

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

FOCUS School-Based Skill-Building Groups: Training and Implementation

Garcia, E., De Pedro, K. T., Astor, R. A., Lester, P., & Benbenishty, R. (2015). FOCUS school-based skill-building groups: Training and implementation. *Journal of Social Work Education, 51*(Suppl.1), S102-S116.
doi:10.1080/10437797.2015.1001292

SUMMARY: Military children encounter unique deployment-related stressors. The study examined the training and implementation of a school-based intervention, Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS) School-Based Skill-Building Groups (SBG). Findings revealed positive feedback from the social work interns who were trained on the model, but also pointed out challenges of implementation because of lack of support from school professionals.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The social work interns gave positive feedback about the FOCUS SBG training and implementation; they reported that the FOCUS SBG curriculum was helpful for implementing the groups, and that the FOCUS SBG program was useful for both civilian and military students.
- The interns also reported difficulties gaining support from school professionals.
- Social workers are important for enhancing the resilience of military students.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Offer support groups to military students who may experience deployment-related stress
- Receive training on military culture, deployment issues, and school transition problems

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Collaborate with social workers to offer school-based assistance to military students so that the students' resilience could be enhanced
- Develop classes and workshops for school administrators and teachers on the importance of emotional wellbeing for military students

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Increase awareness about the importance of resilience and well-being for military families and students
- Continue to support research and programs that aim to assist families experiencing deployment-related stress

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- The study was completed within two academic school years: 2011-2012 and 2012-2013.
- The interns were placed in military-connected public schools, received FOCUS SBG training, and worked with military students using the FOCUS SBG tool.
- At the end of the school year, the interns completed surveys about their perception of the FOCUS SBG program, and their experience of implementing the program with students.

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample included 84 social worker interns who ran FOCUS SBGs with about 700 students.
- The age, gender, and race of the interns were not reported in the article.
- No demographic information about the military students were reported.

LIMITATIONS

- Data were only collected from social work interns but not from students who participated in the FOCUS SBG program, therefore students' perception of the program is unknown.
- Students' demographic information was not collected in the study, so it is unclear if certain groups of students would benefit more from FOCUS SBG than others.
- The study used a regional sample, therefore results of the study may be hard to generalize to other regions or school contexts.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine both social workers' and students' perception of the FOCUS SBG program
- Collect students' demographic information to examine which kind of students benefit most from the intervention
- Implement the FOCUS SBG intervention to both civilian and military students to study whether civilian student would benefit from the program as well

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>