



BUILDING YOUR BATTLE PLAN: GET TO KNOW YOUR MILITARY COMMUNITY

More than 2.1 million service members defend our nation in every state and territory of the nation and over 115 countries worldwide. Along with members of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force, both active duty and reserve component, are nearly 2.7 million family members: spouses, children, and adult dependents.¹ And while these numbers and numerous locations show the enormity of developing and delivering a system of support for this population, the reality is this system must broaden its scope to include “unrecognized” unmarried partners, parents, siblings, other relatives, and friends who comprise the service member’s circle of support.

Since the early 1980s, leadership in the Department of Defense (DOD) acknowledged that DOD personnel and their families have been the most valuable resource to ensure a national defense strategy. Policies and programs reflected this acknowledgement. However, after 9/11 and ensuing years of prolonged combat, steps were taken to revamp and update what had been provided to troops and their families. In 2012, leaders published a revised policy to define military family readiness and outline requirements for the Military Family Readiness System (MFRS).

The MFRS is a network of agencies, programs, services, and individuals, and the collaboration among them that promotes the readiness and quality of life of for every service member and family members. In order for the MFRS to function optimally, it must be based on an integrated social service delivery model through which individual and families can easily and seamlessly access any service or combination of services they may benefit from or need at any time. In a perfect world of family support, the DOD, the military services, and local community agencies work together to connect military families to the right support, meeting their imminent needs and gaining trust for future intervention.

Did you know?

- Over 70 percent of military families live off of installations in civilian communities.
- Approximately 92 percent of military school-aged children attend public schools.
- In a recent Blue Star Family survey, only 19 percent of respondent felt the general population understood the sacrifices made by service members and their families.

Practical applications

- For the MFRS to be fully realized, all organizations and collaborators who provide services must view themselves as part of the overall system and engage with other agencies that are a part of the MFRS.
- When a military family enters the system through any organization, it must be aware of and consider other MFRS services that could benefit the family.
- Be prepared to make trusted referrals and follow-up to ensure the family’s needs are met.
- Reach out to other MFRS organizations and provide your referral information.
- Stay current on the services and resources provided by organizations within the MFRS to ensure referrals are appropriate.
- Stay current on the changing needs in your military community.

Additional resources

- **Military Installations** is a website that provides contact information for programs, services, maps and directions, links to comprehensive location overview and community points of interest for military installations worldwide. Family Support Centers on military installations provide a variety of support services for families. Community agencies may want to get to know their military community by reaching out to staff at the Family Support Center. installations.militaryonesource.mil

¹ 2017 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community

- **Military Family Learning Network** is a key professional development resource for DOD and civilian helping professionals to exchange experiences, resources, and research to enhance professional impact and growth. Concentration areas include Community Capacity Building, Family Development, Family Transition, Military Caregiving, Network Literacy, Nutrition and Wellness, and Personal Finance. militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org
- **Military REACH** supports the DOD's provision of high-quality support to military families by bridging the gap between research and practice. Their mission is to make research accessible and practical by critically evaluating and synthesizing research that speaks to issues of family support, resilience, and readiness. Military REACH identifies trends and practical application of that research and delivers research summaries and action-oriented implications to military families, direct service helping professionals, and those who work on behalf of military families. militaryreach.auburn.edu
- **Military OneSource** (MOS) is uniquely positioned among all other military family support services in that it offers 24/7/365 access to consultants with master's degrees who are trained in providing support services to military families. MOS provides free, convenient access to confidential support in person, online, or phone. militaryonesource.mil
- **Community Capacity Building** (CCB) strategies, curriculum, and readiness tools are available for both DOD family support personnel and civilian helping professionals to prepare for cross-collaboration among organizations to encourage a holistic approach to serving military families' needs. The goal of CCB is to increase the ability of people to take care of each other and take care of their community. Online training modules are available. <https://myhub.militaryonesource.mil/MOS/f?p=SIS:2:0>
- **Joining Community Forces** focus the efforts of local providers with a common goal to strengthen the local military community. Because Community Forces work in communities around the country, they are uniquely positioned to find and consolidate the best local resources, and that means providing better and faster assistance to service members, military families, and veterans when they need it. joinservicessupport.org/communityforces
- **National Resource Directory** is a resource website that connects wounded warriors, service members, veterans, their families and caregivers to programs and services that support them. It provides access to services and resources at the national, state, and local levels to support recovery, rehabilitation, and community reintegration. nrd.gov
- **Measuring Communities** is a social indicators tool designed to help shape community efforts that support military and veteran families developed by the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University. Diverse, reliable, and nationally representative datasets help to provide military-specific information in 10 domains to provide valuable data to complete a holistic view of how military and veteran families can be assets to their community and in parallel, how the community can support this population. The ultimate goal of Measuring Communities is to encourage community action, helping communities track their progress, and sustain attention to military issues. measuringcommunities.org
- **How to Help Military and Veteran Families** by the MFRI is a series of publications that offer information and resources to specific audiences to help them assist and support military and veteran families within their area of expertise. www.mfri.purdue.edu/howtohelp
- **Cooperative Extension System** (CES) In partnership with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), CES translates research into action bringing cutting-edge discoveries from research laboratories to those who can put knowledge into practice. CES is a nationwide, non-credit educational network that addresses public needs by providing non-formal higher education and learning activities to farmers, ranchers, communities, youth, and families. There are offices in or near most of the nation's approximately 3,000 counties. Extension agents support the needs of their counties, to include supporting military families. extension.org

For more information

- Department of Defense Instruction on Military Family Readiness (DODI 1342.22) www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/Issuances/dodi/1342.22.pdf
- Military Family Readiness Council Reports to Congress prhome.defense.gov/MRA/inside-M-RA/MCFP/Reports
- Demographic Reports www.militaryonesource.mil/reports-and-surveys/demographic-profiles

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