



# YEAR IN REVIEW 2017

The Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University





Military-connected families are everywhere. Just like civilian families, they have the same needs for effective behavioral health care, education and community organizations, but they have unique challenges. However, because of their commitment to service and military experience, they are special assets to their communities, and uniquely positioned to make a difference as leaders.

The Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University helps professionals whose work touches military and veteran families to respond to those challenges and recognize those strengths. We're continuing our mission to strengthen communities that serve military and veteran families. We're continuing to generate new knowledge about families who serve, as we advocate for evidence-informed policies, practices and programs. This 2017 Year in Review describes how we are working to accomplish our mission. In a year of transition and change, we look forward with optimism with a clear and committed focus: to improve the lives of military and veteran families in Indiana and beyond.

## **SUPPORTING MILITARY COMMUNITIES**

MFRI supports the work of uniformed, paid and volunteer professionals who work within military systems like the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

### **Star Behavioral Health Providers**

This community-based training, dissemination and referral system expands access to local behavioral health providers with military-specific training. Through SBHP, service members, veterans and their families, including children, can access a database of trained providers and get help from someone with knowledge about the challenges and strengths of military-connected families.

This year, MFRI continued to raise awareness about SBHP, especially among service members, veterans and their families. In addition, we helped to reduce stigma about seeking behavioral health treatment, expanded the SBHP national provider database, and worked to educate SBHP trainees about new developments in treatment and care. In collaboration with our partners, we are also working to develop innovative, online training modules.

SBHP receives support in Indiana, is being sustained in existing states, and is expanding. For example, the Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP) continues to support advanced training tiers in select states and in Indiana, with contributions of significant in-kind resources. Other contributions from Michigan, Ohio and Oregon support MFRI's provision of evaluation assistance for SBHP programs there, keeping program quality high and maintaining consistency. Michigan's state legislature and Ohio's state behavioral health department are supporting the programs there. Expansion in Oregon was made possible when the Oregon National Guard dedicated a portion of their Beyond the Yellow Ribbon funds to implementing SBHP.

In 2017, we conducted seven SBHP trainings in Indiana, educating 300 participants. Across the nation, SBHP partner states supported 41 trainings, educating 1,326 attendees. By year's end, the national SBHP registry contained 1,281 trained providers.

SBHP aims to raise awareness among military and veteran families about SBHP providers while helping to reduce stigma about seeking behavioral health treatment. The level of search activity on the SBHP registry indicates these goals are being achieved.

- » To date, there have been 11,156 basic searches and 3,021 advanced searches network-wide, for a total of 14,177 searches system wide. In Indiana, there have been 4,511 basic and 1,412 advanced searches, including almost 700 in 2017.
- » Across the SBHP system, providers reported 1,162 new military-connected clients in 2017. Of those, 35 percent are veterans, 37 percent are family members and 28 percent are service members.

Now in nine states, SBHP has the support of policymakers, government, communities and behavioral health providers. It is an award-winning program that has been recognized by the National Guard Bureau, the William Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars, and the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. It has inspired federal legislation that strengthens service member and veteran access to trained, community-based behavioral health providers. We are proud of the work that our SBHP partners are doing to improve behavioral health outcomes for families who serve.

*"Clinicians who have never served in the armed forces, but who want to work with veterans, are often challenged in building rapport. Sometimes valuable time is lost. SBHP helps bridge that gap and informs civilian providers how to work more effectively with veteran clients. I can see the difference in their work and in their results. SBHP makes a huge difference in quality of care."*

– Bill Lewis, Army veteran and mental health counselor



## BY THE NUMBERS

### Star Behavioral Health Providers



**94,400**

hours of Tier One, Tier Two and Tier Three trainings to date.



Number of people participating in SBHP training:

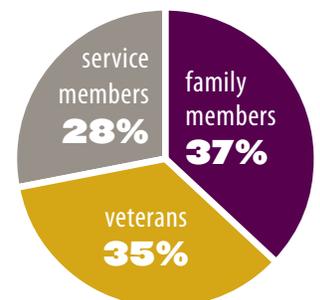
**10,000+**



**1,281**

behavioral health providers listed in the SBHP registries.

New military-connected clients:





#### ⤵ **LEGAL SUMMITS**

MFRI worked with the legal community and JCFI to educate court systems professionals about military and veteran families.

### **Joining Community Forces Indiana**

Joining Community Forces Indiana (JCFI) is an ongoing partnership among MFRI, Indiana National Guard (INNG), and the national and state Departments of Veterans Affairs. Through working groups we helped to create, we are collaborating to address serious problems. For example, suicide rates among service member and veterans remain high—and there is concern about family members as well. Economic concerns continue to plague some military-connected families. And veterans' presence in the judicial system has led to interest in trying to preserve their post-service life opportunities.

The suicide working group is working with the Indiana Suicide Prevention Network advisory council to ensure the council includes service member- and veteran-specific information and strategies. MFRI staff is also training large health systems in Indiana to ensure that their providers are well-prepared to screen and treat military-connected clients. We secured commitment with the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program coordinator to offer the QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training at the reunion briefs during 2018. Offering this training directly to military spouses and significant others prior to a service member's return from deployment is an important way to have those close to the service member understand the warning signs and ways to access help. This agreement comes at a critical time, as 2018 will be a year of increased deployments for the Indiana National Guard.

Under the leadership of former INNG general Brian Copes, the JCFI homelessness working group has transitioned from a central Indiana focus to a statewide focus. This shift in focus creates a more complete picture of veteran homelessness in Indiana. This year, JCFI's financial literacy working group implemented training on this topic with one training held so far.

The JCFI legal working group has grown strong relationships with the judiciary and other elements of Indiana's legal system, especially with regard to expansion of training. For the first time, the working group conducted an educational session about military and veteran families at a conference put on by the Probation Officers Professional Association of Indiana. MFRI presented military culture training to more than 60 judicial staff at the Problem Solving Court state conference in August, and at Indiana State Judicial conference (which is required of all Indiana judges) in September, where all individuals trained work with justice-involved veterans.

Also this year, JCFI, MFRI, the Office of Court Services, and the Indiana Bar Association sponsored two Indiana Military and Veteran Legal Summits for professionals associated with the court system. Along with military culture

training, the summits included a panel about veteran treatment courts (VTCs). Both summits were presided over by Indiana Supreme Court Justice Steven David. These summits educated 150 judges, prosecutors, court staff and VTC mentors. Representatives of Indiana's U.S. senators were present; both senators sent video messages of support. Attendees directly served veterans and their families, with 88 percent reporting they did so either exclusively (44.4 percent) or as part of the broader population (43.6 percent).

Three VTCs were established in 2017, bringing the state total to 23. MFRI staff provided guidance, shared information, and best practices as these courts were in the process of development. The Indiana Military and

Veteran Legal Summits, as well as other MFRI efforts, helped educate Indiana legal professionals and raise awareness about VTCs, and current and former MFRI staff serve as volunteer VTC mentors. In summit evaluations, 28 percent of comments focused on VTCs. "It's time for me to show up at vet court in Indianapolis and Hamilton County to see how I can serve," said one attendee. Another vowed to "try to meet with Judge David on funding VTC expansion." A third attendee said the VTC stories "inspired me to go back to my community to work harder and re-tool my veteran's courts team with military culture trainings." MFRI created and is sharing an educational video about VTCs, which included interviews with a VTC judge, mentor and graduate.

To address civil litigation issues, Army One Source, the Indiana University McKinney School of Law, and the Indiana Bar created an Indiana-specific Servicemembers Civil Relief Act manual. MFRI facilitated the distribution of this resource at the Legal Summit, which is now in the hands of 1,000 Indiana judges and court staff who touch large numbers of veterans in courts around the state. MFRI thus helped to ensure that veteran-specific resources are available to those who have a direct impact in the lives of veterans.

## **STRENGTHENING CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES**

MFRI strengthens the capacity of civilian communities to help their local military-connected families, providing resources as well as offering coordinated support, education and tools.

Significant transitions have continued in Indiana in the organizational efforts related to military and veteran families. For example, the INNG has completed the reorganization of family programs staff assignments and locations. INNG commitment to Joining Community Forces Indiana has been affirmed, and a Community Health Promotion Council (CHPC) has been created as a parallel organization within the INNG to focus on internal activities. Lt. Col. William Hoag serves on both groups, and MFRI Director Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth serves as the community representative to the CHPC.

The VA has appointed a new director of the Veteran Experience office, Dr. Lynda Davis, whom MFRI knows well. Dr. Davis has reorganized the MyVACommunity effort, retaining Community Veteran Engagement Boards (CVEB) as part of the strategy. Aimed at strengthening connections between VA leaders and local communities, this initiative now has staff in Indiana. Several of our community mobilization groups now also identify as CVEBs.

**"The whole idea behind veteran treatment court is a collaboration between the courts, Department of Veterans Affairs, mental health and behavioral health providers. When we started to work together, that was the beginning of connecting communities."**

– Judge Maria Granger, Floyd Superior Court 3



**"What makes veterans treatment court unique is the fact that it is based on teamwork. You're taking a veteran that's lost their way and you're putting them back on a team."**

– Phil Turner, Veterans Justice Outreach, MFRI



In the aftermath of the summit held a few months ago, the Red Cross is continuing to work on its transition to greater involvement in case management, although the organization has been stretched by the many significant disasters during 2017.

We have completed the revision of staff positions to create two new positions focused on strengthening communities. One is devoted to connecting functions across local communities and with MFRI and coordinating the development of a suite of community support tools. These include creating community dashboards, using specific data visualization software to create standardized and customized reports for specific communities. The other position is devoted to veteran treatment courts, working to assist courts as they become established, educating judges about the opportunities and challenges associated with such courts, building a cadre of veteran mentors to assist the courts, and documenting court impact.

In consultation with our colleagues at the INNG, the Red Cross, and some partners in national organizations, we have been analyzing the landscape of supports and services for military and veteran families. We are using the results of our analysis to build our version of the Hometown Collaboration Initiative (HCI.) HCI provides communities with education, coaching and technical assistance to address their own specific challenges. The initiative contains many design elements consistent with the best evidence about effective community mobilization.

The 2017 Battlemind to Home Mental Health Summit took place in Indianapolis, again doing double duty this year as the VA Mental Health Summit. We were happy to be able to secure table sponsorships that allowed us to provide travel scholarships to community mobilization group facilitators from outside the Indianapolis area. This increased audience diversity and fostered greater communication across the state. This year, an impressive 70 percent of the 200 attendees provide direct service to veterans and their families. In addition, 33 percent of those present were first-time participants. Of those responding to our survey, almost 100 percent said they intended to share the knowledge they gained within the next week or month. Battlemind attendees told us the summit increased community awareness of the challenges that military families face when service members return from deployment and enabled participants to discuss the challenges associated with reintegration with family following military deployment. Battlemind to Home 2018 is in the planning stages, and we look forward to its impact on communities.

“[Battlemind] makes me want to do more because it highlights the needs that exist for veterans and their families. It provided me with knowledge about so many services that I never hear of in my everyday life.” – Battlemind participant



MFRI's 15 community mobilization meeting groups have successfully transitioned to local leadership, with mentoring and assistance from MFRI. One additional community, which had ceased mobilization activities (Delaware County) has now re-engaged. We have identified and are developing the tools they need for support and have new points of contact for each of the community mobilization groups. Furthermore, at least 18 community Stand Downs took place in Indiana as a result of community mobilizations efforts that we began.

We helped both the TriState Military Resource Network (TSMRN) and Southern Indiana Military Support Network (SIMSN) become affiliated with the new CVEB model, which is improving working relationships between local communities and VA administrators. Also, MFRI provided guidance to the MyVA staff to identify the third community group to become a CVEB – the Indianapolis community mobilization group. MFRI efforts to support and nurture community mobilization groups helped prepared groups for effective interactions when VA leaders were ready and willing to meet. During one meeting, these groups brought forth 18 care or service-related issues to VA leaders, which were resolved or assigned for follow-up with specific VA staff.



## ⌵ **BATTLEMIND 2017**

Kathy Broniarczyk, left, helps community service providers understand the benefits of Measuring Communities, and how to use the tool.

Through the SIMSN, MFRI assisted the Louisville VA Medical Center (which serves many Indiana veterans) in developing and implementing a strategy to boost local VHA enrollment, resulting in a revised new patient orientation now branded as an Explore myVA activity for veterans and family members. Enrollment has now risen to 10-15 per day.

The CVEB initiative has been useful in the Evansville community. The VA Healthcare system in Evansville is geographically separated from the main medical base in Marion, IL. While the Evansville Health Care Center had a strong track record, some programs, such as homeless outreach, failed to get traction prior to the introduction of the CVEB, which put resources and support at the local level. With this local support, now the homeless program which is based in the Marion VAMC fully supports the homeless outreach in the Evansville HHC to include activities such as the Stand Down held in November.

We are pleased that the Reaching Rural Veterans monthly outreach at Hope Southern Indiana in Floyd County has continued without a break since joining the program. Our first peer-reviewed publication about that program has been accepted (Wright et al., 2017), and we are proud that the first author was a student who worked with us on the program.

## **INFLUENCE POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES SUPPORTING MILITARY FAMILIES**

MFRI helps policymakers, program managers and practitioners as they work with and for military-connected families.

### **Providing access to data about military and veteran families**

All around the country there are organizations working to assist service members, veterans and their families. Some of their efforts are rigorous and evidence-informed, but others are much less systematic. These efforts are embedded in local communities with widely varying needs and opportunities. As a university-based institute, MFRI can play a useful role by assembling data about the state of military and veteran families around the country and making it available to others in ways they can use. This is the purpose of the Measuring Communities initiative.

## BY THE NUMBERS Measuring Communities



Unique users increased by **215%**.



All **50** states accessed. **96%** of counties searched.

We have already had a busy year teaching others about the Measuring Communities tool, having given seven presentations and 17 trainings. In addition, the Measuring Communities site content has now been migrated from our consulting partner to Purdue servers, and features have been added that allow content to be updated automatically whenever new federal data are issued.

We are pleased with the reception that this initiative has received. So far we have seen the following successes:

- » To date, 62 national, state and local organizations have completed agreements with MFRI or have obtained courtesy access to use the Measuring Communities site. These organizations represent every state and territory, and include **America's Warrior Partnership** and the **National Association of Veteran Serving Organizations**, which offer access to their members, as well as smaller organizations such as Hamilton Center, a state level behavioral health organization.
  - Traffic on the site continues to increase, with a 215 percent increase in users in 2017 as compared to 2016 and an 85 percent increase in activities since March. Data about every state and 96 percent of counties in the U.S. have been accessed.
  - The National Guard Bureau is using Measuring Communities to assist in their pilot **Building Healthy Military Communities** program. The six pilot states are using the data to identify the military populations and their concentrations in the state as well as where to locate specific resources in response to needs.
  - A survey of 130 new users of the site finds that more than 40 percent use it to obtain data to support programming efforts such as performance metrics and needs assessments. This is a very important outcome because it indicates that organizations are using data from the site to focus their efforts on behalf of military and veteran families, rather than simply making guesses.
- » One of our major goals is to use crowd-sourcing to get other organizations to share data with measuring communities so that we can learn about how veterans are doing around the country. We are pleased that the list of organizations partnering in this way is growing:
  - The **Elizabeth Dole Foundation** has provided funding to support our work to assess the feasibility of including military caregiver data on the measuring communities site. We are helping them to gather demographic data about military caregivers across the county as well as data about types of care they provide, indicators of social isolation and depression, and other information. We will identify specific indicators to design a specialized Military Caregiver Snapshot at the state level.
  - **Got Your 6** has provided funding to support the creation of strategic partnerships with four national organizations to deploy the information from Measuring Communities in their work and increase their effectiveness. Efforts will expand the capabilities of the tool, add a warehouse capability for partners to map data unique to them and grow a data potluck from other organizations.

We are poised to launch our inaugural national report. Working with subject matter experts in each domain, we will be sharing data-driven stories about the well-being of military and veteran families.

*"In my position, I help to raise awareness of military-affected families in the state. The tools Measuring Communities offers are invaluable for providing large amounts of information in a user-friendly format."*

– Measuring Communities user





## Growing our networks of influence and support

MFRI ambassadors helped drive success in our participation in Purdue’s fourth system-wide Day of Giving. Through this social-media driven fundraising campaign, we saw significant increase (66 percent) in the year-over-year number of gifts. Donors included Advisory Council members, military and veteran families, and individuals associated with Measuring Communities and SBHP initiatives.

On Dec. 22, we launched a newly-designed website, giving MFRI’s digital presence a refreshed look that holds true to our overall mission and our Purdue University home. Throughout 2017, the website served nearly 10,000 visitors, with users spending about 65 percent of the 15,000 sessions on new information. As we continue to improve and refine the website, we expect further increases in visitor engagement.

Our External Relations team strategically manages these efforts, this year transitioning to new leadership under Linda Hughes-Kirchubel, who has been with

MFRI for eight years. Under her leadership, we have hired new external relations staff and are implementing a strategic communication plan that emphasizes clear, consistent messaging across multiple platforms. We are committed to disseminating messages online, in print, through social media and face-to-face, with a “digital first, strategic always” philosophy, appropriately tailoring approaches for diverse audiences.

Our social media interaction continues to grow. Facebook engagement increased 26 percent. On Twitter, we saw a 58 percent increase in followers. Our strategic and intentional use of social media helps to thus expanding our reach, educating new stakeholders and helping organizations stay current with our initiatives, programs and research.

During 2017, we have been honored to work with multiple organizations at their request. For example, we provided feedback on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s national Financial Well-Being Survey, after CFPB leaders asked us to provide key insights into factors that predict improved financial well-being. Our director, Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth, was asked to inform Canadian leaders about military-community collaborations at the Military and Veteran Families Leadership circle meeting in Ontario, Canada. MFRI also informed Department of Defense and NIFA leaders about using “practical rigor” to evaluate U.S. military support programs—another example of our focus on research with impact. MacDermid Wadsworth also was recognized for her work at MFRI. Purdue University’s Susan Bulkeley Butler Center awarded her the Leadership in Action award, which recognizes faculty, staff, and students who have shown exemplary leadership within their respective areas of expertise.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Social media engagement



**58%** increase in new followers.

**29%** increase in profile visits.



**26%** increase in page followers.

**18%** increase in page likes.

## A Battle Plan for Supporting Military Families

Finally, we are pleased to announce that MFRI's latest and most ambitious book has been published. "A Battle Plan for Supporting Military Families," issued by Springer Publishing Inc., is the fourth in our "Risk and Resilience in U.S. Military Families" series. This book is the product of our September 2015 symposium in the Washington, D.C.-area. The expert authors are leaders hailing from a multiplicity of disciplines, many of whom presented at the convening. Chapters focus on lessons learned across domains including the federal government, industries and associations, states and communities, and institutions focused on knowledge dissemination. By analyzing lessons learned since 9/11 on ways to support military and veteran families, these authors offered recommendations to the next generation of leaders facing large-scale deployments, ongoing combat and reintegration issues. Working with our partners at Reingold Inc., we are executing a comprehensive and strategic communication plan to make sure this resource is widely shared among national stakeholders, leaders and constituencies.

### **TOP LESSONS** *Battle Plan for Supporting Military Families*

The book includes information about how to:

- » Integrate family support systems into defense strategy.
- » Adopt policies that help, not hinder, military families during times of conflict.
- » Identify urgent gaps in support systems.
- » Ensure that military families have a voice in the conversation.
- » Plan more effectively for medical and caregiving needs.
- » Provide the resources military and veteran families need after military conflicts wind down.

## CREATE AND SUSTAIN VIBRANT LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

MFRI supports learning in other organizations as well as our own. We work to advance knowledge of the higher education domain in its service to military and veteran students. We support the learning and development of postdoctoral and faculty scholars. We also work to ensure that undergraduate and graduate students have opportunities to work and learn at MFRI.

### Educational resources for higher education stakeholders

MFRI's education and employment team supports two groups that have so far received little attention in efforts to make higher education more hospitable to student service members and veterans: allies and advocates who support students on campuses, and female student service members and veterans, who, according to Purdue Gallup data, appear to be faring less well than their nonveteran or male veteran counterparts.

### Allies and advocates on campuses

We have observed that it is very common for campus student veteran organization chapters to fluctuate in viability and effectiveness as student leaders come and go. Faculty or staff members who serve as chapter advisers, often as volunteers, end up being very important in helping these organizations to sustain and rejuvenate themselves. However these advisors receive little support or training for their role.

NASPA and NAVPA are two of the main organizations that work with professionals who serve student service members and veterans on college campuses. They are also strong allies for their campus' student service members and veterans. We are engaging with them, as well as with Student Veterans of America, to increase resources to student veterans

organization chapter advisors. Also involved in this effort is the Big 10 Academic Alliance Military and Veteran Peer Group, which helped guide MFRI's development of handbook themes.

This year, MFRI partnered with the NASPA Veterans Knowledge Community to create and host a webinar series based on MFRI's How to help publications. The webinars helped participants learn more about supporting the success of military-connected students on their campus. Subject matter experts focused on faculty, academic advisors, and those working in disability services. More than 70 higher education professionals attended the series.

## Supporting women student veterans beyond their campuses

For the second year, we held our Focus Forward Fellowship initiative, an evidence-informed curriculum aimed at supporting the academic and career success of military-connected women. Fellows first complete an intensive four-day residential portion of the program, and then MFRI engages with them in an online learning community (OLC) throughout the following academic year. The OLC serves as a forum of personal, professional and social support among the Fellows, with the primary goal of continuing to strengthen the network of support established during the residency.

The program aims to help Fellows:

- » improve and use professional skills to help foster career success;
- » increase comfort in integrating their veteran identity with other identities;
- » increase recognition and application of personal strengths;
- » build a community of support with women peers in the Fellowship program;
- » increase network-building activities for academic or career growth; and
- » increase integration with their campus and commitment to pursuing academic and career goals.

The online component of the intervention provides Fellows with an easily accessible platform with a secure ability to share educational content and social support. The structured curriculum follows the flow of the academic semester but is adjusted to meet the changing needs of the community. The opportunities we offer to students focus on academic development (such as academic goal-setting), professional development (such as continued contact with corporate mentors), personal development (such as personal narrative work), or social engagement (such as sharing of challenges and positive experiences with other Fellows).

MFRI's two Fellowship cohorts during 2017 consisted of 27 women representing 20 universities in 12 states. The cohorts have been diverse in racial representation, with 20 percent identifying as Black or African American, 17 percent as Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, and 5 percent as Asian. Twenty-four percent are pursuing STEM degrees.

### ≈ FELLOWSHIP

Building community and gaining career and academic skills are just two of the Focus Forward Fellowship goals.



## BY THE NUMBERS

Focus Forward Fellows

**59%** of Fellows served after Sept. 11, 2001.



**24%** are seeking STEM degrees



**73%** of Fellows transitioned out of the military within the last 10 years.



**96%** are engaged in the online learning community.

The Fellowship's value has been recognized by the many organizations that have helped to support it. Support for 2017 cohorts came from Got Your Six and Colorado State University (CSU), which invited MFRI to operate the program to benefit women student veterans pursuing four-year degrees at Colorado institutions. We also received considerable support from corporations that sent professionals to serve as corporate mentors in mock job interviews. Team Red, White and Blue provided wellness and fitness training; Easter Seals provided financial support for a Fellow, and DISC and Strengths Team Training contributed coaches.

The Fellowship's impact is becoming clear. Our Colorado partners report that Colorado Fellows have been more engaged since participating in the program and the partners are very pleased with all positive signs for the students' future academic success. This is an important observation given the high risk of premature withdrawal from their academic programs that women student veterans at those universities had previously displayed.

We are also learning more about impact from the OLCs. Of the 27 Fellows we accepted in 2017, 26 are actively engaged in these online spaces. There they share personal and professional experiences, as well as testimonials about the program's positive impact on them and their continued pursuit of academic and career goals. Some Fellows are becoming advocates for the military and veteran community on their campuses. For example, one woman—who had previously never attended any meetings of her institution's student veteran organization—is now an active member, and has secured an officer position in the organization. Two other Fellows returned to their campus and successfully advocated free access to a resource utilized in the residency curriculum. Testimonials demonstrated the academic, professional, and personal impact the Fellowship has as these women continuing to connect with one another, building a strong community of peer support.

We continue to connect with our 2016 Fellows as well. For example, during mid-year telephone interviews, most reported experiencing improved connections on campus and with other female veterans, improved professional skills and greater acceptance of their veteran identity. One Fellow commented: "The Fellowship has made me realize how much I was living in comfort. I personally believe I have been called to live outside of my comfort zone." We continue to track their progress and outcomes as we prepare for our fourth cohort in 2018.

**"When this opportunity was presented, I felt like it was fate. Who better to progress women veterans than fellow women veterans?"** – Focus Forward Fellowship participant



### Engaged learning for Purdue students

MFRI is dedicated to being an organization that prioritizes student engagement and learning. Throughout our history, Purdue students have held positions in every one of our teams. From research assistantships to paid internships to work study positions to internships for college credit, more than 250 students have worked and learned at MFRI. In 2017, 10 graduate students and 38 undergraduates helped to move our mission forward.

In partnership with Purdue's Brian Lamb School of Communication, MFRI created a new internship opportunity specifically for communication graduate and undergraduate students. Our inaugural intern, Chelsea Moss, is a second-year master's student. She received college credit, educational and resume-building opportunities as she worked collaboratively with MFRI staff, JCFI, INNG, MFRI and Indiana's Court Administrators to create a video explaining how the organizations are working to create more Indiana veteran treatment courts.

**"I never thought I would be interested in research, but working at MFRI on the Family Journeys team has expanded my understanding of how my human services major can pair with research to create better outcomes for families."** – MFRI student intern



Family Support student worker Savannah Willis helped to manage the SBHP trainings and registry updates. During the summer, she travelled to Colorado to assist with MFRI's Focus Forward Fellowship. While working to help manage the four-day event, she also sat in on all of the programming. As a young woman who grew up in a military family, Savannah had a special connection with the Fellows, who embraced her as their own. As a student majoring in hospitality and tourism management, Savannah gained real-world experience in her chosen field. When the Fellowship concluded, Savannah called the experience "life-changing."

In addition to the students who work at MFRI in some capacity in 2017, we are proud to see the success and influence of those who have graduated. Notable graduates include Christina Marini, Ph.D., who is a post-doctoral Fellow in the Center for Healthy Aging at Penn State University; Hayley Hughes, Ph.D., who is a counseling psychology post-doctoral resident at Cornell University. Allison Roberts, a Bement Senior Policy Fellow at the Purdue Policy research Institute, completed her Ph.D. on veterans, service members and their families. Magin Kebert Day completed a decorated tour of duty with the Air Force as an intelligence officer and received permission to pursue her doctorate in clinical psychology, aiming to be an active duty psychologist in the Air Force. She has been admitted to the University of North Carolina and completed her master's degree using data from the Family Journeys project.

Other graduates who worked at MFRI while they earned their degrees are employed in a variety of industries and occupations, ranging from helping professions to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

## **GENERATE IMPORTANT NEW KNOWLEDGE**

MFRI continues to carry out an active program of research. We receive positive reviews about our efforts to better understand how military families operate in the context of deployment cycles, including from our military sponsor now funding Family Journeys. We help military support programs to understand the quality of their content, delivery, and outcomes, and this work is helping to increase the effectiveness of multiple service branches. By raising the visibility of the best research, we are strengthening connections between the worlds of research and practice.

### **Conducting research**

MFRI gathers data to address important challenges: Family transitions, family financial well-being, and families with mental health challenges. Our flagship study, Family Journeys, continues to grow new knowledge about military families' experiences of deployment. Enrollment in the study has been completed and most families are now in the reintegration phase. We are continuing to conduct the reintegration phase home interviews, and we are gathering bursts of data by conducting daily telephone calls that help us understand how post-deployment families renegotiate household responsibilities. We also are processing audio- and video-recorded data that families have provided. An increasing amount of time is spent conducting data analyses. Family Journeys continues to provide important learning opportunities for students – so far, a total of 84 undergraduate and graduate students have worked on the study.



MFRI is also concerned with increasing family financial literacy for military and veteran families, where financial education is in high demand. Driven by downsizing, high OPMTEMPO, and substantial changes to military compensation, service members and their families need to be knowledgeable and wise about their financial futures. For the office of the Commander, Navy Installations Command, MFRI conducted an evaluation of the “Million Dollar Sailor” financial education program, which they offer at Fleet and Family Support Centers world-wide. With funding from the Department of Defense, we gathered evaluation data from every available offering of this program, recruiting and training data collectors across the globe.

Our analyses of these data showed that the program effectively taught a wide range of sailors, based on career stage, gender, race and ethnicity. Given the worldwide scope of this program, we were not surprised to find considerable variation in its implementation. In our report, we suggested ways to build an evaluation system that could be integrated into program administration with minimal expense, to help ensure that families receive consistent training reflecting current issues no matter where they are stationed.

Over the years, MFRI has been fortunate to partner with a number of VA researchers. In 2017, we received funding through a new partnership with Michele Spont, a researcher at the Minneapolis VA, who is also affiliated with the National Center for the Study of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. The VA knows that, in comparison to white non-Latinos, veterans who are members of racial and ethnic minorities receive different treatments and are more likely to discontinue treatment. To understand the role of family, social network, cultural and community influences on veteran mental health treatment, we interviewed 120 veterans, both male and female, from a variety of ethnic groups. In 2018, we will code transcripts of these interviews and hope to receive additional funding to conduct another 40 of them. A team of Purdue faculty helped conduct these interviews and plan to publish manuscripts from these data.

### Disseminating research to a wider audience

MFRI communicates research findings to scientific audiences to contribute to ever-growing evidence base through publication of authored journal articles and book chapters. For example, MFRI collaborator Heather Eicher-Miller led a conference presentation that highlighted **the needs of veteran families in rural communities** and the effectiveness of MFRI’s Reaching Rural Veterans (RRV) pilot. Eicher-Miller’s team observed that families of veterans participating in RRV were food-insecure, yet tended not participate in government assistance programs for which they were eligible. For example, many families with children in the household did not participate in WIC or free or reduced school meals. Use of these resources improved after participation in the RRV project, in addition to significant improvements in food security.

Regarding **marriage in the military**, researchers compared historical patterns of marriage among men and women in the military and the general population, finding that the military appears to provide an environment that is supportive of marriage for men but not for women. This chapter, published in a book by the American Psychological Association, joins a series of MFRI publications aimed at drawing attention to the military’s role in contributing to the fragility of the marriages of female service members (Lee & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2017).

Furthering our research on the **impact of deployment on children** in military families, we authored an article reviewing findings from data gathered by the Centers for Disease Control in multiple states. We found that military

children reported higher levels of risky behavior among children in relation to parents' military service and deployment than did than their civilian counterparts (MacDermid Wadsworth, Bailey & Coppola, 2017). These behaviors included substance use, suicidal thoughts, and weapon-carrying. Furthermore, the gap widens when children have been exposed to the deployment of parents or siblings. This article was published in a journal distributed to the several thousand academic and practitioner members of the Society for Research in Child Development, and shared with the Military Child Education Coalition in the hope that they will consider it in their programming.

### Family Journeys

To understand the helpfulness of **predeployment programing for families**, a study related our Family Journeys project was published in the journal *Family Relations*. We documented that stress pile-up can be positively related to depressive symptoms before deployment (Collins, Lee & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2017). Among the strategies used to address this problem, our analysis showed that informal family resources and taking specific, instrumental actions to prepare for deployment were positive adaptation strategies. Family service professionals may want to assist families with identifying and strengthening their family support and improving family functioning, as well as guide families in a process of identifying the instrumental and logistical tasks that are necessary or helpful for an impending transition.

### NEW KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MILITARY MARRIAGES

A recent dissertation completed by MFRI doctoral student Christina Marini used Family Journeys data to reveal ways in which depression travels within military families. According to the findings, service members' levels of depression following deployment were significantly related to the degree to which their spouses engaged in "minimizing" patterns of communication during deployment. This finding is important because training can help couples to avoid this pattern of communication, potentially reducing the relationship corrosion associated with depression.

### SOCIAL SUPPORT

Another of MFRI's students recently completed her master's thesis using data from Family Journeys. Magin Day, who joined the Air Force while working at MFRI, was recently selected for the Air Force Health Professions Scholarship and is enrolled in a clinical psychology doctoral program at UNC Charlotte. Her findings suggest that for National Guard members, social support from civilian family and friends can have a positive impact on reintegration outcomes, while military sources of support are far less influential. Her findings also provide an important contrast to prior studies with active duty populations, where military social support was significantly related to reintegration outcomes, suggesting professionals working with National Guard members should leverage and strengthen Guard members' sources of civilian social support.

### PARENTING

Allison Flittner O'Grady, a former post-doctoral researcher at MFRI, led a team that published analyses showing how changes in depressive symptoms and parenting style are related to changes in children's behavior (Flittner O'Grady et al, 2017). This research shows that changes in at-home parents' feelings and responsiveness when the service member leaves and when the service member returns have implications for children's adjustment. This work demonstrates the interdependence between children and both of their parents, the parent who is deployed and the parent who remains at home, even during separation.

### RESEARCH ABOUT SIBLINGS

Former Purdue Associate Professor Shawn Whiteman, Ph.D., who is now at Utah State University, and Purdue graduate student Meghan Loeser presented findings about siblings at the national conference of the Society of Research on

## BY THE NUMBERS

Family Journeys students

**3** postdoctoral researchers

**28** graduate students

**56** undergraduate students



Adolescents. The research focused on sibling relationships through the deployment cycle. The researchers extended their earlier analyses of data gathered from the Family Journeys project into the reintegration phase, and found that sibling relationships became less harmonious early in the deployment cycle, but showed signs of recovery during reintegration. These changes were associated with externalizing behaviors such as acting out. These findings underscore the need to include siblings in family and prevention and intervention programs. In fact, parents' concern for their children may be an effective motivation to for families to participate in intervention programs.

## Translating research to practitioners and communities

### *Star Behavioral Health Providers*

At the invitation of the **Defense Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury**, MFRI trained over 300 practitioners with a seminar focused on how to design and deliver programs that are sensitive to cultural diversity among military families. This seminar was evaluated as among the strongest presentations of the year to date.

### *Family financial literacy*

We were very pleased that our work has come to the attention of the military department at the **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau**, which invited us to participate in a small meeting of national research leaders aimed at advising CFPB about how best to analyze national data about the financial security of military members and veterans. Although not publicly visible, this activity allowed MFRI expertise to have a direct impact on the actions of a national organization with unique power to protect the financial well-being of military-connected families well beyond what DoD and VA can do on their own.

### *Family Journeys*

As in previous years, MFRI was given time at the Indiana National Guard spring training conference for volunteers to share guidance based on research evidence. We focused our remarks on urging those present (including Family Programs staff and INNG leaders) to take action based on recent research findings that can help them to prepare more effectively for future conflicts.

Our partners at the Nathanson Family Resilience Center, who are themselves clinicians, help MFRI translate findings to contexts where they can be more directly helpful to military and veteran families. We regularly brief them on recent analyses and findings; they help us incorporate them into settings where they can be useful. For example, our chapter in a new textbook discusses the importance of effective communication strategies to help military families navigate the deployment cycle cites recent findings from the Family Journeys study (Hajal et al, in press).

## Supporting our partners and collaborators

MFRI continues to assist Douglas Powell's team in completing a new comprehensive evidence-based curriculum for **child development** centers attended by military children. We are also continuing to partner with Maggie O'Haire in the **School of Veterinary Medicine**, who is conducting an evaluation of the effects of PTSD service dogs on mental health and family dynamics in veteran families. Sandra Liu of the department of Consumer Science is conducting research on the success factors in veteran-owned businesses with funding from the National Association of Veteran-Serving Organizations. This work is being accomplished in partnership with MFRI.

## LOOKING FORWARD

The upcoming year will be busy with efforts to advance new and existing initiatives. We will see the release of the inaugural **Measuring Communities** report. As we seek to influence national conversations about the status of military and veteran families, we will highlight their needs, their strengths and the ways they can contribute to communities. We will continue to improve the Measuring Communities website, working collaboratively with Purdue Polytechnic's user experience design lab and the Purdue Center for Regional Development, as well as partner organizations and subject matter experts across the nation.

Our work with **Star Behavioral Health Providers** continues, and we will maintain provider registries in all states. While Georgia and New York have completed their funded projects, 2018 trainings will be offered in Oregon, Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

Through **Joining Community Forces Indiana**, we will continue to address financial literacy issues for military and veteran families. Training will occur in partnership with the National Guard Personal Financial Counselors and representatives from Regions Bank, Price Waterhouse Cooper, Centier Bank and Forum and Financial Center Federal Credit Unions. We will continue our work in partnership with major health systems to expand suicide prevention training. We will expand our documentation of veterans as they move through Indiana's veteran treatment courts, and expand the presence of mentors in those courts. We also will continue with our revised community mobilization approach, proceeding with the **Hometown Collaboration Initiative**.

Our experiences have given us new ideas for enriching the **Battlemind to Home** summit. This year, we will be offering three tracks of specialized information for behavior health, legal professionals and community mobilization workers.

We will continue to **conduct research**, where completing Family Journeys will be a major activity. We will collaborate with Sandra Liu of Purdue's Department of Consumer Sciences in her study of veterans who have started businesses (paying special attention to those with families), and Michele Spoons of the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, where we are examining the role of family members in ethnic minority veterans' journeys to treatment for psychological health problems.

We also will actively **disseminate research**. Faculty and students are already working on presentations and publications from both the Family Journeys and the Minneapolis VA project. Heather Eicher-Miller, our partner in Purdue's department of Nutrition Science, is working on disseminating results from Reaching Rural Veterans.

In the **research translation** arena, our partners at the Nathanson Family Resilience Center are developing supplementary material for their FOCUS intervention based on Family Journeys results, currently focused on sibling relationships during the deployment cycle. Once Sandra Liu's findings are complete, the National Association of Veteran Serving Organizations will translate them into practice in their organization's work with the veteran community. We are pleased to be assisting Purdue faculty member Douglas Powell with the development of a comprehensive

evidence-based curriculum for early childhood education, now called Elm: Early Learning Matters, which will be used in military child development centers and family child care homes and made available to civilian facilities as well.

We also will be awarding MFRI's Excellence in Research on Military and Veteran Families award, established to recognize the year's best research on military-connected families. Recipients are authors of research that combines exceptional rigor with important insights about military and veteran families.

A major effort during 2018 will be the activities surrounding our recently-released book, "A Battle Plan for Supporting Military Families." A nationally-focused strategic communication plan launches in March, and we have commitments from AUSA and others to host events to educate key leaders about the contents of the book.

In the area of education and employment, we will complete the online learning community for the 2017 Focus Forward Fellowship participants. We will watch for the continued academic and career accomplishments of the 2016 cohort. And we will welcome the 2018 cohort of Fellows. We will also continue to develop materials to support chapter advisors in their work with student service members and veterans.

Finally, our learning opportunities for Purdue students continue to grow and expand. We are offering more paid experiences as well as internships for credit. We will build on students' work during the spring semester to create expanded opportunities for students during the summer. We are focused on creating meaningful opportunities that help the next generation of leaders develop appreciation for and understanding of the unique strengths of military and veteran families.



# 2017 PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

## Books

Hughes-Kirchubel, L., MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M., & Riggs, D. (Eds.). (2018). *A battle plan for supporting military families: Lessons for the leaders of tomorrow*. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing.

## Book contributions

- Hughes-Kirchubel, L., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2018). Introduction to a battle plan for supporting military families. In L. Hughes-Kirchubel, S. M. MacDermid Wadsworth, & D. Riggs (Eds.), *A battle plan for supporting military families: Lessons for the leaders of tomorrow*. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing.
- Hughes-Kirchubel, L., & Johnson, E. C. (2018). MilVet philanthropy: Challenges past, recommendations for tomorrow. In L. Hughes-Kirchubel, S. M. MacDermid Wadsworth, & D. Riggs (Eds.), *A battle plan for supporting military families: Lessons for the leaders of tomorrow*. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing.
- Lee, K. H., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017). The newest generation of U.S. veterans and their families. In C. Price & K. Bush (Eds.), *Families and change: Coping with stressful life events* (pp. 203-222). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M., Mustillo, S., Faber, A. J., & Christiansen, A. T. (in press). Using the life course perspective to examine the prevalence of marriage in military families. In R. Settersten, R. Spiro, & C. Aldwin (Eds.), *Long term outcomes of military service: Perspectives on health and well-being*. Forthcoming, American Psychological Association.

## Refereed journal articles

- Collins, C. L., Lee, K. H., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017). Family stressors and resources: Relationships with depressive symptoms in military couples during pre-deployment. *Family Relations*, 66(2), 302-316. doi:10.1111/fare.12251.
- Flittner O'Grady, A. E., Whiteman, S. D., Cardin, J. F., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017). Changes in parenting and youth adjustment across the military deployment cycle. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, n/a-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12457>.
- MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M., Bailey, K. M., & Coppola, E. C. (2017). U.S. military children and the wartime deployments of family members. *Child Development Perspectives*, 11(1), 23-28. doi: 10.1111/cdep.12210.
- Marini, C. M., Collins, C. L., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. (accepted). Looking beyond snapshots: An examination of multiple rhythms of military and veteran family life. *Journal of Family Theory and Review*.
- Wilson, S. R., Marini, C. M., Franks, M. M., Whiteman, S. D., Topp, D., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017). Communication and connection during deployment: A daily-diary study from the perspective of at-home partners. *Journal of Family Psychology*. Advance online publishing. doi: 10.1037/fam0000333.
- Wright, B. N., Sternberg, M., Wellnitz, A., MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M., & Eicher-Miller, H. A. (2017). Food security, dietary quality, and use of resources are low among rural U.S. veteran food pantry users in a Reaching Rural Veterans pilot intervention. *The FASEB Journal*, 31. Retrieved from [http://www.fasebj.org.ezproxy.lib.purdue.edu/content/31/1\\_Supplement](http://www.fasebj.org.ezproxy.lib.purdue.edu/content/31/1_Supplement).

## Refereed national or international presentations

- Coppola, E. C. (2017, November). *Family functioning and posttraumatic stress disorder in military service members*. Poster presented at the National Council on Family Relations Annual Conference, Orlando, FL.
- Marini, C. M. (2017, November). *Stress generation and marital discord: Linking marital quality and mental health*. Poster presented at the National Council on Family Relations Annual Conference, Orlando, FL.
- McCall, C. E. (2017, November). *Renegotiating and communicating about household tasks during reintegration*. Poster presented at the National Council on Family Relations Annual Conference, Orlando, FL.

Whiteman, S. D., Loeser<sup>c</sup>, M. K., Topp, D., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017, April). *Sibling relationships across the deployment cycle: Risk or protective relationships*. Presentation at biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Child Development, Austin, TX.

## Invited lectures, plenaries or presentations

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, January). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Training for My VA staff, West Lafayette, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, January). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Training for Allen Community mobilization members, Ft. Wayne, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, February). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Training for Indiana State Department of Health, Indianapolis, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, March). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Training for Grant County Community mobilization members, Marion, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, April). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Training for Fulton County Community mobilization members, Rochester, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, April). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Training for Military Family and Community Policy staff, Department of Defense, West Lafayette, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, May). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Training for Building Health Military Community staff members, National Guard Bureau, West Lafayette, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, June). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Training for Wayne County Community mobilization members, Richmond, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, July). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Briefing for Kentucky State government officials, Lexington, KY.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, July). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Briefing for MFRI Advisory Council, Indianapolis, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, August). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Briefing for US Navy Joint Reserve Forces, West Lafayette, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, August). *Measuring Communities briefing*. Training for American Red Cross staff members, West Lafayette, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, September). *Measuring Communities presentation*. Battlemind to Home Symposium, Indianapolis, IN.

Broniarczyk, K. (2017, October). *Measuring Communities briefing*. McCormick Foundation grantees for the National Association of Veteran Serving Organizations, Chicago, IL.

Collette, C. (2017, January). *Tier I train the trainer*. Training for SBHP Tier I trainers, Salem, OR.

Collette, C. (2017, February). *JCFI update*. Presentation for Hendricks County Community Mobilization Meeting, Danville, IN.

Collette, C. (2017, March). *Managing crises with veterans: A training program for law enforcement*. Presentation at Critical Incident Training, Lafayette, IN.

Collette, C. (2017, March). *JCFI update*. Presentation for Hendricks County Community Mobilization Meeting, Danville, IN.

Collette, C. (2017, May). *The military and veteran community in Indiana*. Presentation for Probation Officers state conference, Indianapolis, IN.

Collette, C., & Nixon, W. (2017, June). *QPR suicide gatekeeper training*. Presentation for Veteran Services Organizations at Roudebush VA Medical Center, Indianapolis, IN.

Collette, C. (2017, June). *Measuring Communities*. Presentation for JCFI Indianapolis community meeting, Indianapolis, IN.

Collette, C. (2017, June). *Behavioral health professions and the military*. Presentation for the 4-H Military Partnership, West Lafayette, IN.

Collette, C. (2017, August). *Military culture and the legal profession*. Presentation for Problem Solving Court's annual conference, Indianapolis, IN.

- Collette, C. (2017, September). *Military culture and the legal profession*. Presentation for the Indiana State Judicial conference, Ft. Wayne, IN.
- Collette, C. (2017, October). *Military culture and the legal profession*. Presentation at Indiana Military and Veteran Legal Summit, Kokomo, IN.
- Collette, C. (2017, November). *Military culture and the legal profession*. Presentation at Indiana Military and Veteran Legal Summit, Camp Atterbury, IN.
- Ludiker, K. R. (2017, October). *MFRI update and education and employment initiatives*. Presentation to the Big Ten Military & Veteran Peer Group, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.
- MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017, January). *Military-community collaborations: A U.S. perspective*. Presentation at the Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle conference, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
- MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017, January). *Using 'practical rigor' to evaluate U.S. military support programs: Progress report*. Presentation at DoD/NIFA project leader meeting, Arlington, VA.
- MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017, April). *Changing family roles across the deployment cycle: Progress report*. Presentation at program review committee, Fort Detrick, MD.
- MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017, April). *Recent evidence about military children*. Training webinar for Navy Fleet and Family Support professionals.
- MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M. (2017, April). *Outreach and support to military families: Ethnic/cultural considerations*. Training webinar for Defense Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury.
- Runco, L. (2017, February). *Focus Forward: An evidence-based fellowship engaging women student veterans beyond the classroom*. Presentation at NASPA Symposium on Military-Connected Students, Washington, DC.
- Runco, L. (2017, September). *The changing landscape of military connected students*. Presentation at Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success Project Manager's Meeting, Department of Education, Washington, DC.
- Runco, L., & Signore, J. (2017, October). *The impact of processing the post 9/11 GI Bill on school certifying officials*. Presentation at NAVPA Annual Conference, Atlantic City, NJ.
- Runco, L. (December, 2017). *Promising practices in veteran support services: On campus*. Panelist for Operation College Promise, Madison, NJ.

## 2017 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

### **Charlene Austin, M.S.**

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