

BARBARA THOMPSON
EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH
ON MILITARY AND VETERAN
FAMILIES AWARD



Military Family Research Institute

The Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University established the *Excellence in Research on Military and Veteran Families Award* in 2015.

The goals of the award are to:

- » bring visibility to issues of military and veteran families generally, and to outstanding new research specifically;
- » increase the impact of rigorous scientific evidence on programs, policies and practices affecting military and veteran families;
- » strengthen connections between researchers and practitioners interested in military and veteran families; and
- » raise awareness of research about military and veteran families across many disciplines.

The winning paper is selected through a rigorous process. No nominations or applications are accepted, and authors have no idea their work is being considered. Instead, a panel of accomplished scholars examines every relevant article published during the eligible year. Multiple rounds of review include standardized quantitative assessments. In this way, the panel arrives at the final selection.

In 2019, MFRI named the Excellence in Research on Military and Family Veteran Award after Barbara Thompson, who has served military and veteran families for more than 30 years.

MFRI thanks the Association of the United States Army and Military REACH for supporting this award, and joining us in our mission to advance important research about and for military and veteran families.

About Barbara Thompson

Barbara Thompson assumed the duties of director for the Office of Military Family Readiness Policy, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy in 2006 and retired in 2017. She was responsible for programs and policies that promote military families' well-being, readiness and quality of life. In this capacity, she had oversight for Department of Defense child development and youth programs, serving 700,000 children daily at more than 300 locations worldwide.

Thompson had purview over military family readiness programs, including spouse career advancement, military family life cycle and transition support, community capacity building supporting geographically dispersed military members and their families, the Family Advocacy Program, and Exceptional Family Member Program. She also coordinated programs for the severely injured and supported the rebuilding of the Ministry of Education in Iraq.

Thompson is continuing her leadership in the military community by advising multiple national organizations, including MFRI.



About AUSA

The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) is the only private, nonprofit professional organization serving all components of America's Total Army and its supporters. Since 1950, AUSA has provided a voice for the Army and vital services for Soldiers, Army civilians, and their families to advance the security of our nation. If you have a connection with the Army—professionally or personally—AUSA is your resource for exclusive access to scholarships and grants, business opportunities, educational resources, philanthropy initiatives, family programs, influential representation, and genuine relationships with a supportive Army community. Join us today at www.ausa.org/join.



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About MFRI

The Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University conducts research on issues that affect military and veteran families and works to shape policies, programs and practices that improve their well-being.

Founded in 2000, MFRI envisions a diverse support community that understands the most pressing needs of military and veteran families. To achieve this, MFRI collaborates to create meaningful solutions for them. This internationally-recognized organization is located at Purdue University's College of Health and Human Sciences, in the Department of Human Development and Family Science.



Military Family Research Institute

mfri.purdue.edu

About Military REACH

The purpose of Military REACH, a partnership between Auburn University and the DoD-USDA Partnership for Military Families, is to bridge the gap between military family research and practice. To facilitate the DoD's provision of high-quality support to military families, our objective is to make research practical and accessible. We do this by producing research summaries with action-oriented implications for our target audiences: families, helping professionals, and those who work on behalf of military families. Our team critically evaluates and synthesizes military family research related to issues of family support, resilience, and readiness. We identify meaningful trends and practical applications of that research, and then, we deliver research summaries and action-oriented implications to our target audiences.



militaryreach.auburn.edu



2023

AWARD WINNER

Mogil, C. Hajal, N., Aralis, H., Paley, B., Milburn, N. G., Barrera, W., Kiff, C., Beardslee, W., & Lester, P. (2022). A trauma-informed, family-centered, virtual home visiting program for young children: One-year outcomes. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 53, 964-979. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-021-01181-y>

Study takeaways

- » Military connected families with 3- to 6-year-old children were randomized to receive either a family-centered, trauma-informed preventive intervention program called FOCUS for Early Childhood (FOCUS-EC) or access to an online parent education curriculum.
- » Families who participated in the FOCUS-EC virtual intervention program reported significant long-term improvements in child behavior and parenting practices and reduced parent PTSD symptoms compared to those who accessed the online parent education curriculum.
- » Telehealth delivery of FOCUS-EC in this study indicates the potential for in-home virtual delivery of preventive interventions for military-connected families with young children, as well as families with young children facing other types of adversity.

Researcher biography

Catherine Mogil, Psy.D., is an associate clinical professor at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine. Her research focuses on intervention development and implementation strategies to better serve families facing adversity, including infants born into the neonatal intensive care unit, families involved in the child-welfare system, and military-connected children. She is the co-developer of several interventions including Families Overcoming Under Stress (FOCUS), FOCUS for Early Childhood (FOCUS-EC), and Strategies for Early Educational Developmental Success (SEEDS). She co-chaired a NATO Science and Technology task group focusing on the impact of military life on children in military families.

FINALISTS

Cannon-Albright, L.A., Romesser, J., Teerlink, C.C., Thomas, A., & Meyer, L.J. (2022). Evidence for excess familial clustering of post traumatic stress disorder in the US veterans genealogy resource. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 150, 332-337. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2021.12.018>

Study takeaways

- » Genealogical information was studied to see whether PTSD runs in families. A heightened incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among relatives of veterans diagnosed with PTSD was observed. These results suggest that there may be an inherited contribution to PTSD predisposition and identify a powerful resource for assessing PTSD risk in populations.
- » The researchers linked a comprehensive genealogy database with VHA patient records to allow analysis of familial clustering without revealing individuals' identities. The researchers used information about over 70 million individuals and 1 million VHA patients, making it a uniquely large and valuable resource for studying genetic factors in medical conditions, including PTSD.
- » In the future, this resource needs to be completed with additional genealogy data that will link to additional VHA patients. Eventually the database could include information about 300–400 million individuals, including 40–60% of the 13 million VHA patients. This integration would yield profound insights about the genetic components of multiple health issues that veterans encounter.

Researcher biography

Lisa Cannon-Albright, Ph.D., is the program leader of genetic epidemiology, Department of Internal Medicine, University of Utah School of Medicine, Salt Lake City, Utah. She has decades of experience in designing and directing studies of high-risk pedigrees to identify genes predisposing to disease. Dr. Albright has significant experience in building and analyzing genealogical resources linked to medical data to define the heritable contribution to disease and to identify the genes responsible. The VHA genealogy resource she is building was used to identify evidence for an inherited contribution to PTSD.



Cigrang, J. A., Cordova, J. V., Gray, T. D., Fedynich, A. L., Maher, E., Diehl, A. N., & Hawrilenko, M. (2022). Marriage checkup in integrated primary care: A randomized controlled trial with active-duty military couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 90*(5), 381–391. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000734>

Study takeaways

- » Poor marital relationship quality is positively associated with a multitude of negative health outcomes including risk factors for suicide and intimate partner violence. Effective couple therapies exist but are underutilized and reach only a small proportion of couples in need of assistance.
- » Couples who do seek help delay reaching out until their relationship is highly distressed. Primary care services reach a larger number of community members and provide the opportunity to connect with couples earlier.
- » Researchers in this study adapted a brief relationship health intervention, the Marriage Checkup, for use with military couples in an integrated primary care clinic. Couples who received the Marriage Checkup significantly improved their relationship quality compared to a control condition.

Researcher biography

Jeffrey A. Cigrang, Ph.D., ABPP (USAF, retired), earned his doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Memphis and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio. He is board-certified in Clinical Health Psychology. He served as professor in the School of Professional Psychology, Wright State University, from 2014 to 2022 after a 24-year, active-duty career as a clinical psychologist in the United States Air Force. His clinical and research interests are military psychology, primary care integration, and health psychology. In 2023 Dr. Cigrang joined the Hematology & Oncology Service at the Dayton Veterans Affairs Medical Center.



Corry, N. H., Joneydi, R., McMaster, H. S., Williams, C. S., Glynn, S., Spera, C., & Stander, V. A. (2022). Families serve too: Military spouse well-being after separation from active-duty service. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping, 35*(5), 501-517. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2022.2038788>

Study takeaways

- » Compared to families remaining on active duty, spouses whose families transitioned from active duty experienced increased post-traumatic stress symptoms, a steeper decline in marital relationship quality, and less work-family conflict.
- » Families leaving the military before retirement face greater challenges compared to those staying in service, underscoring the need to consider the broad impact of military transition on family dynamics and well-being.
- » In families moving from active duty, observed risk factors to spousal well-being included having young children and the spouse being female, while being the spouse of an officer was a protective factor for post-traumatic stress symptoms, marriage quality and family satisfaction. The strongest predictor of future outcomes was the baseline value of health and relationship quality.

Researcher biography

Nida Corry, PhD, is a principal research scientist at NORC. She is a licensed clinical psychologist and behavioral health researcher with twenty years of experience leading national evaluation and epidemiological studies focused on trauma, military health, and integrated care. Dr. Corry supported the Millennium Cohort Family Study as a co-investigator for seven years. She was also deputy project director of the National Vietnam Veterans Longitudinal Study. Dr. Corry currently supports several large-scale Veteran-focused health surveys, including the VA ASCEND for Suicide Prevention, and leads an evaluation of an ACF-sponsored trauma-informed workforce training initiative. She completed her PhD in clinical psychology from Purdue University and a postdoctoral fellowship at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Fredman, S. J., Le, Y., Renshaw, K. D., & Allen, E. S. (2022). Longitudinal associations among service members' PTSD symptoms, partner accommodation, and partner distress. *Behavior Therapy, 53*(6), 1161-1174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2022.05.005>

Study takeaways

- » PTSD symptoms in one member of a couple are associated with psychological and relationship distress in their romantic partners, especially among active-duty military and veteran couples. Some partners accommodate the service member's PTSD symptoms by altering their own behaviors, which can lead to increased distress.
- » Higher PTSD symptoms in service members led to increased accommodating behaviors in their partners, which correlated with greater depression and reduced relationship happiness. Partners who consistently accommodated, particularly to avoid conflict or due to helplessness, experienced increased depression and relationship dissatisfaction.
- » While this adaptation can strain relationships, couple-based treatments targeting these accommodating behaviors may improve both individual and relational well-being within these families.

Researcher biography

Steffany Fredman, Ph.D., is an associate professor of human development and family studies and psychology and Edna P. Bennett Faculty Fellow in Prevention Research at The Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Fredman conducts research on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and related conditions within a couple/family context, including ways that romantic partner involvement in treatment optimizes outcomes for individuals with PTSD and their loved ones. Dr. Fredman is the co-developer of cognitive-behavioral conjoint therapy for PTSD, a couple-based treatment for PTSD designed to simultaneously treat PTSD and enhance relationship functioning that has demonstrated effects in community, veteran, and active-duty military populations.

Association of the United States Army

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