

**Center for the Study
of Traumatic Stress
2022**

S

F

S

S



CSTS

The Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS) is part of the Department of Psychiatry in the Uniformed Services University's (USU) School of Medicine (America's Medical School). The Center supports USU, the Military Health System (MHS), and the Department of Defense (DoD). Since it was established in 1987, the Center has been working to mitigate the impact of trauma from exposure to war, disasters, terrorism, community violence, public health threats, and humanitarian operations throughout the nation and across the globe.

The Center's work encompasses both military and civilian populations, but it focuses on health issues of special interest to the military, including combat, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), suicide and suicide-related behaviors, and the impact of death and loss on the families of Service members.

CSTS is composed of a multi-disciplinary and collaborative team of scientists, educators, clinicians, and leaders who help inform our Nation's policies and responses to the impact of exposure to trauma from disasters, both human-made and natural. The Center is well-positioned to rapidly respond to DoD mission-relevant activities. CSTS sustains national readiness, enhances national security, and serves an essential role for the DoD and the nation.



War in Ukraine Support Highlights in 2022

The war in Ukraine has resulted in countless casualties, displaced millions, and led to widespread exposure to extreme and traumatic events. In 2022, CSTS was sought out by global colleagues and stakeholders within Ukraine and around the world to provide consultation, support educational seminars, and disseminate actionable just-in-time resources that included mental health education fact sheets providing guidance for Service members, families, military and community leaders, as well as healthcare providers and other global responders. CSTS remains actively involved in numerous consultations in support of Ukraine with DoD and other federal agencies, NATO partners, the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the Five Eyes international collaboration.

CSTS Mission

The Center provides leadership, education, training, research, scholarship, service, outreach, consultation, and global health engagement. CSTS informs and educates community, regional, state, national, and global stakeholders in government, industry, healthcare, public health, and academia. The Center's work includes innovative and ground-breaking research that ranges from the micro level in laboratories to the macro level in communities, the Nation, and all across the world. CSTS helps to foster community and national resilience, and improve trauma-related care by preparing treatment providers to address the impact of trauma.

The work of the Center also:

- Uniquely combines and integrates military and disaster psychiatry.
- Moves science from the gene to the cell, to the organism, to the person, to the community.
- Applies state-of-the-art approaches to neuroscience and precision medicine.
- Moves from knowledge to action.
- Helps ensure that behavioral health is addressed in the face of public health threats, disaster planning, and disaster recovery.



The Center consists of more than 100 people. In 2022, CSTS directed approximately \$30 million in funding through a core grant and 12 external grants.

For more information, visit the CSTS website at: www.CSTSonline.org

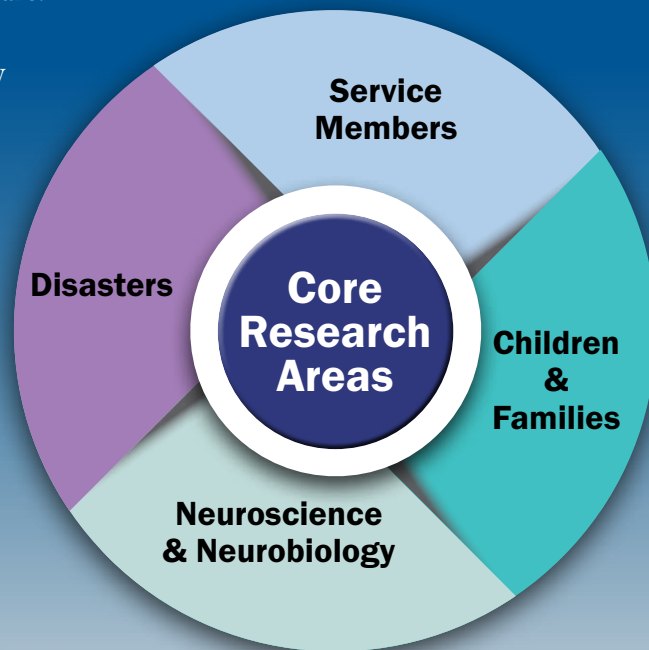
Research

CSTS research encompasses a broad spectrum both in the laboratory and in the field. All the Center research is designed to support the Military Health System (MHS) in its efforts to provide a medically-ready force to Combatant Commands in both peacetime and wartime, and to deliver integrated, affordable, and high-quality health services.

The four core areas of CSTS research are:

- Research on Service members.
- Research on the children and family members of Service members.
- Research in neuroscience and neurobiology.
- Research on disasters and terrorism.

Examples of specific research topics include the causes of suicide in Service members, psychological responses to trauma and disasters, and clinical investigations of the symptomatology and treatment of PTSD.



Research Highlights in 2022

- **COVID-19 Pandemic** - CSTS continues to work with the National Guard Bureau (NGB) to provide the New York National Guard with interpretation of the public health surveillance assessment to inform NGB leadership and provide recommendations.
- **Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers (STARRS)** - CSTS continues its role leading STARRS studies -- the largest ever conducted on military suicide. Results and recommendations actively shape DoD and civilian mental healthcare for suicide and related risk factors. There have been 119 published articles and more than 100 recommendations.
- **Suicide Prevention Program (SPP)** - Informed by STARRS studies, CSTS launched the SPP to develop action-oriented and evidence-based products and programs to address suicide and risk-related behaviors. Twelve SPP projects focus on a range of risk factors through interagency and private sector partnerships.
- **Brain Bank** - CSTS continues to work with the Veteran's Administration (VA) National Center for PTSD on Brain Bank project that we co-founded with them. The Brain Bank's objective is to identify biomarkers of susceptibility and resilience to trauma and assist in targeting new treatments.

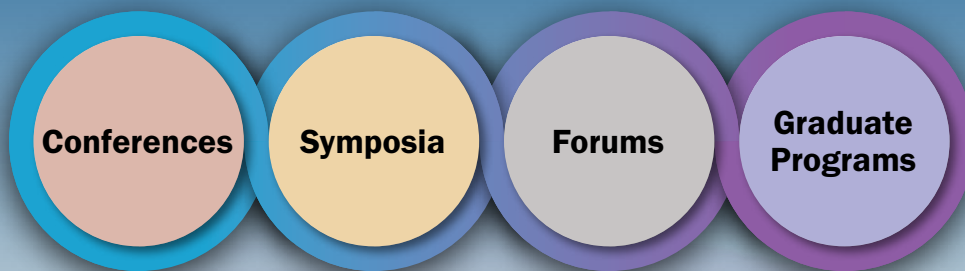
Education and Training

The Center provides educational resources to interagency organizations (including DoD and other federal entities) as well as state and local agencies, professional associations, and others.

Center Scientists educate and train USU medical students committed to service in our Nation's Army, Air Force, Navy, and Public Health Service. The Center provides education to interagency and private sector leaders and other personnel.

The Center advances the field of military and disaster psychiatry through publications, presentations, outreach, and training. CSTS sponsors and participates in conferences, seminars, symposia, workshops, and collaborations with educational and training objectives across the U.S. and internationally. The Center also educates and expands knowledge through public health efforts and interventions during and after disasters.

CSTS disseminates educational materials to stakeholders, including healthcare providers, community leaders, families, first responders, teaching professionals, and policy makers. The Center creates and disseminates customized, easy-to-read, just-in-time educational fact sheets to assist stakeholders in effectively managing the adverse effects of traumatic stress through enhanced preparation and response to disaster events.



Education and Training Highlights in 2022

- Adapted and trained Combat and Operational Stress Control principles to numerous healthcare systems, professional associations, and other organizations, in order to enhance well-being and functioning in work environments in the face of stress and trauma.
- Supported response efforts following a range of climate-related disasters, including Hurricane Ian, Hurricane Fiona, and the massive floods across the Central states, which particularly devastated the state of Kentucky.
- Provided community mental health support resources to multiple local and national organizations in the wake of three mass violence events over a period of five weeks: shootings at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, a parade in Highland Park, Illinois, and Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas.
- Refined an eight-week Neuroscience and Behavioral Module to be conducted in distance and hybrid learning as well as in-person classes and simulations.
- Virtually conducted the 16th Annual Amygdala Conference: Stress and the Mind, sponsored by CSTS in collaboration with the USU Department of Psychiatry, USU Neuroscience Program, USU Department of Family Medicine, and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Department of Psychiatry.

Consultation

The Center develops relationships with, and provides consultation to, many agencies and organizations throughout the DoD and other federal agencies, as well as with state, local, and national agencies, professional associations, and international organizations.

Since its inception, establishing and maintaining consultative relationships have been cornerstones of CSTS's work, and include a wide variety of organizations both inside and outside government, and internationally. These collaborations build bridges that provide opportunities to contribute Center resources and expertise in the service of others and to monitor real-time needs of other organizations.



Consultation Highlights in 2022

- Provided numerous consultations in support of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. Expanded on CSTS's existing consultative relationships with international organizations, DoD and other federal agencies, state and local level agencies, and professional organizations.
- Worked with U.S. Coast Guard psychiatric leadership in preparing Coast Guard members to manage unique exposures during activation and how to support them and their families.
- Supported resiliency leadership at Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in reviewing and researching the effectiveness of their current programs and practices designed to protect the mental health of agents, analysts, and other personnel exposed to child exploitation material in the process of their investigations.
- In its ongoing collaboration with the Five Eyes Alliance Advisory Group on Mental Health, CSTS coauthored multiple publications on Service member and family well-being, including research priorities on moral injury and optimizing pathways to mental health care across the military career life cycles.

Knowledge Dissemination

CSTS disseminates knowledge through a variety of means, including:

- Publishing research findings in peer-reviewed scientific journals.
- Publishing books, volumes, and newsletters.
- Making presentations at scientific meetings and conferences, and other events.
- Giving briefings and interviews.
- Developing and disseminating fact sheets.
- Conducting educational campaigns.
- Posting information and other resources to CSTS social media platforms.
- Developing pocket cards to address leader support for Service member activations during mortuary affairs and pandemics.

Health Education Campaigns

Publications

Online Presence

Newsletters

Disaster Education Fact Sheets

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress


Helping others Calm an Acute Stress Response (Horror, Fear, Agitation)

NEAR
Stand or sit near them and say: "Look at me. Can you hear me?"

CONNECT
"I'm going to squeeze your arm, you squeeze me back."
"Look in my eyes. See me here."
"I'm right here with you, I'm not going anywhere. You are not alone."
"Talk with me — what are you thinking? I am here with you."

CALM
"Take deep breaths. Keep your eyes open."
"Tap your finger slowly on your leg or arm — feel the tapping? Tap slowly, count with me."

PRESENT
"Hold my hand. We are ok. We will work to stay ok."


www.CSTSONline.org

CSTS
Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress
UNIFORMED SERVICES UNIVERSITY

SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR LEADERS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF TRAUMATIC STRESS (CSTS) | Department of Psychiatry | Uniformed Services University | www.CSTSONline.org

Firearm Leadership to Reduce the Risk of Suicide and Harm

Firearms are an essential tool for many service members in military operations and also a part of sports and hunting for many. The safe handling and storage of firearms is critical to the safety of service members and their families. Leaders influence service members not only on the battlefield but also in their personal lives. "Firearm Leadership" involves knowing the risks and taking actions to prevent firearm injuries, both during routine daily operations and acute situations when you are concerned about a service member's safety.

Do You Know?

- Almost all firearm deaths in garrison are self-inflicted
- Suicide death by firearms often occurs without warning
- It's difficult to know who or when a person will attempt suicide
- Not everyone who dies by suicide looks sad, angry, anxious, or talks about wanting to end their life
- Military children die of accidental firearm incidents

Firearm Leadership Actions

Actions to promote Firearm Leadership include educating service members and role modeling personal firearm practices that reduce risk:

- Discuss Personal Firearms Storage
 - Talk about personal firearms safety with all personnel
 - Encourage storing personally owned firearms unloaded and locked in a case or gun safe when not in use
 - Promote storing and locking ammunition in a separate location
- Discourage Alcohol Use When Using Firearms
 - Practice zero tolerance mixing alcohol with handling weapons
 - Communicate clearly: "Don't mix alcohol with your firearms"

Alternatives to Firearms for Protection

Removal personnel of options for personal and home safety that are safer than unlocked weapons. These include:

- Alarm systems
- Pepper spray
- Stun guns and tasers
- Pocket and tactical knives
- Guard dogs

Promote Family Safety

- Inform service members that while a loaded and unlocked firearm at home might make them feel safer, it greatly increases risk of accidental injury or impulsive shooting death
- Recommend keeping firearms out of the reach of children
- Remind personnel to teach children that firearms are not toys and should only be handled when supervised by a trained adult

Steps to Take When You Are Concerned

A leader may feel concerned when a service member is "not acting like themselves." When going through a tough time, having access to a firearm increases the risk of impulsive self-harm. How a leader responds can save a life.

- Be compassionate and genuine in your approach
- Tell the person you are there to help
- When time permits, seek advice from behavioral health and chaplain teams
- Escort the person to emergency care
- If firearms are present, offer to store them away from home until the situation improves
- Protect the service member's personal information and quickly address rumors


Resources

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
Call or text 988

Military OneSource
1-800-542-9474

The Firearm Industry Trade Association
<https://www.ustf.org/articles/securely-storing-firearms-in-the-home/>

Defense Suicide Prevention Office Lethal Means Safety Guide
<https://www.dspo.mil/Tools/Resource-Library/lethalleansafety/>



<https://www.cstsonline.org/suicide-prevention-program>

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

Rapid Psychological First Aid Help for You, Family, and Friends


SAFE
■ Keep yourself as safe as possible.

CONNECT
■ Connect with loved ones as often as you can.
■ Talk to children about what is happening using words that aren't scary.
■ Stay close to children and give them hugs.

SUSTAIN
■ Eat, drink water, and sleep as regularly as possible, even if you may not want to.
■ If you have medications, take them as directed.

FOCUS
■ Use your problem-solving skills.

REACH
■ Recruit "helpers" to assist others and extend your caring.


www.CSTSONline.org

Knowledge Dissemination Highlights in 2022

- 49 publications
- 65 presentations at scientific or professional meetings, conferences, and symposia
- 15 fact sheets and 2 pocket cards addressing mental health aspects of the war in Ukraine



CSTS



Uniformed
Services
University

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

Department of Psychiatry

Uniformed Services University

4301 Jones Bridge Road, Bethesda, MD 20814-4799

www.CSTSONline.org