

The COVID-19 Military Support Initiative (CMSI)

Our nation is facing a public health crisis whose ripples are impacting every aspect of everyday life. Below is a catalogue of the manifold ways in which COVID-19 will likely wreak havoc on our military communities.

FINANCIAL SECURITY

- Employed military spouses are not always salaried; it is possible that many such spouses will lose their jobs and/or be unable to work as a result of the crisis
- Military families are being forced to delay PCS moves, and might suffer from out-of-pocket expenses as a result of rescheduled moves
- Many military families rely on free/reduced-price breakfast and lunch at school to feed their children; school closures might exacerbate military family food insecurity
- Many military families could be displaced by canceled move-orders; some might even find themselves homeless, because they sold their home or gave up a lease in anticipation of moves that are now postponed indefinitely
- The stress and anxiety created by the crisis may aggravate many military family members' pre-existing mental health/behavioral health conditions (e.g. anxiety, depression, substance abuse, etc.)
- Many military families with children who have special needs may lose access to the special education and support services that schools provide

CAREGIVING

- A large percentage of wounded and disabled veterans are in a high-risk category (e.g. over the age of 60, with underlying medical conditions); those who become ill as a result of the virus may require caregiving – thereby increasing the number of military caregivers
- Many military caregivers may neglect their own health and well-being due to increased concern for their vulnerable loved ones

HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Many questions remain unanswered regarding the effects of the outbreak on the military health system; for example:
 - Will Tricare reimburse remote mental health care/telemedicine?
 - Some prescription drugs cannot be ordered by mail; how will DHA and VA accommodate access to such drugs outside of MTFs?
- The outbreak will likely make it difficult for many military family members suffering from mental health/behavioral health conditions to maintain continuity of care

CHILDCARE

- The high costs of childcare will likely be compounded by increased inaccessibility; for example at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, military families are unable to access CDCs; nor are they able to pursue fee assistance programs while maintaining CDC enrollment
- Due to social distancing, families may not be able to pool childcare resources (e.g. babysitting co-ops or shared nannies)

K-12 EDUCATION

- The outbreak may impact the development/learning of many young military children by preventing them from socializing with their peers (a key aspect of early childhood education)
- Students may not have access to remote/virtual learning resources, and parents may not be prepared to educate their child(ren) at home, leading to a decline in students' academic performance and university prospects
- The transfer to online/digital learning may create a mismatch of the school-year and PCS season, insofar as many schools might extend their academic years to make up for lost time during the transition
- Testing cancellations/delays (e.g. of the SATs/ACTs) will likely impact the timelines of many military youth applying to university

MILITARY PERSONNEL & READINESS

- Service members have been infected, and many military families are quarantined overseas; it is unclear how such quarantines will impact readiness
- Many military installations are in lock-down, and only command-approved visitors are being granted access (meaning that in-home providers, etc. might not be allowed on base)
- It is possible that the outbreak will affect deployment and reintegration schedules, adding more unpredictability to an already stressful time for families
- The outbreak may affect military families preparing to separate from the military/retire

