

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Military Families

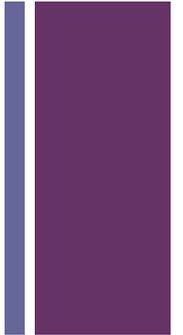
Ariana Bostian-Kentes

President, Military Partners and Families Coalition

Battlemind to Home Symposium III

27 September 2012

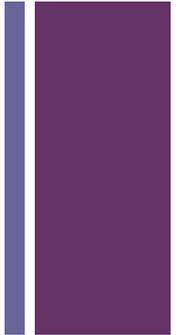
+ Overview



- What We Know
- Brief History of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT)
- Our Journey
- One Year Later: A Soldier's Perspective
- Military Partners and Families Coalition (MPFC)
- MPFC Community Study Survey
- What Can You Do?



What We Know



70,000+

LGB Military Families (Gates, 2010)

16,000+

LGB Military Families with Children
(Gates, 2011)

1 million+

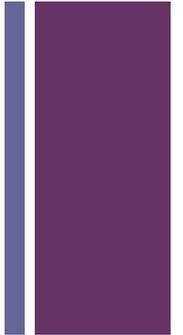
LGB Veterans (Gates, 2003)

+ DADT: A Brief History

- Est. in 1993 as a result of a compromise when President Clinton attempted to lift the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the Armed Forces
- DADT intended to bar from service those who disclosed a Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) identity to others
- Unintended results:
 - Frequently used to investigate and discharge existing military personnel who were *suspected or accused* of being LGB
- Over 14,000 service members were discharged under the DADT policy (SLDN, n.d.)

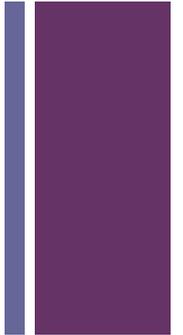
+ Under DADT...

- Families of LGB service members were completely invisible
- Isolation: no formal resources through which to connect with one another or to the military community
 - No access to FRGs or other military family support programs
- Service members were discharged under DADT at the whim of their particular command



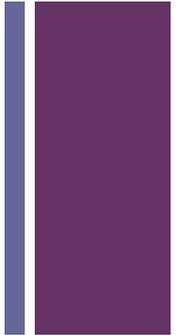
+ Under DADT...

- LGB Families also lacked “human” benefits
 - Unable to attend promotion ceremonies and other military functions
 - Often forced children to lie about their parents’ relationship
 - Unable to attend deployment send-offs and welcome-home ceremonies
 - Civilian partner also forced into a “closet”

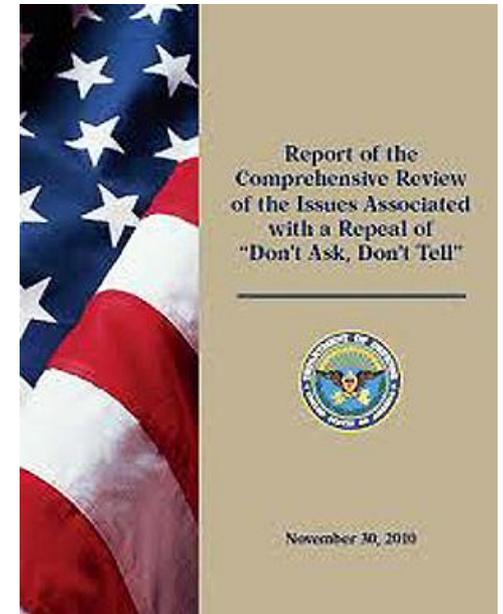


+ Under DADT...*and* currently

- LGB partners and families ineligible for the spousal benefits awarded to every other military family
 - TRICARE
 - Military-subsidized life insurance
 - Legal services
 - Deployment separation pay
 - Surviving spouse benefits
 - Family-rate housing allowance
 - Adequate funds for PCS
 - Military dependent ID card for base/post access
 - Child care
 - Commissary, gas, veterinary services, etc.



+ Our Journey



- This is the true story of 11 strangers...picked to testify before the DoD Comprehensive Review Working Group...

+ Celebrating *ALL* Military Families

- Sept 20, 2011: Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell





What We Know

- LGB Military Families are stepping out of the shadows...



And they need our support.



+ MPFC History & Mission

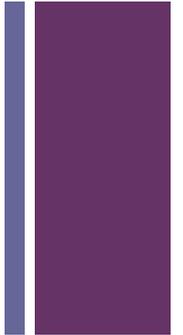
Military Partners and Families Coalition (MPFC) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C.

MPFC was founded in 2011 by a group of partners of active duty U.S. Armed Forces service members.



MPFC provides support, resources, education and advocacy for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender military partners and their families.

+ What We Do



MPFC provides:



- Support
- Resources
- Education
- Advocacy

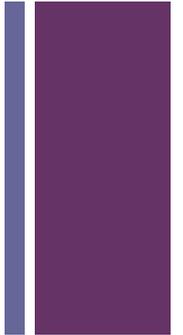
+ Support

■ MPFC Battle Buddy Program

- Is your partner deployed and you need support?
Can you offer support to deployed families?
Let MPFC connect you.

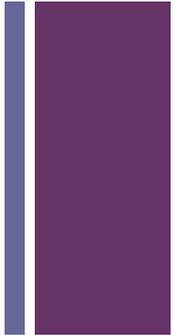
■ MPFC Virtual Family Meetings

- Safe-space video chat discussion for LGBTA Military families
- Professionally-facilitated
- Different topics/guest speakers each month
- Next one:
TONIGHT 7pm ET with guest speaker, Kathy Moakler of
National Military Families Association



+ Support

- MPFC events around the country
 - Brunch in D.C. ~ potluck in North Carolina ~ baseball game in Detroit ~ camping trip in Bethesda ~ family picnic in San Diego, and more!



+ Support

■ Presence at military events:

- Homecoming parades ~ Hiring Our Heroes fairs ~ military family support groups ~ Army Ten-Miler ~ White House Military Family Garden Tour



White House Fall Garden Tour, 2011

+ Support

- Presence at LGBT Pride events across the country
 - DC Capital Pride ~ NYC Pride ~ Atlanta Pride ~ San Diego Pride ~ Richmond VA Pride ~ Raleigh NC Pride ~ Motor City Pride ~



- First Annual Pentagon Pride!



+ Resources

■ www.milpfc.org



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Military Partners and Families Coalition (MPFC). The website features a dark blue header with the MPFC logo and name. Below the header is a yellow navigation bar with links for ABOUT, COALITION MEMBERS, NEWS, RESOURCES, EVENTS, CONNECT, CONTACT, and a red DONATE NOW button. The main content area includes a large banner image of a woman and child, a "STAY INFORMED" section with a newsletter sign-up form, and sections for "Latest Tweets" and "UPCOMING EVENTS".

MPFC
Military Partners and Families Coalition

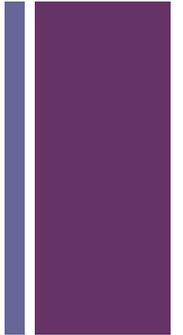
ABOUT COALITION MEMBERS NEWS RESOURCES EVENTS CONNECT CONTACT DONATE NOW

STAY INFORMED
Sign up to receive our e-newsletter.
Subscribe to Updates

UPCOMING EVENTS
September 27, 2012 10:45 am
2012 Battlemind to Home III Symposium
September 27, 2012 7:00 pm
MPFC Virtual Family Meeting w/ Kathy Moakler of the National Military Families Association

- Information on current available benefits, employment, mental health resources, policy information, more

+ Resources



- Our coalition as a resource
 - Created partnerships with national and local organizations that provide services inclusive of *all* military families
 - NMFA
 - Operation Purple
 - SLDN/OutServe
 - Blue Star Families
 - National Military Spouse Network
 - Military Acceptance Project
 - Hiring Our Heroes
 - eMentor online networking program
 - PFLAG



+ Education

- Workshops/panels at various conferences
 - OutServe International Leadership Conference
 - Michigan Military Family Support Forum
 - OutServe Summit: Our Families Matter
 - Battlemind to Home Symposium III !
- Faces of Our Families
 - Sharing our military families with one another and the greater community
 - Raising the visibility of LGB military families
 - Storytelling as an educational tool

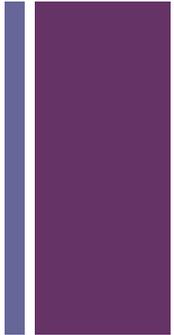


+ Advocacy

- Advocating for our military families
 - MPFC consulted as subject matter experts on policy proposals by White House, DoD
- Pool of families prepared to speak to various media outlets on issues they face



+ Advocacy



■ MPFC Community Study Survey

- Funded by an award from the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services
- First survey to focus on the health and mental health needs of the LGBT military community
- Will be used as a resource for further studies we can use to advocate for creation and development of programs to meet the needs of our families



Deployment
Goodbye & Separation

Reintegration
Reunited & It Feels So

Marriage & Family
The Military Nest

Military Life
The REAL Version

Career &...
Yes You Can!



New Survey Seeks to Help Gay MilFams

(24)

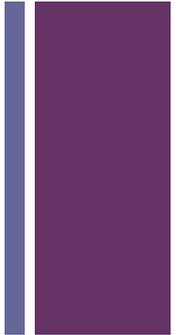
April 04, 2012, in *Marriage & Family, Spouse & Family News* by Amy Bushatz

Like 13 Tweet 6 +1 0 Share 3

A gay and lesbian support organization is asking troops with same-sex partners to take an online survey aimed at gauging what care and benefit challenges the repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell has left behind, [this story reports](#).



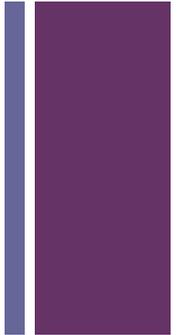
MPFC Community Study Survey



■ Preliminary results and themes

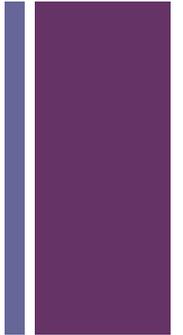
- A majority of respondents feel that coming out would put them and their families at risk of negative reactions from the military community
- While sexual orientation (S.O.) is not a strong factor when it comes to deciding whether or not to seek *physical* health care, it is a factor in whether or not to seek mental health care
- While most know where to go to receive mental health care within the military, far fewer feel that the military has programs and services that would be helpful to them personally
- Self-identified people of color tended to be less comfortable having conversations with their healthcare provider about the unique needs they may have as a member of the LGBT community

+ MPFC Community Study Survey



- Qualitative responses:
 - spoke of challenges of working with healthcare providers who are “methodologically and emotionally unprepared to serve the needs of LGBT service members”
- If service member stays in the closet, their family does too
- Lack of LGBT-specific resources for service members and their families
 - Resources to address added challenges of stress caused by minority status
- General apprehension to disclose sexual orientation and a transgender gender identity to providers
 - Lack of disclosure can be detrimental to health and well being

+ MPFC Community Study Survey



- DOMA prevents further progress in gaining equal rights and benefit parity for LGB service members and families
 - Affects personal and professional success
 - Extra burden of having to worry how to provide for a family
 - Affects mission focus
 - One of the most commonly expressed sentiments:
“Make sure my family is taken care of so I can focus on my mission.”
 - Employment is even more critical to an LGB military partner since no access to service member’s health care
- To the military, as a partner you are officially a “nobody”



+ What's to come...

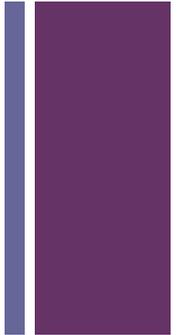
■ NCCOSC Collaboration

- The Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control (NCCOSC) is a directorate of the US Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and is tasked to improve the psychological health of Sailors and Marines
- Building on the MPFC survey results, NCCOSC is developing a study of psychological health issues related to the LGB community within the military





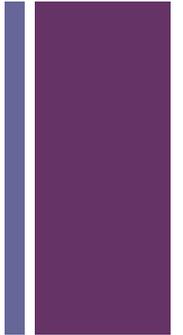
What Can You Do?



- How can providers take action?
- Develop continuing education opportunities around LGBT issues
 - Do a training around LGBT cultural competency
 - Connect with a local LGBT center or university resource office
 - Provide opportunities to earn CEUs
- Create an LGBT+Ally group at work to discuss current issues
- Simply ask people what they need and how you can help...then listen



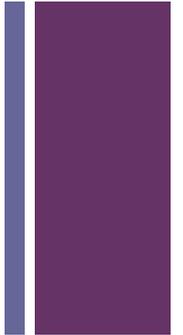
What Can You Do?



- Don't assume that LGBT people will know they're included in the services you provide
 - Disclose how your practice operates and make mention of being LGBT-affirming (to everyone)

- Be intentional about showing you're affirming and inclusive of everyone
 - Could be as simple as displaying a rainbow or ally sticker
 - Creating an LGBT-specific section on your website
 - Using inclusive language and not making assumptions when working with someone
 - E.g. "partner" or "spouse" instead of boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife

+ What Can You Do?



■ Stay informed!

- Subscribe to newsletters, read blogs, visit websites of relevant orgs, find places that will deliver trainings

- MPFC

- milpfc.org

- SLDN

- sldn.org

- OutServe

- outserve.org

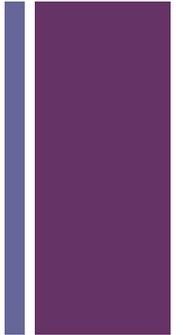
- Human Rights Campaign

- hrc.org

- University of Michigan Spectrum Center

- Spectrumcenter.umich.edu

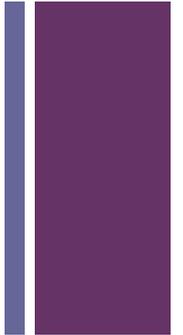
+ Other Ideas?



- What can **you** do within your profession to promote acceptance and inclusion of LGBT military families?



Thank you!



■ Questions? Comments?

**ASK,
TELL**

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