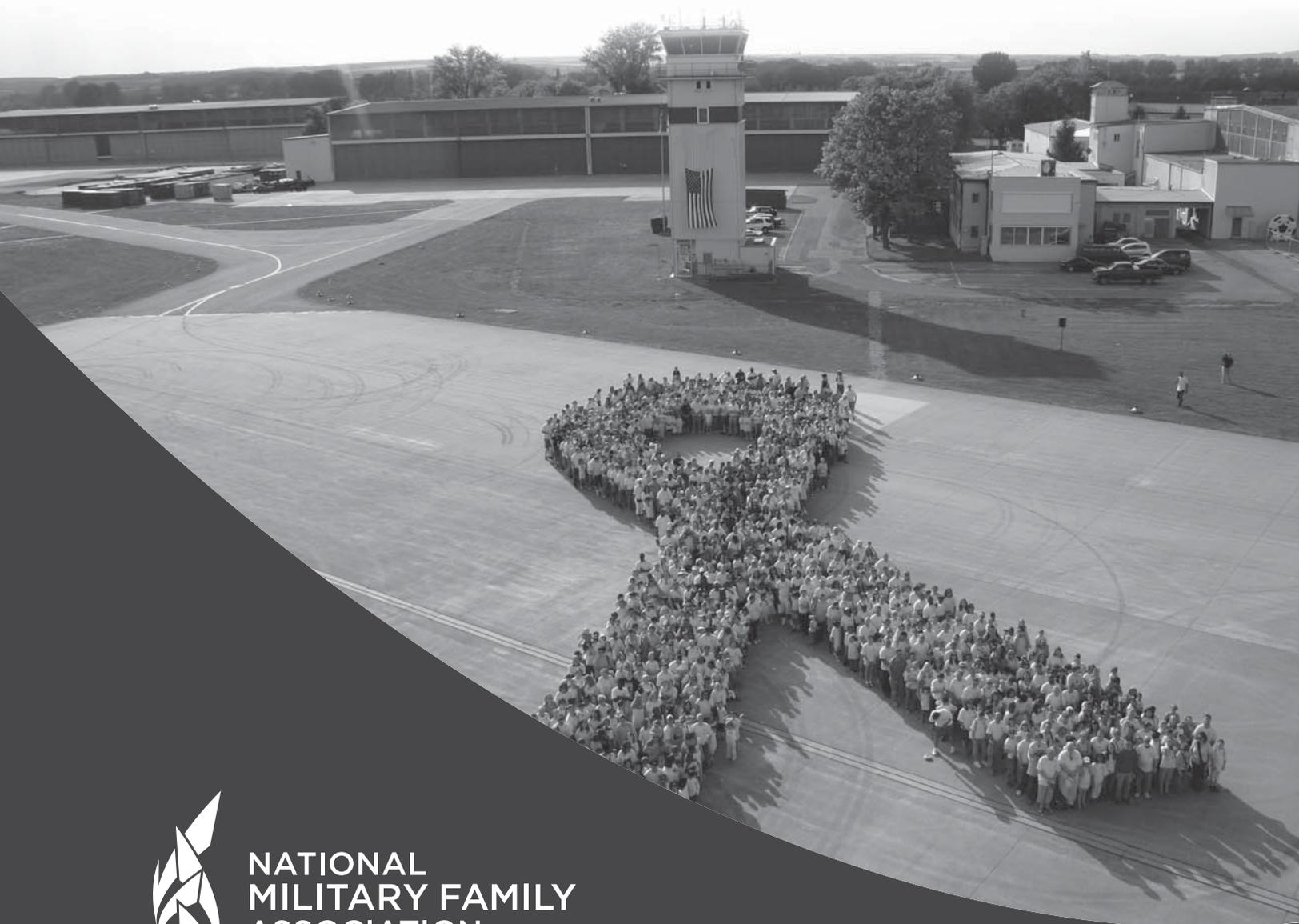


# Finding Common Ground

A Toolkit for Communities Supporting Military Families



**NATIONAL  
MILITARY FAMILY  
ASSOCIATION**

Together we're stronger

Military families serve our country with pride, honor, and quiet dedication. The National Military Family Association is the leading nonprofit organization committed to strengthening and protecting the families of the men and women currently serving, retired, wounded or fallen. We provide families of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Commissioned Corps of the USPHS and NOAA with information, work to get them the benefits they deserve, and offer programs that improve their lives. Our 40 years of service and accomplishments have made us a trusted resource for military families and the Nation's leaders. To learn more, visit [www.MilitaryFamily.org](http://www.MilitaryFamily.org).

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## Letter from the Chairman

The National Military Family Association's concern about the impacts of multiple deployments on the well-being of military families led us to sponsor the first definitive research examining how military families from all Services, ranks, and components are managing the stresses of war. We commissioned the RAND Corporation to conduct this research, drawing insights from 3,000 participants (1,500 families). Children, ages 11-17, and their parent or caregiver were selected from the more than 9,000 applicants to the Association's 2008 *Operation Purple*® camps.

The research confirmed anecdotal accounts from families: while many families are meeting the challenges of military life, deployments are threatening the stability of the family, and those challenges don't end when the service member returns home.

These findings and others like them compelled our Association to assemble a panel of experts from the fields of military family support, childhood development, women's issues, and behavioral health for a summit on military families in May 2010. While many important and helpful programs and policies now exist, research and concerns voiced by families indicate more must be done to sustain families through these challenging times. Our Blue Ribbon Panel outlined innovative and pragmatic ideas to improve the well-being of military families, recognizing that it is imperative solutions involve a broad network of government agencies, community groups, businesses, and concerned citizens.

For this reason, we've published the recommendations from the summit in this toolkit. The toolkit lists concrete actions individuals, organizations and communities can take to assist and support our military families. These actions are not exhaustive—no single initiative or organization has all the solutions. It is our hope this toolkit will start conversations and stimulate action. Everyone can contribute and we welcome feedback on how you, or your community, use this information.

Most organizations are connecting with military families every day, they just don't know it. Our Association is committed to working with others by sharing resources and information to help them better support the military families in their communities. Additionally, we have incorporated the action items that require legislative solutions into our own legislative agenda, and will continue to seek out and highlight best practices for supporting military families.

At our May Summit, First Lady Michelle Obama said, "As America asks more of these families, they have a right to expect more of us. This is our moral obligation. It's also a matter of national security. The readiness of our Armed Forces depends on the readiness of our military families." We couldn't agree more.

**Thank you for your support of military families.**



Mary T. Scott  
Chairman, Board of Governors

## Military Families are Facing Unprecedented Challenges

The National Military Family Association has been at the forefront of advocacy for military families for the last forty years. In 2011, the Nation faces challenges that are unparalleled in its history.

As American military forces continue their engagement in two wars that are now in their ninth and tenth years, the consequences of multiple deployments are enormous. They impact the children and spouses of service members, their siblings, parents, other caregivers, and the military itself. Research commissioned by the Association conducted by the RAND Corporation and later studies by other researchers found that while many parents and children are coping effectively with the challenges of military life, deployments are threatening the stability of too many families.

Recent research shows military spouses and children have anxiety levels that are higher than their civilian peers and their stress builds as the cumulative months of deployments add up. Even after a service member returns home, the challenges continue.

**Research shows military spouses and children have anxiety levels that are higher than their civilian peers and their stress builds as the cumulative months of deployments add up.**

Military families do not shy away from sacrifice or service to the country, but their individual and collective well-being is unmistakably impacted by the duration of conflicts, frequency, and length of deployments.

The well-being of military families is a national concern, but also a measure of military readiness. In fact, family issues are some of the major reasons war fighters' deployments are curtailed. As the President's Fiscal Year 2011 budget stated, "The strength of our troops relies on the strength and the stability of the families that support them..."

### SOME KEY NUMBERS ►

Bearing the burden of war: **the military community makes up 1%** of the American population.

Military families live throughout our American community:  
**70% of families live in civilian communities**—not on military installations.

More than **2 million children have a parent in the military.**

## Convening a Blue Ribbon Panel and Military Family Summit

Given the need to identify and execute effective policies and programs to strengthen family well-being and mental health, the National Military Family Association organized a Blue Ribbon Panel of leading experts in the fields of military family support, childhood development, women's issues, and behavioral health and advocates to develop a set of recommended actions. Lengthy interviews were conducted with the 40 panel experts to get the latest insights on successful existing programs and to determine where significant gaps in services for military families exist. The panel provided innovative and pragmatic ideas that could be undertaken by government, communities, and individuals to make positive differences in the lives of military families.

These ideas were discussed by the panel and other stakeholders at a two-day summit, "When Parents Deploy: Understanding the Experiences of Military Children and Spouses." First Lady Michelle Obama delivered the summit's keynote address, issuing a challenge to government and the private sector to develop a more coordinated approach to supporting military families.

The recommendations formulated at the Summit are summarized in this document to guide leaders in military, government, academic, business, and nonprofit communities to make needed policy decisions and coordinate work across their sectors.

## Perspectives on the Nature of the Challenges

The following are key perspectives shared by Summit participants on the nature of the challenges facing military families.

It is difficult, but critical to identify the families most in need. Given that most families are living in civilian communities and may have few interactions with the service member's installation or unit, it is difficult to determine which families are most vulnerable.

Military culture and mental health stigma are factors preventing more families from seeking support. The "pull yourselves up by your bootstraps" mentality of the military, in addition to a societal stigma attached to seeking mental health care, makes many families reluctant to come forward to seek help ranging from simply helping a child with an academic problem to managing anxiety.

The shortage of mental health professionals in the military and civilian communities throughout the country is particularly problematic. The extended lengths of the current wars and the resulting repetitive deployments have strained the existing capacity of both the military and civilian mental health systems. The Department of Defense (DoD) and the Service branches have a growing and previously unrecognized need for service members themselves, in addition to their family members, to have access to mental health professionals.

In addition, too many of the professionals offering care do not have an understanding of the military experience and the issues faced by service members and their families.

The government and the public have the will to help military families dealing with the stresses of deployment. American public, philanthropic, and business communities

are eager to support the troops and their families, but need clear guidance on how to channel their goodwill into contributions of time, money, and expertise.

Military families value civilian community engagement and recognition of their service. Even those families who are managing would appreciate greater acknowledgment from their neighbors and communities for their service and sacrifice. Many military families find members of the civilian community disengaged from the wars and the impacts they have on the daily lives and long-term development of almost three million children and spouses.

**Helping families manage the stresses of military life early on can prevent some of the destructive outcomes that carry a far heavier price tag.**

Military spouses may lack awareness and clarity about existing support options. Despite—or because of—the myriad of programs, services, and web sites offered by DoD, the Service branches, and the nonprofit community, many military families are overwhelmed by the choices and do not have the tools to determine what resources will best meet their needs.

## What Needs to be Done

The strategic approach taken by military and nonprofit sectors to address the needs of military families must shift from leaning towards treating mental health problems as they arise to promoting well-being and preventing stress from becoming distress.

Given the lack of available mental health providers, both nationally and within the military community, it is essential to teach family members how to build the skills that will enable them to better cope with traumatic events and to offer services and programs that can help promote their physical and emotional well-being (e.g. physical exercise, social connections, community). A small investment in strengthening the ability of spouses and children to manage through the many stresses they will encounter as military families can prevent outcomes that carry a heavier price tag in human and financial terms.

Teaching “resiliency” skills, which enable a person to adapt after exposure to adverse or traumatic experiences, is being built into the Army’s Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Training and is embraced by other Service branches as a key part of training military service members to perform effectively.

Ensuring that service members’ spouses and children are also given the tools to build their own coping skills is a primary way to help military families manage through the extraordinary stress of multiple deployments as well as the basic challenges of military life. It is critical to focus on identifying and meeting the needs of vulnerable families. Screening for problems, while broadly facilitating resiliency development for all, should be a key priority of DoD, the Service branches, and the civilian community.

## Implementation Requires Broad Engagement from a Variety of Stakeholders

### Engage Civilian Communities

Most members of the military population are immersed in civilian communities—living in neighborhoods, with their children attending public schools and their spouses

working in local businesses and institutions. Their friends, neighbors, co-workers, and community members are well positioned to provide the additional support needed for managing the stresses of deployment and reintegration. Within the civilian community, there are two types of people who can be particularly helpful:

- *Family-Serving Professionals and Volunteers Inside and Outside the Military* – people who regularly interact with families—like teachers, clergy, doctors, and coaches—can play a significant role in supporting military spouses and children with some directed outreach, training, and coordination.
- *Friends* – people who want to support spouses and children, but who don't know how to help, can play an important role. By building a system to connect these volunteers with military families' needs, more assistance can be delivered.

### **Mental Health and Medical Communities Can Bridge Gaps**

Key players in supporting the well-being and mental health of families are the doctors, nurses, counselors, and mental health specialists who interact with spouses and children. The health community must come together to help address the critical issues of provider shortages, cultural barriers, and stigma that are currently creating barriers to care.

**More than 70 percent  
of military families  
currently live in  
civilian communities.**

### **Opportunities for the Department of Defense and the Service Branches**

The Department of Defense (DoD) and the Service branches clearly recognize that the well-being of families is a crucial part of military readiness. They have a broad set of opportunities to influence family well-being in their unique role as employer, health care provider, and deliverer of family services. They have an enormous ability to shape the thinking and actions of military members and their families and to implement policies and programs that will help.

There is a need, however, for increased cross-Service leadership and collaboration in building and implementing strategies to meet family needs. The current support infrastructure within DoD and the Services can create barriers to developing and implementing a holistic family support strategy as well as clear and effective communications to families.

### **Engage Civilian Communities**

Given that more than 70 percent of military families around the country currently live “outside the gate” of military installations, providing support and services to military families in their neighborhoods is critical.

When the professionals and volunteers have the necessary understanding of military culture, the needs of military families, and information about available services, they can help screen to identify possible issues affecting a child or spouse and then help refer those family members to resources that can support them. Taking an approach in which all stakeholders in a community become part of a military family-friendly community ensures that military families can knock on “no wrong door.”

### **Create Public Awareness among Civilians about the Lives of Military Families**

Many military families perceive that the civilian world cannot relate to their lives. Through a public outreach campaign enabling the military community to share more about its lifestyle, culture, and needs, more civilians will learn how to offer acknowledgment and support to their friends and community members in the military.

### **Share Resources to Help Family-Serving Professionals and Volunteers**

National organizations that serve families should work together to review and modify their existing training and background materials and identify what kind of additional curricula and outreach resources are needed.

These organizations should develop a process to widely disseminate these tools to local professionals and volunteers at schools and in local service and faith-based organizations that will help these individuals:

- Train their constituents/members in how to build coping skills.
- Learn how to screen the populations they work with for problems.
- Have the knowledge of what exists and how to access it in order to refer military families to local and national services and programs.

### **Create Military Family-Friendly Communities**

Some communities are striving to provide support structures by engaging schools, volunteers, youth-serving organizations, religious groups, health care providers, and the business sector. However, these structures for military families vary by location. Leadership is needed at the local

level in many areas to start efforts (or embrace those that are underway) that are focused on making a community “military family-friendly.” Many military family and community service advocates are working to organize and disseminate community assessment tools and resources via the web to help local leaders take stock of what is available to military families in their own communities and launch local initiatives to improve support for service members, families, and veterans. In the meantime, community leaders and organizations can start to ask themselves how they identify and support the military families they encounter or already serve as they make supporting military families a community priority.

### **Support Family-Friendly Work Arrangements**

Business leaders and organizations at the national and local level can encourage all employers to adopt flexible work arrangements for employees, and identify and model best practices. In addition, employers can structure opportunities and promote the idea of their employees volunteering in support of military families.

### **Engage and Network with State and Local Governments**

Organizations representing mayors, county officials, governors, and other state and local leaders can organize a forum and ongoing network to share ideas and information on creating military family-friendly communities.

This leadership group should establish and share best practices—perhaps by awarding recognition to communities that are effectively supporting military families. This process will provide model community programs that other communities can replicate.

**“As America asks more of these families, they have a right to expect more of us. This is our moral obligation.”**

*First Lady Michelle Obama,  
May 12, 2010 at the  
National Military Family Association  
Military Family Summit*

### **Ask Foundations and Philanthropists to Coordinate Funding and Foster Broader Community Solutions**

Many of the support efforts that communities undertake or would like to initiate require funding, but budget deficits are limiting government’s ability to deliver or expand services.

A major foundation or group of foundations should build a “funding table” of philanthropists—individuals, corporations, and foundations to develop financial support for organizations focused on building “no wrong doors” strategies in targeted communities. This funding would underwrite training, stakeholder outreach, and the necessary coordination among local groups and community leaders.

### **Connect Volunteers to Tasks that Support Military Families**

In communities with large concentrations of military families, there is often a vacuum in volunteer posts such as scout leaders and coaches when service members deploy. Many Americans would like to help assist military families by volunteering their time, but there is no national system and few local systems to connect military family needs to community provided solutions.

Summit participants made the following recommendations:

- Coordinate with national nonprofit organizations. Ask fraternal organizations and veterans’ service organizations to play an active role at the national and local level in promoting volunteerism and plugging their members into volunteer opportunities.
- Identify a national organization with local infrastructure, like the United Way, that funds local community support service programs to help identify the needs of military families across the 50 states.
- Ask the Service community to develop templates and tools for connecting volunteers with needs. Develop a template that can be used by local communities who are interested in connecting volunteers to existing needs. The template would guide communities in how to catalog needs that exist for military families that could be addressed by volunteers. It would also explain how to build an infrastructure for recruiting and assigning volunteers to organizations and individuals who would like support.
- Determine which organization(s) could build and maintain websites able to identify needs and link volunteers at the state and local level.
- Create a process for DoD and Service branches to engage volunteers. Ask DoD to assign a community service liaison to work with national organizations developing strategies for community service efforts focused on military families and veterans.
- Ask all Services to appoint installation coordinators who will work with local community volunteer organizations and link individuals and groups to the needs that have been identified by military families or family-serving professionals and volunteers on the installation.

## Mental Health and Medical Communities Can Bridge Gaps

It is generally agreed that the mental health benefit package provided by TRICARE, the military's health insurance program, is among the most comprehensive in the Nation. The problem is that the increased needs of service members themselves for mental health support is reducing access to what is already an insufficient pool of mental health providers. In addition, military leaders and mental health experts have pointed to the lack of understanding of military culture as a factor that may be limiting existing providers' ability to effectively assist military families. Ongoing stigma is also an issue that must be addressed.

DoD should conduct a comprehensive inventory of existing mental health services in order to better understand where the gaps are and to better communicate about these existing options. The Department of Defense should develop an ongoing database that identifies the Service and component offering resources, the providers who deliver services by specialty and geography, and the population they are intended to serve.

DoD should determine how to recruit more mental health providers into the system. As a first step, this includes assessing whether and how the TRICARE reimbursement policy and administrative requirements contribute to provider shortages. There is ongoing debate about the level of influence that these factors have on whether mental health professionals decide to become a part of the TRICARE network. It would be useful to know the answers in order to respond effectively. Adding new provider resources is an urgent priority.

The mental health community should build effective tools and training for doctors,

nurses, and nurse practitioners to screen for mental health issues and refer to appropriate resources. Given that many mental health problems present themselves as medical problems (stomachaches, headaches, sleeplessness) the mental health professional associations should create a partnership with the primary care professional associations to embed behavioral health into primary care.

DoD should explore the idea of assigning mental health providers to visit patients in remote areas as "circuit riders" as a feasible way of starting treatment and once a relationship is established move to telehealth treatment. (Certain medical specialists are already following this model. It could be expanded to mental health professionals.)

DoD should expand the intensive outpatient treatment benefit under TRICARE to better meet the acute outpatient needs of family members requiring care.

DoD should continue to work with the civilian mental health community to offer training for mental health providers to better acquaint them with military culture and lifestyle.

The mental health professional organizations, the academic community, and DoD should work together to advocate for the creation of a scholarship program that would help build a cadre of new mental health providers. The scholarships should be offered to military spouses and veterans in exchange for serving the needs of the military community for a specific period of time.

## Opportunities for the Department of Defense and the Service Branches

### Build "Resiliency" Training Programs for Families

Resiliency training and activities should be provided to families in all Service branches.

### **Work with Civilian Experts to Create Resilience-Based Curricula for Spouses and Children**

Child behavioral and mental health experts can assist the military in creating the training tools and resources so that resiliency can be taught effectively and consistently throughout the military and civilian infrastructure.

### **Create Life Cycle Training for Spouses**

Life Cycle training classes should be developed or expanded so spouses could become acquainted with military life, begin building their resilience skills, and learn to better manage the stresses of deployment and reintegration beginning at the start of their entry into military life and continuing as their service member's career and life circumstances evolve. These programs would also help screen for spouses who need more support.

### **Use Family-Serving Professionals and Volunteers to Conduct Training**

DoD should ensure that a curriculum for teaching resiliency is developed and provided to family-serving professionals and volunteers on installations and in civilian communities. These individuals can then focus on incorporating resiliency skills into their existing programs or providing them as stand-alone programs. Military leaders should ensure the families in their command have been trained or have access to this training.

### **Determine if Resiliency Skills are Embedded into Mental Health Services**

The Department of Defense should assess the services currently provided by military and civilian behavioral health professionals—social workers, Military Family Life Consultants, chaplains, pediatricians, psychologists—for components to build family resiliency. Once the services are reviewed, decisions can be made about

whether and how to adapt or expand the services currently offered to include resiliency-building.

### **Train on the Importance of Family Well-Being and Mental Health**

Given the need for buy-in at all levels of leadership to the idea that managing family well-being and mental health is critical to force readiness, the Services should include this topic in leadership training curricula. In addition, leaders should be encouraged to promote family well-being and mental health to the service members in their chain. Their role in promoting these ideas to service members (particularly junior enlisted) is critical to encouraging a family's focus on preventive steps that promote well-being as well as the use of mental health services when problems arise.

### **Identify Vulnerable Families and Target Support to Them**

Certain families are more vulnerable to falling into distress during deployment, due to a variety of factors such as income, education, and age. DoD and the Services should develop a screening process to identify families who might be at greater risk during deployment and reintegration. This screening process could be modeled on existing screening tools like those used in the new parent support programs. It could also be accomplished by adding new questions about a service member's spouse and children to the mandatory health risk assessment that he or she completes pre- and post- deployment. In addition to adding a formal way of screening through a direct review of each service member's circumstances, installation and unit commanders should be given tools and trained on how to screen for problems and refer their subordinates to available family services.

**“What I’m asking of communities is to just open up your lenses, to include in your outreach, these [military] families.”**

*ADM Mike Mullen, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, comments during a town hall meeting, Chambersburg, PA*

### **Map Existing Services and Create Core Program Standards**

There are now numerous efforts underway by DoD and the Service branches to deliver support to families, but many of these overlap with existing initiatives and their effectiveness is largely unknown.

DoD should work with experts in the military and civilian community to develop core program standards for certain family services—taking into account the need for building resiliency skills. These standards should be shared with all family service providers. In addition, accountability measures should be developed for programs.

DoD has contracted with land grant universities to document and assess these programs. Once this review is done, DoD needs to develop a plan to communicate best practices and share information with military and civilian leaders about how to access these services.

### **Break Down Structural Silos to Integrate Policymaking and Service Delivery**

DoD and the Service branches must update the way in which they structure their approach to families. There is a need for a more holistic view of family support spanning from early childhood development programs to teen

centers and medical and behavioral health services. The Undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness should develop a structure and processes to address communication structure in an integrated way.

### **Improve Family Readiness Functions for All Service Branches**

Deployments need to be handled with a process and protocols that will ensure the needs of families are being monitored and addressed effectively. Some Service branches are using paid staff, relying less on volunteers playing key outreach roles during deployments.

DoD should work with the Services to establish a system that will create accountability at the unit level for the management of family needs during deployment. Consideration should be given to ideas such as requiring a Unit Family Deployment Plan to be developed by each commander. The plan must outline the roles and expectations for personnel and volunteers who will play important parts in serving family needs. Commanders would need to use this proof of concept tool to demonstrate that individuals have the proper training, background, commitment, and time to function in key roles. The plan would also need to outline ways in which existing family support resources—chaplains, Military Family Life Consultants and others—would be leveraged throughout the deployment.

### **Break Down Stigma to Seeking Mental Health Care**

While the social stigma of mental health care has diminished both in and out of the military in recent years, it still remains a significant obstacle to seeking care. Military families may be even more vulnerable to stigma than civilians, given the military culture built on strength. In order to address this, DoD should:

- Conduct baseline research on military families' attitudes and beliefs regarding stigma, mental health illness, and care in order to build effective outreach to this community and ensure help is sought when needed.
- Develop an aggressive, comprehensive program to address stigma in collaboration with DoD's Real Warrior campaign as well as with mental health and public relations experts experienced in debunking myths (e.g. Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration, National Alliance on Mental Illness).
- Given their potential influence on their subordinates' behavior, encourage senior leaders (officers and senior enlisted service members) and their spouses to speak out to promote strong mental health and the importance of seeking care.

### **Develop a Communications Plan to Raise Awareness of Existing Programs and Services**

There is a common view among spouses and a keen recognition by military leadership that families lack awareness of available services and how to access them. As the Department of Defense has determined, a strategic communications plan must be developed by the Service branches to improve information dissemination to spouses and the variety of stakeholders who support families.

Summit participants recommended that the communications plan include:

- **Development of Consistent Program Names:** A common language/brand for describing programs should be used among all Service branches and installations so that family members can more easily identify the services they are seeking.
- **Creation of a Team and a Process Focused on Information Flow to Families:** DoD and the Services should establish a

Communications team that is squarely tasked with ensuring that family members receive critical information about national policies and local programs and services. Currently, it appears that individuals with expertise in communications are not being tasked with focusing on family members as their key audience. Professional communicators should be assigned to develop and execute plans for family audiences including a social media strategy that reaches family-serving professionals and families.

## **Next Steps**

### **The Need to Learn More: Conducting Additional Research**

There are still considerable questions about a variety of factors that go into creating the most effective policies and services that can support families during this unparalleled time—the impact of deployment and reintegration on various populations, best practice services to support families and behaviors and attitudes of families and children—to name a few.

The military family advocacy community and DoD should work together with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), military health experts, and academic and mental health professionals to catalog existing research, share information, and determine and prioritize outstanding research needs.

The National Military Family Association will share these recommendations with key government, military, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders who can implement the ideas.

The Association will also convene follow-up conversations with the philanthropic and business communities to seek funding for some of the initiatives imperative to improved family support.

This toolkit suggests easily-achievable action items and useful resources to guide anyone who wants to support military families, but doesn't know where to start. The following pages are written for individuals and community groups whose help is so vital to supporting military families.

### **Find information for:**

- Family, Friends, and Neighbors
- Military Families
- Educators
- Health Care Professionals
- Child and Youth Serving Professionals
- Community, Civic, and Religious Leaders
- Philanthropic Supporters
- Employers
- State and Local Government Officials
- Federal Government and Military Leaders

Our Association hopes you will identify with one or more of these broad groups and use the ideas and resources provided to start conversations and stimulate action on behalf of military families.

# Family, Friends, and Neighbors

You don't need to live near a military installation to have military families and families of the fallen in your community. With the unprecedented extensive use of the National Guard and Reserve, military families can be found in every community in the United States. In fact, more than 70 percent of military families live in civilian communities.<sup>1</sup>

Family, friends, and neighbors are well positioned to help support military families. Many times, just thanking the family for their service is appreciated.

## Action Items:

- Talk to your neighbors and those you are in contact with in your community to see if there is a military family that could use some help. Sometimes being willing to help in small ways can help lighten the load of a military family or family of the fallen. Offer to carpool to children's activities, help shovel snow from a driveway, offer some assistance in caring for the lawn, or invite your military friends to take part in your family's activities. These small gestures can make a difference to a military parent who may need some time to relax or a military spouse who may be feeling alone.
- Create an online neighborhood user group by using Yahoo or Google. This is a simple way to share information about neighborhood activities, recommended reliable repair companies, and finding babysitters. An online group may also help identify the needs of your neighbors.

- Consider volunteering to coach a youth sports team or lead a youth organization. Many service members fill these positions and when they're deployed they leave a void that needs to be filled.
- Veterans Service Organizations in your community are often aware of opportunities for military families or families of the fallen. Contact the American Legion Auxiliary, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), or the USO in your local community to fulfill specific local needs.

## Resources:

The National Military Family Association created Toolkits for Military Kids and Teens to give the people in military kids' lives a way to help them manage stress and affirm the positive aspects of military life. Visit [www.militaryfamily.org/publications](http://www.militaryfamily.org/publications) to download the toolkits.

The American Legion is the Nation's largest veterans organization. Visit [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) to find a post in your community.

The American Legion Auxiliary is the world's largest women's patriotic service organization. Visit [www.legion-aux.org](http://www.legion-aux.org) to find a unit near you.

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is a Veterans Service Organization with 2.1 million members. Visit [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org) to find a Chapter in your community.

United Services Organization (USO) is an organization dedicated to lifting the spirits of America's troops and their families. Visit [www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org) to learn more about their programs.

The Military Family Research Institute has created a series of informational brochures titled, *How to Help Military Families*. Visit [www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25](http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25) to download the brochures.

*A Handbook for Family & Friends of Service Members* provides solutions for service members and identifies outside tools and resources that may be useful to friends and family members before, during, and after deployment. Go to <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA10-EMLKITM> to order the handbook.

Joint Services Support (JSS) is a program of the National Guard Bureau. Open to all National Guard, Reserve, and active duty families—regardless of Service, JSS provides information on programs and services available in your community. For more information, go to [www.jointservicesupport.org](http://www.jointservicesupport.org).

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Installation and Environment Military Housing Privatization: [www.acq.osd.mil/housing/faqs.htm#Tenant](http://www.acq.osd.mil/housing/faqs.htm#Tenant).



# Military Families

Military families and families of the fallen are the Nation's families. In order to support them, a broad network of government entities, community groups, businesses, and concerned citizens is needed to work together. However, military families also need to take responsibility for their own readiness.

After a decade of war, new programs and services have been developed to help support military families and families of the fallen. Acquainting yourself with these programs or at least identifying a trusted resource in which to find information is paramount for your own family advocacy.

## Action Items:

- Not everyone is aware that you are married to a service member or are a child of a service member. Informing your teachers, clergy, and health care providers will help them understand you and your family better.
- Each branch of the military provides services that will assist you and your family. Take it upon yourself to learn more about your spouse's career from them or other trusted sources.
- The length of deployments and constant reestablishment of relationships has negatively affected some families more than others. Seek out information from your military health insurance provider, TRICARE, in order to learn about the different types of counseling services available to you.



- The Department of Defense has created Military OneSource, an internet-based resource which provides a 24-hour call center staffed with master's level consultants familiar with the military lifestyle. Military OneSource also provides counseling sessions and will set up face-to-face counseling sessions in the family's community. Education and employment opportunities are also available to you. Military OneSource has information on both—visit [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com) or call 800.342.9647 for more information.
- Join community sports or recreation centers— they're great places for you and your children or teens to make new friends.
- Connect with your family support network—family, friends, clergy, teachers, and Family Readiness Group.
- Volunteer! Volunteering is a great way to stay busy, make new friends and help others.

## Resources:

TRICARE is the health care program serving uniformed service members, retirees, and their families worldwide. To find a provider near you visit [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil).

Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and United We Serve. Visit [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov) to find volunteer opportunities.

The American Psychological Association developed a series of brochures entitled, *Resilience in a Time of War*. To download the brochures go to [www.apa.org/topics/military/index.aspx](http://www.apa.org/topics/military/index.aspx).

The Armed Services YMCA has partnered with the Department of Defense to provide eligible military families and active duty personnel with free memberships at community YMCA's nationwide. Visit [www.asymca.org/what-we-do-3/national-programs-services/yymca-military-outreach-initiative](http://www.asymca.org/what-we-do-3/national-programs-services/yymca-military-outreach-initiative) for eligibility and to apply.

*A Handbook for Family & Friends of Service Members* provides solutions for service members and identifies resources that may be useful to friends and family members before, during, and after deployment. Go to <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA10-EMLKITM> to order the handbook.

Military Child Education Coalition offers resources and training for parents and educators of mobile military children. Visit [www.militarychild.org](http://www.militarychild.org) for more information.

# Educators

Repeated and extended separations compound stressors in the lives of military children. With 90 percent of military children attending public or private schools or other school options rather than Department of Defense schools<sup>1</sup>, it is important for educators everywhere to learn new ways to help them.

All school personnel—teachers, coaches, school nurses, and guidance counselors—are great influences on the children and teens they work with. They also provide children and teens with a good support network when a parent is deployed. Because of their unique relationship with the family, school personnel are able to serve as safety nets by screening families who need assistance.

## Action Items:

- Seek out training that is available online and in person to help your efforts with military children and youth. Some basic research can help you understand the feelings your students are experiencing.
- Your daily contact with children and teens gives you a unique opportunity to notice a change in behavior. Early screening for possible stress or emotional challenges can prevent more serious problems that occur when left unnoticed. Recognize that disciplinary problems may be a result of deployment-related stress.
- Watch for signs of stress in the student's caregiver or at-home parent as they interact with you or other school personnel. Research shows that poorer caregiver emotional well-being was associated with greater difficulties for military children during and after a deployment.

Learn about military and civilian resources in your local area where you can refer your students and their parents or caregiver.

- Explore ways you can involve deployed service members in the educational life of their children by including them on class email lists, by inviting them to talk with the class when they return, and by assisting children without computers at home in sending emails and other greetings to their deployed parents.
- Schools should work with installations and unit commanders, or their designees, to coordinate major events, such as homecomings and reintegration periods after units return home. If military leaders and schools can coordinate these major activities they can minimize disruptions.

## Resources:

The National Military Family Association created Toolkits for Military Kids and Teens to give the people in military kids' lives a way to help them manage stress and affirm the positive aspects of military life. Visit [www.militaryfamily.org/publications](http://www.militaryfamily.org/publications) to download the toolkits.

The Military Family Research Institute has created a series of informational brochures titled *How to Help Military Families*. Visit [www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25](http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25) to download the brochures.

Department of Defense Educational Activity Educational Partnership works with local schools to provide caring adults to enhance the education experience for military children. Visit [www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu](http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu) for more resources and information.

Military Child Education Coalition provides resources and training for parents and educators of mobile military children. Visit [www.militarychild.org](http://www.militarychild.org) for more information.

The American Association of School Administrators offers training support to school leaders: 5 Things School Leaders Can Do To Build Connections. Visit [www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=8998](http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=8998) to download the materials.

The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Johns Hopkins Center of School, Family, and Community Partnership created an online course for school administrators, support staff, and teachers to help all students meet life's challenges with resilience. Access course information at [www.jhsph.edu/mci/training\\_course](http://www.jhsph.edu/mci/training_course).

The American Psychological Association developed a series of brochures entitled *Resilience in a Time of War*. To download the brochures go to [www.apa.org/topics/military/index.aspx](http://www.apa.org/topics/military/index.aspx).

<sup>1</sup> DoDEA Educational Partnerships Website  
[www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/index.cfm](http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/index.cfm)



# Health Care Professionals

More military families are experiencing higher stress and anxiety levels due to the longevity of the wars and the multiple deployments which are separating families for longer periods of time.

Health care professionals play a critical part in the community safety net providing support for military families. When health professionals have a better understanding of military life, needs, and services available, they can help screen to identify possible issues affecting a child or spouse and refer them to the right resource.

## Action Items:

- Identify military family members. Given that more than 70 percent of military families live outside the gates of a military installation<sup>1</sup> and that many National Guard and Reserve members transition from civilian to warriors frequently, you may be treating a service member's spouse, child, or sibling without knowing it. Ask if the person you're treating has a family member in the military.
- Understand the culture. Research done by academic experts and the Department of Defense shows that understanding the unique culture of the military is important to offering more effective treatment to military families. A number of training curricula and programs are available to help familiarize you with the culture so that you can better relate to and understand the needs, concerns, and lifestyles of the people you serve.
- Screen to identify emotional problems. Seek out training on how to screen families for signs of stress. Screening can help catch emotional problems at an early stage and often prevent more serious illness from

occurring. Also, provide a referral for professional help and encourage the families to seek help without delay.

- Be a source for referral information. Many resources for military families exist online and in some local communities. You will benefit from having accurate information about where to refer your patients for social or medical services. Contact a local government office for a list of community support available.
- Join the TRICARE network to improve military families' access to care in their communities. Take advantage of the professional development programs offered by the TRICARE managed care support contractors to learn more about military culture and issues affecting military families.

## Resources:

Coming Together Around Military Families has a training curriculum for professionals serving military families. It was developed by Zero to Three, a national nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in the lives of infants and toddlers. For more information go to [www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/military-families](http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/military-families).

The American Academy of Pediatrics Military Youth Deployment Support website was designed to support military youth, families, and the youth-serving professionals caring for military kids. Visit [www.aap.org/sections/uniformedservices/deployment/index.html](http://www.aap.org/sections/uniformedservices/deployment/index.html) for more information.

The American Psychological Association offers training for mental health providers serving military families. To register go to [www.apa.org/education/ce/aoa0010.aspx](http://www.apa.org/education/ce/aoa0010.aspx).

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, in conjunction with Families Overcoming Under Stress (FOCUS) and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Services, have developed the Military Families Knowledge Bank, which provides information and resources to help military families. To access the Knowledge Bank go to <http://mfkb.nctsn.org/cwis/index.php>.

The Military Family Research Institute has created a series of informational brochures titled *How to Help Military Families*. Download them at [www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25](http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25).

The Real Warriors Campaign, an initiative of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), has developed resources for health professionals, available at [www.realwarriors.net/healthprofessionals](http://www.realwarriors.net/healthprofessionals).

The Citizens Soldier Support Program makes training and resources for health professionals and families available at [www.citizensoldiersupport.org](http://www.citizensoldiersupport.org). To access the searchable database of primary and behavioral health care providers who are trained in serving military members and their families go to [www.warwithin.org](http://www.warwithin.org).

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Installation and Environment Military Housing Privatization: [www.acq.osd.mil/housing/faqs.htm#Tenant](http://www.acq.osd.mil/housing/faqs.htm#Tenant).



# Child and Youth Serving Professionals

Learning ways to become and remain resilient is recognized as a key part of training to help service members perform effectively. Ensuring that military spouses and children are also taught the skills to help build their own resiliency is a good way to help military families effectively manage the stress of multiple deployments, as well as the basic challenges of military life.

Child and youth professionals are well-positioned to help military children gain resiliency skills. With simple changes, organizations that regularly serve children and teens can incorporate resiliency skills into their curriculum that will benefit not only military children, but civilian children as well.

Finding ways to identify the military children and teens in your organization can also help target communications, support, and resources. Child and youth professionals can strengthen the safety net by supporting the parent or caregiver and accepting any changes in their level of volunteerism or program involvement during a deployment.

## Action Items:

- Identify successful programs that build positive youth development for military children and teens and replicate them in communities where they are needed.
- Partner with national youth-serving organizations—such as 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Girls Inc., The Boy Scouts, The Girl Scouts, and others—to share the best ways to train personnel and volunteers to work with military children and youth.

- Work with your organization's national staff to adapt its curriculum, where necessary, to help build positive outcomes for military children and youth.
- Reach out to local military installation Child and Youth program staff to share information about community and military resources to support military children and teens.

## Resources:

The National Military Family Association created Toolkits for Military Kids and Teens to give the people in military kids' lives a way to help them manage stress and affirm the positive aspects of military life. Visit [www.militaryfamily.org/publications](http://www.militaryfamily.org/publications) to download the toolkits.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America Military Support has more than 350 military youth centers around the world; these are places where military teens can feel at home, no matter where that is. Visit <http://www.bgca.org/meetourpartners/pages/militarypartnership.aspx> for more information.

The American Academy of Pediatrics Military Youth Deployment Support website was designed to support military youth, families, and the youth-serving professionals caring for military kids. Visit [www.aap.org/sections/uniformedservices/deployment/index.html](http://www.aap.org/sections/uniformedservices/deployment/index.html) for more information.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, in conjunction with Families Overcoming Under Stress (FOCUS) and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Services, have developed the Military Families Knowledge Bank, which provides information and resources to help military families. To access the Knowledge Bank go to <http://mfkb.nctsn.org/cwis/index.php>.

The American Psychological Association has developed a series of brochures entitled *Resilience in a Time of War*. The brochures discuss a variety of topics on how children cope with deployment and homecoming. To download the brochures go to [www.apa.org/topics/military/index.aspx](http://www.apa.org/topics/military/index.aspx).

Coming Together Around Military Families has a training curriculum for professionals serving military families. It was developed by Zero to Three, a national nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in the lives of infants and toddlers. For more information, go to [www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/military-families](http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/military-families).

Military Community Youth Ministries is an ecumenical Christian ministry that reaches out to military teens. For more information on their programs and locations, go to [www.mcyministry.org](http://www.mcyministry.org).

Courage to Care is an electronic health campaign for military and civilian professionals serving the military community, as well as for military men, women, and families. To access the fact sheets go to [www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html](http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html).

4-H Military Partnership has special programs for the development of military youth. Check out the services at [www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org](http://www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org).

Joint Services Support (JSS) is a program of the National Guard Bureau. Open to all National Guard, Reserve, and active duty families—regardless of Service, JSS provides information on programs and services available in your community. For more information, go to [www.jointservicesupport.org](http://www.jointservicesupport.org).



# Community, Civic, and Religious Leaders

Communities provide a critical safety net for military families, especially for parents and siblings of service members. Schools, youth organizations, religious groups, health care providers, and volunteer networks provide opportunities to extend support and offer encouragement to military families.

More than 70 percent of military families currently live in civilian communities and rural locations around the country.<sup>1</sup> For military families, receiving support from their own community is critical.

## Action Items:

- Work together with other community leaders to create a community resource guide of services available to military families. Consider organizations that have programs designed to positively affect children like the scouts, YMCA, YWCA, local sport teams, and after-school programs. Make the guide available to all of the service providers and to local military families.
- Gather together a diverse group of local organizations—fraternal organizations, women’s clubs, local Chambers of Commerce, and religious organizations—among others to offer their skills and resources to work with military families.
- Develop training for all service providers in your community that work with military families to help them gain more awareness and a better understanding of the culture of the families they will serve.
- Train service providers in your community to recognize the signs of mental and emotional stress in military families.

## Resources:

The National Military Family Association created Toolkits for Military Kids and Teens to give the people in military kids’ lives a way to help them manage stress and affirm the positive aspects of military life. Visit [www.militaryfamily.org/publications](http://www.militaryfamily.org/publications) to download the toolkits.

The Military Family Research Institute has created a series of informational brochures titled *How to Help Military Families*. Visit [www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25](http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25) to download the brochures.

Joint Services Support (JSS) is a program of the National Guard Bureau. Open to all National Guard, Reserve, and active duty families - regardless of Service, JSS provides information on programs and services available in your community. For more information, go to [www.jointservicessupport.org](http://www.jointservicessupport.org).

The Yellow Ribbon Program is a nationwide effort sponsored by the Department of Defense to provide National Guard and Reserve service members and their families with information on benefits and referrals before, during, and after deployments. Find a local program at [www.yellowribbon.mil](http://www.yellowribbon.mil).

The American Red Cross has resources including financial assistance, referral, and deployment tips to help military families. The Red Cross has also developed a course on Psychological First Aid for Military Families. Visit [www.RedCross.org](http://www.RedCross.org) for more information on their military family programs.

The Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE), in collaboration with PBS, has produced a handbook for military families. *A Handbook for Family & Friends of Service Members* provides solutions for service members and identifies outside tools and resources that may be useful to friends and family members before, during, and after deployment. Go to <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA10-EMLKITM> to order the handbook.

Military Community Youth Ministries is an ecumenical Christian ministry that reaches out to military teens. For more information on their programs and locations, go to [www.mcy.mil](http://www.mcy.mil).

National Network of Partnership Schools provides research-based guidance on engaging parents, schools, and community leaders to create student success in schools. Find out more at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).

The Citizens Soldier Support Program is a capacity-building initiative designed to strengthen community support for National Guard and Reserve members and their families. Visit [www.citizensoldiersupport.org](http://www.citizensoldiersupport.org) for more information.

<sup>1</sup>Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Installation and Environment Military Housing Privatization: [www.acq.osd.mil/housing/faqs.htm#Tenant](http://www.acq.osd.mil/housing/faqs.htm#Tenant).



# Philanthropic Supporters

More than two million service members have deployed since 2001, leaving behind more than three million immediate family members. More than one third of those family members are children, and 72 percent of those children are school-aged. Half of all military children are under age eight—all they have known is war.

Corporations, foundations, and individual philanthropists have a critical role in helping to pioneer solutions for the challenges facing America's military families. They are well-positioned to fund research and support targeted, research-based initiatives.

More research is needed to better understand how military families are coping. Training for service providers is needed to teach them signs of distress before they worsen. Resiliency skills can be taught to strengthen vulnerable military families and to protect those families that are managing well.

## Action Items:

- Individuals and corporations could make the well-being of military families the sole focus of their charitable funding. Establish a foundation to support that initiative.
- Existing foundations should consider adding a “Military Family Fund” within their existing foundation initiatives—the equivalent of carving out funds within their established missions, but committing to support military families through the duration of this conflict, until the last service member returns home.
- Foundations with prescribed missions can consider adding military families to their list of targeted populations they support. For example, if your foundation offers scholarships, add a military spouse scholarship. If your focus is health care access, seek proposals from groups focused on improving health care access in the military community.

- Foundations could make a one-time commitment of “discretionary” or “Board-waived” funding to support military families.
- Sponsor efforts to train national youth organizations in resiliency building programs, which can be replicated in “train the trainer” programs throughout the country.
- Fund research, especially projects that can provide insights for service providers on the cumulative effects of war and long-term needs of military families.
- Corporations and their foundations have more than money to give. The time and talent of their employees can help organizations that support service members and their families. Consider allowing your employees one day off per month to volunteer and encourage them to assist military families in your community.

## Resources:

Charity Navigator is an independent charity evaluator. To review evaluations of your favorite military charities go to [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org).

The American Institute of Philanthropy (AIP) is a charity watchdog service whose purpose is to help donors make informed giving decisions. Visit [www.charitywatch.org](http://www.charitywatch.org) for more information.

Courage to Care is an electronic health campaign for military and civilian professionals serving the military community, as well as for military men, women, and families. To access the fact sheets go to [www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html](http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html).

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) has created resources to help people make wise donations. To access the BBB Wise Giving Alliance visit [www.bbb.org/us/charity](http://www.bbb.org/us/charity).



# Employers

It can be challenging for military spouses to maintain a career compatible with military life. Frequent moves, deployments, training missions, and often being a single-parent are examples of the lifestyle dynamics balanced by working military spouses. While more than half of working military spouses report that deployment has had a negative effect on their careers, the majority of military spouses worked during their service member's last deployment.<sup>1</sup>

Why hire a military spouse? Military spouses, as a whole, are better educated than average workers. Yet they are less likely to be employed and more likely to earn less than average civilian workers, as well as their equally qualified counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Military spouses work to contribute to the total family income and to provide financial stability for their family. Apart from financial gain, three in four spouses claim the desire for a career is an important reason to work and essential to their quality of life.<sup>3</sup>

## Action Items:

- Flexible work schedules provide military spouses the opportunity to be employed and have a better work-life balance when their spouse is away. Consider how your business, franchise, or corporation can offer flexible work arrangements for military spouses and military teens.
- Businesses that support the needs of their community build goodwill and also increase their revenues. Consider the importance of allowing your employees one day off per month to volunteer and encourage them to assist military families in your community.
- Get together with other small or large employers in your community and consider new ways to help grow your business and also employ military spouses. Consider creating a bank of flexible work opportunities for military spouses.

- Start a family support group in your workplace. Parents and other loved ones of service members, as well as military spouses, often speak of the isolation they feel during a deployment. By providing a meeting place and time for family members to support each other, you can remove some of the anxiety they feel.

## Resources:

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) developed resources for employers to help them support and value the military service of their employees. For more information, go to [www.esgr.org](http://www.esgr.org).

The Military Family Research Institute has created a series of informational brochures titled *How to Help Military Families*. Download them at [www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25](http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/content.asp?tid=6&id=25).

Corporate Voices for Working Families, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of working families and the competitiveness of American business, developed toolkits to assist employers in implementing workplace flexibility programs. Download the toolkits at [www.cvworkingfamilies.org](http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org).

World at Work, a not-for-profit organization focused on global human resource issues, developed resources available for download on workplace flexibility and work-life issues. Download them at [www.worldatwork.org](http://www.worldatwork.org).

Workplace Flexibility 2010, a campaign to support the development of a comprehensive national policy on workplace flexibility, has resources for service members and their families. For more information, go to [http://workplaceflexibility2010.org/index.php/stakeholders/military\\_families](http://workplaceflexibility2010.org/index.php/stakeholders/military_families).

Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces creates a link for service members and their families to potential employers. For more information, go to [www.employerpartnership.org](http://www.employerpartnership.org).

Connect with other employers who are hiring military spouses through VetJobs at [www.vetjobs.com](http://www.vetjobs.com).

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the Families and Work Institute (FWI) formed a new partnership to promote flexible work arrangements. For more information, go to [www.weknownext.com/movingworkforward](http://www.weknownext.com/movingworkforward).

<sup>13</sup> Defense Manpower Data Center, 2008 Survey of Active Duty Spouses, February 2009

<sup>2</sup> Harrell, M., *Working Around the Military: Challenges to Military Spouse Employment and Education*. RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2004.



On May 12, 2010, First Lady Michelle Obama issued a national challenge, a challenge to every sector of American society to mobilize and take action to support and engage our military families. In that same speech, the First Lady announced a new Presidential Directive requiring the National Security staff to lead a ninety-day review to develop a coordinated Federal government-side approach to supporting and engaging military families.

State and local governments can follow the Federal government's lead and do their own review of agencies. Do you mention military families and families of the fallen in your communications about services? How can state and local government agencies support military families and military spouses that have lost their loved one?

#### Action Items:

- Elected officials have the leadership position, staff, and resources to help their local communities assist the needs of military families. Make supporting your state's military families a key priority for your administration and this will encourage others to get involved.
- Hold community meetings to bring together people who want to help and provide examples of what other communities are doing to successfully support their military families.
- Local leaders can help build a roadmap or guide to the services available in the community. Provide the information to all families, including military families, in the community so they know where to go when they need help.
- Use a variety of community recognition tools—such as community awards, citizen of the week programs, and reward programs for to school children—to

honor those who have done a good job at supporting military families and families of the fallen in their community.

- Contact your member organizations (U.S. Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, National Association of County Officials, or the National Governors' Association) and organize a leadership table of your peers to share best practices and create new efforts where none exist.

#### Resources:

The Department of Defense (DoD) State Liaison Office seeks to engage the states about the needs of military members and their families. By developing state/military partnerships, DoD seeks to work with the states to remove unnecessary barriers, and significantly improve the quality of life for military families. To learn more about the DoD State Liaison Office visit [www.usa4militaryfamilies.dod.mil](http://www.usa4militaryfamilies.dod.mil).

To access the Presidential Directive report, *Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment*, and to read what federal agencies are doing to respond to the President's call to action go to [www.defense.gov/home/features/2011/0111\\_initiative](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2011/0111_initiative).

The Yellow Ribbon Program is a Department of Defense program to support National Guard and Reserve members and their families before, during, and after deployment. The Yellow Ribbon Program has created a Center of Excellence that highlights lessons learned from state and local community programs. Find a local program at [www.yellowribbon.mil](http://www.yellowribbon.mil).

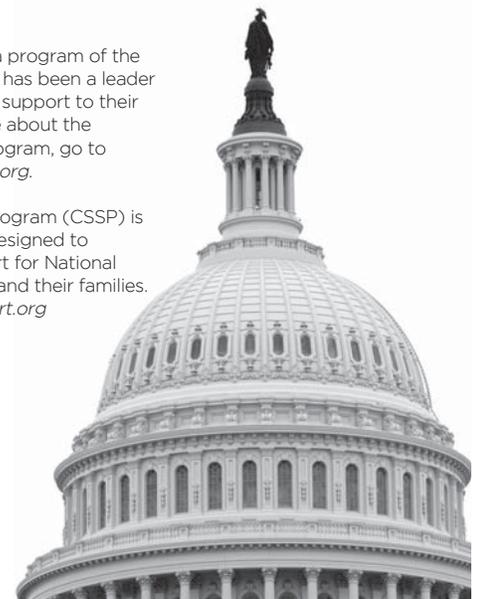
The Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP) provides family support to geographically-dispersed military families. Unlike traditional military family support programs that are delivered on the military installation, these services are delivered within the community through partnerships with local, state, and federal governments. For more information, go to [www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/sp/jfsap](http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/sp/jfsap).

Joint Services Support (JSS) is a program of the National Guard Bureau. Open to all National Guard, Reserve, and active duty families - regardless of Service, JSS provides information on programs and services available in your community. For more information, go to [www.jointservicessupport.org](http://www.jointservicessupport.org).

National Network of Partnership Schools provides research-based guidance on engaging parents, schools, and community leaders to create student success in schools. Find out more at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org).

Beyond the Yellow Ribbon is a program of the State of Minnesota. Minnesota has been a leader among the states in providing support to their military families. To learn more about the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program, go to [www.beyondtheyellowribbon.org](http://www.beyondtheyellowribbon.org).

The Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) is a capacity-building initiative designed to strengthen community support for National Guard and Reserve members and their families. Visit [www.citizensoldiersupport.org](http://www.citizensoldiersupport.org) for more information.



# Federal Government and Military Leaders

Military families and families of the fallen have traditionally looked to the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Service branches for services and support, but all federal agencies share in the responsibility for ensuring that their programs and services are accessible to military families. Recognizing this shared responsibility, President Obama released a Presidential Directive outlining how all federal agencies, as well as the White House Domestic Policy and National Economic Councils and the Offices of the Vice President, the First Lady, and Dr. Biden are supporting and engaging military families.

Military and federal government leaders have the capability to make a difference in the health and well-being of military families. Research shows that service members are less effective when their families back home are in distress. Many of the actions needed are not costly, but can have significant positive effects on the families at home.

## Action Items:

- Installation and unit commanders, or their designees, should work with schools to coordinate major events, such as homecomings and reintegration periods after units return home. If military leaders and schools can coordinate these major activities they can minimize any attendance and activity participation disruptions.
- Ask all installation commanders to appoint installation coordinators who will work with local community volunteer organizations to connect individuals and groups to the needs that have been identified by military families or family-serving professionals and volunteers on the installation.
- Develop core program standards for family services taking into account the need for building resiliency skills. These standards should be shared with all family service providers. In addition, develop accountability measures to help determine the effectiveness of the program.
- Adopt consistent program names. A common name or brand for describing programs should be used among all Service branches and installations so that family members and families of the fallen looking for support can find the programs they need regardless of location.
- To fulfill the responsibility to provide quality health care, review the existing availability and qualifications of mental health providers, identify where the shortages of providers exist, and fill the gaps.
- Develop a strategic communications plan to improve information dissemination to military families, families of the fallen, and the variety of stakeholders who support them.

### Resources:

To access the Presidential Directive report, *Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment*, and to read what federal agencies are doing to respond to the President's call to action go to [www.defense.gov/home/features/2011/0111\\_initiative](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2011/0111_initiative).

Military OneSource is a comprehensive, free resource and referral service for military families and families of the fallen providing information for everything from moving, to counseling, to car repair services. For more information, go to [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com).

MilitaryHOMEFRONT is the DoD website for official Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) program information, policy, and guidance designed to help troops and their families, leaders, and service providers. Go to [www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil](http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil) and click on "Leadership" for more information.

Department of Defense Educational Activity Educational Partnership works with local schools to provide caring adults to enhance the education experience for military children. Visit [www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu](http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu) for more resources and information.

The Citizens Soldier Support Program has developed training and resources for Health professionals and families. Visit [www.citizensoldiersupport.org](http://www.citizensoldiersupport.org) for more information. To access the searchable database of primary and behavioral health care providers who are trained in serving military members and their families go to [www.warwithin.org](http://www.warwithin.org).

The Department of Defense (DoD) State Liaison Office seeks to engage the states about the needs of military members and their families. To learn more about the DoD State Liaison Office and their ten priorities visit [www.usa4militaryfamilies.dod.mil](http://www.usa4militaryfamilies.dod.mil).

The Yellow Ribbon Program is a DoD program to support National Guard and Reserve members and their families before, during, and after deployment. The Yellow Ribbon Program has created a Center of Excellence that highlights lessons learned from state and local community programs. Find a local program at [www.yellowribbon.mil](http://www.yellowribbon.mil).

