate for a teacher to call if they notice a parent who seems to be having trouble adjusting following deployment.”

When someone concerned about a former or current service member contacts the Military Crisis Line, call center operators, many of whom have experience with military life, gather information before contacting the veteran or service member to conduct an assessment. Dr. Thompson notes that if a person is not actively suicidal, phone operators will discuss mental health self-care options and offer information about local resources. “In an immediate crisis, we work with the caller to develop a safety plan,” explains Dr. Thompson. “If the person is actively suicidal we can help them get to a hospital.” She adds, “We have point people who check in with veterans within a twenty-four hour period to see how they are doing.” For active duty personnel stationed overseas, the VA is partnering with the Department of Defense to build intra-theatre support networks that can provide similar types of assistance and follow-up care.



Since 2007, the call center has received over 740,000 phone calls from individuals in crisis or from people concerned that a veteran or service member might be considering suicide. The Military Crisis Line has expanded their crisis intervention services to reach a broader range of military personnel by adding online chat and text messaging options for those who prefer digital communication. As of December 2012, the Military Crisis Line has taken part in over 80,000 chats and received more than 5,000 text messages.

In addition to calls from people in psychological distress, the Crisis Line also receives a high volume of thank you calls. “We have had many callers who call the Crisis Line to specifically thank us for what we did for them. They tell us they were able to get into better treatment or we ‘saved their lives’ or we just helped,” said Dr. Thompson. “There is no better feeling than that.” To access the Military Crisis Line, call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, visit [www.militarycrisisline.net](http://www.militarycrisisline.net) to access the online chat, or text 838255. ■

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## Coming Soon to a Location Near You: Influenza!

Early analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as private think tanks, is indicating that the 2012-13 flu season may be starting earlier than usual. The United States is experiencing an unusually high number of early cases of severe flu symptoms. In the United States, 18 children had reportedly died from flu complications as of December 29, 2012.

According to the CDC, the three most important actions people can take to avoid contracting influenza are to make time to take the vaccine at the start of the flu season; use personal hygiene to avoid spreading germs (this includes frequent hand-washing and covering one's nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing); and visit the doctor to receive the proper antiviral medication if one's physician prescribes them.

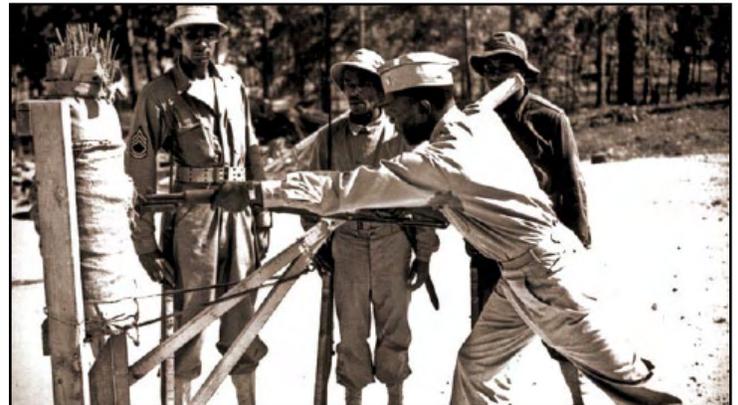
For additional information on 2012-2013 Influenza trends, visit the CDC site, Flu View, at [www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly). In addition, each week the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center publishes a summary of influenza activity among military health system beneficiaries worldwide. The summary tracks influenza-like illnesses, confirmed cases of influenza, and offers statistical information about vaccinations to prevent flu. To learn about flu trends in your military region, visit <http://afhsc.mil/fluReports>. For tips on symptoms and avoiding the flu, visit the DoDEA homepage ([www.dodea.edu](http://www.dodea.edu)) and click on the revolving feature in the upper left corner. ■

## Celebrate Black History Month

February is Black History Month. This year, the observation of Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday will be celebrated with a National Day of Service. Planning service activities for students need not be difficult. The MLK

Day Web Site ([www.mlkday.gov](http://www.mlkday.gov)) offers helpful lists of ideas to get organizations and student groups started planning service projects.

Sometimes in the "busyness" of everyday life, it is easy to forget there are often heroes in our own backyards. On or near every U.S. installation there are individuals who have participated in critical moments in U.S. military history. By planning to include African American veterans from the community as speakers, educators can inspire students by introducing them to real life examples of those who make freedom possible. Check with community services and the installation public affairs office to discover the names of local veterans willing to speak to student groups.



There are many ways to plan events during Black History Month that fit into the academic curriculum. For example, schools can focus on the historical contributions of African American personnel serving in the U.S. military.

The Department of Defense (DoD) offers a web page filled with archival photographs and information about the contributions of African-American service members throughout American history. To learn more, visit [www.defense.gov/home/features/2012/0212\\_aahm/](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2012/0212_aahm/). DoDEA also offers a wealth of activities and resources for Black History month at [www.dodea.edu/dodeaCelebrates/BlackHistory/2012.cfm](http://www.dodea.edu/dodeaCelebrates/BlackHistory/2012.cfm). ■

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## Strengthening Commitment to Security Awareness

Following a demonstration of exemplary school security procedures, Pat Schob, principal of Albritton Middle School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, summed up the thoughts of many educators in the wake of the Newtown, Connecticut shooting. Schob observed: “All educators, but particularly principals, are reeling emotionally from the news. It leaves us wondering what more can we do to protect our students.”

In fact, elementary school principals sometimes confide that on days when their job feels particularly stressful, they visit the kindergarten classrooms. There, the enthusiasm and transparent honesty on those young faces has a rejuvenating effect. The death of our collective denial that anyone could intentionally harm these innocents gives birth to a renewed commitment to do everything possible to protect them.



So it is with gentle respect that we invite educators to join us in committing to “Charlotte, Daniel, Olivia, Josephine, Ana, Dylan, Madeline, Catherine, Chase, Jesse, James, Grace, Emilie, Jack, Noah, Caroline, Jessica, Benjamin, Avielle, and Allison” . . . not one more.

Without interrupting learning any more than necessary, there are three things all principals can do immediately to decrease the possibility that a perpetrator could harm students, and limit damage from a determined attack:

- 1) Review access control procedures to ensure doors lock and visitors sign-in.
- 2) Practice lockdown procedures to ensure staff members understand their roles and feel confident in their ability to implement security procedures.
- 3) Ensure staff members, students, and parents know how to report any suspicious activity.

### Emphasize Access Control

Signs, locks, and signatures are the keys to maintaining access control. To channel traffic to the control point at the main entrance, post signs starting at the school perimeter. Once school is in session, operate with exterior doors locked, and require visitors to sign in at the school office.

### Practice Protective Action Drills

Conducting an orientation during a staff meeting, and devoting 15 minutes to practicing lockdown drills throughout the school year, should be sufficient to maintain proficiency. For additional tips on how to maximize learning and bring substitutes and new staff members up to speed on procedures contact [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com).

### Publicize Reporting Procedures

Students, parents/sponsors, and staff members are the eyes and ears of the school. They provide early warning when something is amiss. Use newsletters, the school’s Web site, and regular communication with parents to maintain awareness of how to report situations or behavior that could be considered threatening or unusual.

School administrators can take comfort that their personal commitment to security bears fruit. In hundreds of observations in U.S. public schools, evaluators have documented how leadership commitment benefits school security through greater awareness and tighter implementation of security procedures. We all hope we could respond with the remarkable courage and self-sacrifice displayed by the adults at Sandy Hook: Dawn Hochsprung, Rachel Davino, Anne Marie Murphy, Lauren Rousseau, Mary Sherlach, and Victoria Soto. Establishing and practicing school security procedures decreases the chance such sacrifice will be required. ■

*“This awful tragedy brings renewed focus to the importance of our training and vigilance . . .”* – Marilee Fitzgerald, Director, DoDEA.

## Bullying Prevention in Europe: Progress Report

Effectively addressing bullying in schools requires community involvement, education, and clear procedures for responding to incidents when they occur. Administrators and officials in DoDDS-Europe have been working on such a program for the past two years. Two thousand and twelve was a particularly busy year as Judi Patrick, School Liaison officer at U.S. Army Installation Management Command – Europe Region. Following a successful bullying prevention pilot program at Garmisch Elementary and Middle School, Patrick began working with schools across Europe to create similar safe and inclusive learning environments for students.

Patrick worked with individual schools to create bullying task forces that included a cross-section of all installation stakeholders. Each bullying task force participated in trainings, led by internationally recognized bullying prevention expert Michelle Borba, Ph.D. During these trainings, the task forces learned to gather information about the needs of their school, how to identify bullying “hot spots,” and how to develop a plan for addressing bullying within their communities.

In addition, garrison commanders across Europe signed bullying prevention policies that included clear definitions of bullying and appropriate, but fair, disciplinary consequences for bullies, support and skills for the bullied, and training for the bystanders. These policies represented over a year of intense collaboration by DoDEA educators, administrators, counselors, and psychologists, child social workers, school liaison officers, and law enforcement officers. Having rules in place to prevent bullying was not enough, however. “It was really important to us that this did more than check the box,” explained Patrick. “You can have policies and procedures, but if people don’t know how to respond you are not doing enough.”



*Dr. Michelle Borba and Judi Patrick take a break during the Bullying Prevention workshops held in September.*



So in September 2012, Dr. Borba returned to Europe to present full-day bullying response workshops at three DoDDS-Europe District Superintendents Offices: Kaiserslautern, Bavaria and Heidelberg. At each site, the Army bullying prevention task force groups attended the full-day workshop. Thanks to video conferencing technology, over 300 participants stationed in Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, England, and Portugal (the Azores), were able to take part in the trainings. The Army invited all military installations in Europe to participate, and six Air Force bases took part through telepresence.

After the trainings, the bullying task forces returned to their respective schools to begin training school staff in bullying prevention, intervention, and reporting procedures. Some schools have lost no time in organizing awareness-raising activities for the children. Mary Corrigan at Netzaberg Elementary School in Grafenwoehr, Germany, asked students to sign an anti-bullying pledge, after which the kids held a Peace March. Many of them waved banners they had prepared specifically for the occasion. Meanwhile, Diana Vidrini, Kathy Thomas, and Carol Kabonick, all at Vicenza Middle School, developed a Bullying Reduction Plan that not only earned them graduate credit, but also now serves as a roadmap for ongoing bullying prevention efforts at Vicenza Middle School and in the community as a whole.

It is too soon to measure how these efforts will benefit children in DoDEA, but already the anecdotal evidence looks promising. “Bullying prevention takes time and it is one of those things that only works if everyone is on the same page,” explained Patrick. “It’s important to include everyone: community leaders, parents, teachers, support staff, even student leaders. By training the community in how to recognize and respond to bullying, we know we are taking the first important steps to creating a world where every child feels safe in and out of school.” ■

## Here an App, There an App, Everywhere an App: Children Use Applications, Too

The term “application” or “app” is becoming a household term due to the rapid rise in the percentage of the population using smart phones, tablets, and other personal electronic devices that allow students and parents/sponsors to use apps. Reportedly, of the 40 billion apps downloaded to date, half were downloaded in the past year.

Surprisingly, parents are more likely than non-parents to download apps. A Pew Research Center study showed that 84 percent of parents who own tablets, and 48 percent of parents who own mobile phones, download “apps.” According to the same research, 56 percent of parents download apps for use by children.

Parents accessing the vast array of education and entertainment oriented apps might not be aware of the privacy and security implications. A recent Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Staff Report expressed concerns about the data collected by applications or “apps” developed for children.

The December 2012 FTC report, titled, *Mobile Apps for Kids: Disclosures Still Not Making the Grade*, examined whether applications were providing privacy disclosures and information about how data would be used. The FTC found that apps harvest personal data for use in advertising, social media websites, and advertisements that appear within the app. Researchers also checked to see whether disclosures matched actual practice.



The results are not comforting. The survey found that parents are still not receiving basic information about what data mobile and tablet apps are collecting from their children. “Most apps failed to provide any information about the data collected through the app, let alone the type of data collected, the purpose of the collection, and who would obtain access to the data,” the FTC Staff Report noted. Application developers, advertising networks, analytics companies, or other third parties can compile detailed profiles of the child, including the child’s preferences and whereabouts, while parents are unaware of the basic characteristics or functions of the apps themselves.

The report shows that 59 percent of apps relay some user information to the developer or other third party. This data, which applications could gather, includes a “user’s name, geo-location, birth date, email address, mailing address, phone number, or various device identifiers.” It remains difficult for parents and users to find out, as well as understand, what types of information apps are collecting and how this information is actually being used. Adults can, however, remain aware of the risks involved in letting children use apps:

- ▶ Use discretion when deciding whether or not to let a child download and use apps.
- ▶ Even though it is not fool-proof, always read the fine print of user agreements.
- ▶ Finally, take time to “test drive” any apps children use as a means of screening the types of advertisements and social media links they will be seeing while using the app.

The FTC plans to launch a project to develop “new consumer education directed to parents to help navigate the mobile app marketplace and avoid apps that fail to provide adequate disclosures.” To download the FTC report and learn more about the data collected by apps, visit [www.ftc.gov/opa/2012/12/kidsapp.shtm](http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2012/12/kidsapp.shtm). For additional resources to help parents understand apps and protect their children, see [www.onguardonline.gov/articles/0018-understanding-mobile-apps](http://www.onguardonline.gov/articles/0018-understanding-mobile-apps). ■

## Teen Prescription Drug Abuse on the Rise

Every day in the United States, approximately 2,000 teenagers, aged 12 to 17, will abuse prescription drugs for the first time. In most cases, they will obtain these drugs easily and for free, simply taking them from the medicine cabinets of parents, friends, and relatives.

While overall illicit drug use by teens is down, nationwide abuse of prescription drugs by teens is on the rise. In fact, more teens abuse prescription drugs than any other illicit drug except marijuana — more than cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine combined, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). A study published by the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) under the auspices of SAMHSA, found that in 2010, teens ages 20 and younger accounted for nearly 20 percent of all drug-related emergency room visits, and about half of these visits involved drug misuse or abuse.

The most commonly abused prescription drugs are depressants and sleeping aids (such as Valium and Xanax), painkillers (such as OxyContin and Percocet), and stimulants (such as Adderall and Ritalin). Teens take these drugs to get high, believing them “safe,” because they were prescribed by a physician. They do not realize that overdosing, especially on pain killers, can be fatal, and so can mixing prescription drugs with over-the-counter medications and alcohol. In addition, long term use of many of these drugs is potentially addictive.

### Signs that a teen may be abusing prescription drugs:

- ◆ Change in sleeping patterns
- ◆ Change in attitude
- ◆ Loss of interest in hygiene or personal appearance
- ◆ Unexplained drop in grades
- ◆ Change in friends
- ◆ Change in appetite

### What can parents and educators do?

Talk to children about the dangers of prescription drug abuse. Research shows that parental disapproval is a powerful deterrent to stop teens from taking drugs. Safeguard your medications by locking them up. Count and monitor pills. Talk to friends and relatives, especially grandparents, about safeguarding medication. Safely dispose of unused medicine by participating in the Drug Enforcement Agency’s National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on April 27, 2013.

Find more information at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal/takeback/](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/). More information about unused drug drop-off programs may be obtained by contacting a local pharmacy. ■

### **SAMSHA Disaster Distress Helpline Lends an Ear When Times are Tough**

In the wake of disasters or distressing news events, people sometimes need to speak to a trained counselor in order to process their emotions. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) sponsors the Disaster Distress Helpline which can provide immediate counseling to anyone who needs help dealing with the many issues and problems that might arise during times of stress. The Helpline connects callers to trained professionals from the closest crisis counseling center in a nationwide network of call centers. Helpline staff will provide confidential counseling, referrals, and other needed support services.

According to SAMHSA, the Disaster Distress Helpline is a “24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week national hotline dedicated to providing disaster crisis counseling.” Calls to the helpline are confidential and multilingual services are available. For people who are experiencing psychological distress as a result of natural or man-made disasters, incidents of mass violence, or any other tragedy affecting America’s communities, the Disaster Distress Helpline can provide caring support. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” to 66746. The Helpline can also be accessed online at <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/>. ■