

## **Abstract** for “Combat Operational Stress Stigma Reduction Intervention”

The proposed project serves to complement the existing programs for PTSD prevention, assessment, and treatment by more vigorously battling perceived stigma that may serve as an insurmountable hurdle to some service members who are in need of mental health treatment. The aim of this study is to develop and evaluate a program tailored for military service members to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help for combat and operational stress and other mental health concerns. The stigma reduction program will contain components that address specific reasons why service members may not seek help such as concerns about confidentiality, embarrassment, harm to career, and being perceived as weak, and will incorporate a reframing of the way barriers to care are viewed by service members such that they can be overcome. Specifically, the study objectives are to:

1. Assess specific current views of the stigma associated with seeking help for PTSD, COS and mental health issues among enlisted service members and senior leadership.
2. Assess the actions a soldier or Marine would take if he or she was suffering from symptoms of COS, or if he or she knew someone suffering from such symptoms, and determine what factors influence the decision to seek treatment for mental health concerns.
3. Develop and evaluate a stigma reduction program for soldiers and Marines that addresses the specific reasons why service members often do not seek help.