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COVID-19

MILITARY SUPPORT INITIATIVE

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THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE MILITARY AND VETERANS:

WHAT WE LEARNED, AND WHAT WE CAN DO

COVID-19 MILITARY SUPPORT INITIATIVE SPONSORS

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INTRODUCTION

In early March 2020, it became clear that COVID-19 was quickly and dramatically upending daily life for everyone. As the effects of the pandemic multiplied, weeks of new state and local restrictions, emerging and sometime conflicting Department of Defense (DoD) guidance, and growing economic concerns turned into months of social distancing, travel restrictions, furloughs, and impromptu schooling and shelter-in-place orders for non-essential workers. But through all of this one thing remained clear: service members were essential and the mission of defending our nation must continue no matter the risks. Recognizing the incredible strain and confusion this would place upon military families, the Association of Defense Communities and Blue Star Families sprang into action. In a remarkable partnership, they launched the COVID-19 Military Support Initiative (CMSI). CMSI provides a platform for information sharing and tools that supports military families and the communities they call home. Leveraging the expertise and capabilities of the White Oak Collaborative, CMSI quickly became the go-to resource for members of the military community as they grappled with the impacts of the pandemic.

As part of CMSI's outreach, Blue Star Families and the Association of Defense Communities co-sponsored 26 virtual town hall meetings, usually twice per week, with topics ranging from "Working as One Community – Joint Installation-Community Response Efforts" (April 14), to "Addressing Caregiver and Wounded Warrior Needs During COVID-19" (May 19), and "Strategies for Career & Family Post COVID-19" (June 18).¹ Perhaps more important than the topics themselves was the diverse array of panel discussants and participants. The partnership between Blue Star Families and the Association of Defense Communities opened the door to a tremendous number of military and veteran service organizations (MSOs/VSOs), defense industry partners, and government leaders to share views and experiences, often from the "grassroots" level of an Army post or Air Force base. The collegiality fostered during these town halls created a strong, enduring public-private partnership — a partnership that strived to support defense communities and military families in all branches and all ranks, from retired to active to reserve to National Guard.

WORKING GROUPS BACKGROUND

Through continuous polling, weekly CMSI Partner calls, and town hall discussions, five critical themes emerged (K-12 education, financial readiness, installation response, defense community response, and the need to understand what the data was saying about each of these topics). These themes became the foundation for issues to be further discussed and dissected by a multi-sector working group composed of subject matter experts, including some who had not previously been involved in the CMSI effort. Working group invitations (informed by recommendations from the White Oak Collaborative) were distributed to a list of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, ensuring that DoD leaders from across the Office of the Secretary of Defense as well as the military services had a voice alongside not-for-profits and defense industry partners — all in pursuit of a holistic understanding and response to COVID-19 that could better aid and serve military families and the communities in which they live.

The intent of the working group discussions was to better understand how military families and military installations best handled the challenges of COVID-19 — and what could be recommended for improvement now and in the future. In July 2020, approximately 180 people from Blue Star Families’ and the Association of Defense Communities’ diverse partners — leaders from DoD, MSOs and VSOs, academia, think tanks, and industry advocates — met remotely to address the major challenges facing service members and their families during the COVID-19 crisis. Decisions such as the March “Stop Movement” order restricting military families’ movement and challenging financial situations due to increased military spouse unemployment affected — and continue to affect — military families in myriad and often dramatic ways. To better delve into the issue, the CMSI leaders organized five working groups to observe top challenges and devise potential policy recommendations and solutions.

Working groups included subject matter experts and key leaders from non-profit, government, and corporate sectors. Additionally, a number of senior spouse leaders from the military services partook in the working groups, adding a valuable perspective and helping ensure that the challenges felt in active-duty military communities were accurately recorded and understood by those leading them. Meetings were recorded and each breakout group was assigned at least one note-taker. The opportunity to “dig into” the issues proved invaluable, and although the groups only met for a short amount of time, they were able to rapidly identify and address the most pressing concerns.

As a result of these cross-cutting discussions, CMSI has a cogent, tangible set of policy ideas and recommendations based on real-world and real-time problems. The working groups’ discussions, takeaways, policy ideas, and recommendations are documented in this white paper. The value of this format was in convening a diverse set of stakeholders and participants with diverse backgrounds, expertise, and experiences. For that reason, not every participant or organization may fully support all policy ideas and recommendations herein; however, these innovative approaches can be used as a launching point for longer-term policy discussions to address acute and systemic issues.

WHITE PAPER ROADMAP

Blue Star Families facilitated Data Analysis, K-12 Education, and Financial Impacts on the Military Family; the Association of Defense Communities facilitated Installation Management and Partnerships, and Installation-Community Crisis Response. The five working groups are organized as follows:

- I. Data Analysis
- II. K-12 Education
- III. Financial Impacts on the Military Family
- IV. Installation Management and Partnerships
- V. Installation-Community Crisis Response

Each of the five working groups devised “Actions for Consideration” in hopes that these points will inspire real and lasting change in military communities to ensure service members and their families are better served in future crises.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The effects of the pandemic showed us — and continue to show us — that military families need support and potential policy prescriptions. The following themes *transcend* the topics of the five individual working groups and are a helpful place to start:

- The power and reach of public-private partnerships is key for the success and welfare of military families and their associated communities, whether on or off a military installation.
- The many effects of COVID-19 have significant implications for military personnel and readiness policies. From dwindling spouse employment opportunities and the increasing challenges of finding adequate day care, to the difficulties of permanent change of station (PCS) moves, COVID-19 highlighted problems in military communities that already existed and were magnified by crisis pandemic conditions.

The effects of COVID-19 on military families showed how crisis response mechanisms work — or do not — within the military community. The effects also showed that some of the major topics, such as access to child care, financial resilience in difficult times, and community support “outside the fence line,” need to be addressed before the next crisis so that some of the stressors on military families are better mitigated in advance.

WORKING GROUP I: DATA ANALYSIS

One of Blue Star Families' strengths is its commitment to a data-driven understanding of military families' hardships, successes, and reactions — the panoply of experiences from military life. This in-house applied research expertise, paired with a robust network eager to support survey fielding on short-notice, enabled Blue Star Families to launch a continuous polling effort with 24 hours' notice. Ultimately, two major research efforts were funded under the auspices of CMSI itself: the frequently cited Pain Points Poll, which was conducted over the course of 10 weeks starting in March 2020, and the Resilience Under Stress Survey (RUSS).¹

Blue Star Families had over a decade of data from its annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey (MFLS) to understand military life before the pandemic; the Pain Points Poll and RUSS were able to illuminate what major issues were and were not exacerbated during the crisis, and these understandings helped provide context for recommendations made during the early days of the pandemic.² Additionally, the Blue Star Families' applied research team sought research conducted by other CMSI partners and thought leaders and collated this collective body of work into a COVID-19 Military and Veteran Research Library available for use by practitioners during and after the pandemic.³ The reports in this research library were the basis for the Data Analysis Working Group.

The Data Analysis Working Group is unique because the findings and recommendations touch all portions of the CMSI working group discussions rather than discrete subjects. As such, the group curated strategic-level takeaways, "Actions for Consideration" and "Top Ten" lists designed for researchers and policymakers interested in looking at high-level takeaways.

WORKING GROUP CHAIRS

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FACILITATORS

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PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- American Red Cross
- Bipartisan Policy Center
- Blue Star Families
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation
- Bunker Labs
- Cohen Veterans Network
- Department of Veterans Affairs – Liaison
- Elizabeth Dole Foundation
- Hiring Our Heroes, US Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)
- Military Child Education Coalition
- Military Family Research Institute, Purdue University
- National Association of Veteran-Serving Organizations
- PsychArmor Institute
- Travis Manion Foundation
- United Services Automobile Association (USAA)

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC UNDERScoreD THE NEED FOR THE MILITARY TO ADAPT TO A 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE, CULTURALLY AND STRUCTURALLY, TO PRESERVE OPERATIONAL AND FAMILY READINESS DURING A NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Permutations of these takeaways were reflected in all other working groups, and additional suggestions for action are included throughout this white paper. Data informing this finding was gleaned from a number of reports, but was most informed by Pain Points Poll questions regarding financial wellness, personnel and readiness, child care, and spouse employment.⁴ The following are high-level, consensus takeaways that should be incorporated into future planning and decision-making by military leaders, policymakers, and other senior decision-makers:

- Child care and military readiness are inextricably linked.⁵
- Virtual work was and is critical to navigating the pandemic, but barriers exist to universal usage.⁶
- The impact of reduced employment among military spouses and veterans will have long-term implications for military and veteran families' financial readiness.⁷

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Military and civilian leaders should identify and help set the conditions for safe and effective use of flexible, non-traditional work and child care arrangements until the threat of the virus dissipates; these adaptations should be tailored to local public health conditions.
- Families should use existing resources to holistically assess their financial situation in the wake of the pandemic.

THE ABILITY TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF MILITARY AND VETERANS FAMILIES IS TIED TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES' CAPACITY TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF THE BROADER CIVILIAN POPULATION

Permutations of these takeaways and policy recommendations are reflected by the conclusions of Working Groups IV and V: Installation Management and Partnerships and Installation-Community Crisis Response as well as a subsection of Working Group II: K-12 Education. This finding was informed by a number of reports, but data from the Pain Points Poll regarding access to local community resources and food insecurity were particularly helpful. Takeaways from this section were also supported by polling conducted by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) and Military Times and later findings from the Resilience Under Stress Survey, which were not available for Data Analysis Working Group participants, but validated the takeaways

and recommendations.^{8,9} The following are high-level, consensus takeaways that should be incorporated into future planning and decision-making by military leaders, policymakers, and other senior decision-makers:

- The COVID-19 pandemic was a unifying event for many communities; there are indications that active-duty, National Guard, and veteran families all have stronger ties to their local communities in the wake of the pandemic.¹⁰
- Currently serving and veteran families benefited from innovative solutions at the local level to reduce food insecurity and address nontraditional food accessibility dilemmas.¹¹
- The pandemic underscored the importance of addressing local inequities such as ability to access virtual resources (internet, devices), access to quality schools, and access to health care.¹²

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Installation commanders, local leaders, and resource providers should use this experience as an opportunity to preserve and continue to build common understanding across the civil-military divide. Case studies, such as those explored in Working Groups IV and V, can serve as a basis for the start of these discussions, but every installation should take time to document activities that supported a successful response or hindered it. Installation leaders should seek to immediately build upon relationships with local communities, now and once the crisis abates. These lessons should be systematically collected by the DoD and included for future reference as part of an After-Action Review.
- Military and civilian leaders should ensure equitable, virtual access to high-quality services such as telehealth and schooling.

DESPITE CLEAR GUIDANCE AT THE HEADQUARTERS LEVEL, THERE WAS STILL INCONSISTENT INTERPRETATION AND COMMUNICATION OF GUIDANCE ISSUED AT THE LOCAL INSTALLATION LEVEL, WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO A SENSE OF GENERAL UNCERTAINTY AMONG SOME SERVICE MEMBERS AND FAMILIES

“Inconsistent interpretation and implementation” or “general uncertainty” with regard to the military itself rose to the top as common themes in multiple breakout groups during the Data Analysis Working Group, and although permutations of it were indirectly discussed or implied in nearly all other working groups, these issues were only directly addressed by the Data Analysis participants. Some working group participants were concerned about the degree to which DoD did not employ mechanisms to ensure a coherent, consistent response while providing for a reasonable adaptation to local conditions.¹³ Both the Pain Points Poll and the Resilience Under Stress Survey directly support these assertions, in both quantitative and qualitative

responses, as do anecdotal stories in the media and Inspector General complaints.¹⁴ The following are high-level takeaways which should be considered by military leaders, policymakers, and other senior decision-makers; while we are confident in these assertions, because they were not directly raised in every breakout group, they are not considered here to be “consensus” findings.

- Inconsistent implementation guidance and communication existed from installation to installation and within installations.¹⁵ Despite general satisfaction with installations’ responses and communication, perceptions of a “poor” installation response was associated with higher stress levels among service members and their families.^{16,17, 18}
- Secondary and tertiary impacts from the “Stop Movement” order led to unexpected financial and morale impacts for military families.¹⁹
- Some service members are concerned about how the pandemic will impact their likelihood of receiving a fair evaluation of their performance in their current position and their ability to spend down funds before the end of the fiscal year.²⁰ Internally, working group participants also identified anecdotal concerns about the downstream security clearance concerns arising from personal financial challenges directly attributable to the pandemic. These concerns were addressed by the National Counterintelligence and Security Center on March 23; however, because there was an abundance of information being shared during that time, the extent to which affected service members were aware of the guidance is unclear.^{21, 22}

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Military and civilian leaders should conduct a comprehensive After-Action Review at the installation and national level, including focus groups and surveys of service members and their families, to identify best practices for the future. It should include an expansive review of child care, the impact of school closures on family readiness, Family Care Plans, defining “Mission Essential” personnel, clarifying the second-order effects on training and fiscal spend-down requirements, and use of National Guard personnel.
- Military leaders should reassure service members and their families early and often that they will not be held personally or financially accountable for challenges caused by an unforeseen national emergency.²³

REDUCING UNCERTAINTY AND ADDRESSING INCREASED STRESSORS MAY ALLEVIATE THE INTENSITY OF COVID-19 IMPACTS ON MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES' MENTAL HEALTH

Many of the issues discussed in all working groups — such as exacerbated financial woes, the “digital divide” furthering inequities, and the uncertainty created by the “Stop Movement” Order — have implications for mental health. Organizations such as the Bob Woodruff Foundation correctly predicted severe mental health consequences for veteran families, and it is well-proven that stress and uncertainty exacerbate mental health and wellness concerns.^{24,25} Additionally, working group participants raised concerns about the secondary effects that children’s mental health might have on the readiness of service members.²⁶ As anticipated, these concerns were identified by respondents to CMSI research efforts and have been documented within civilian populations throughout the course of the pandemic.²⁷ For example, an average of 23% of military family respondents “without a pre-existing depressive disorder or anxiety diagnosis now have symptoms,” according to the Pain Points Poll.²⁸

Since military communities across the United States are currently living in pandemic conditions and feeling the economic pinch, defense leaders need to continue to mitigate the effects on military families. Furthermore, in the instance of another crisis mirroring the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders should think “left of the bang” by proactively preparing for the mental health consequences of the crisis before it happens and by mitigating potential stressors for military families.²⁹ Pain Points Poll respondents identified strategies such as the authorization to telework and/or work flexible hours, and having supportive commanders as actions that effectively supported their family as they navigated increased child care demands. Having a plan, support structures, and set of clear guidelines in place prior to the next crisis is necessary to ameliorate the uncertainty which emerged during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.^{30,31} Leaders can also proactively encourage and normalize use of high-quality mental health care resources early and often, whether before, during, or after a crisis.³²

Since the Data Analysis Working Group touched on almost every topic discussed by the subsequent four working groups, the facilitators decided to carefully and methodically list “the 10 things we know about the impact of COVID-19 on military and veteran families” and “10 unanswered questions” — important discussion points for moving forward now and in the post-pandemic space.³³ For policymakers, advocates, military and civilian leaders — all in the business of taking care of service members and their families — the Data Analysis Working Group’s “Top 10” lists are the ideal place to start when incubating and growing contingency plans on and around military installations.

TOP 10 THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES

1. Military and veteran families reported increased stress and incidence of mental health symptoms.³⁴
2. Unemployment increased among veterans and military spouses.^{35, 36, 37}

3. Like their civilian counterparts, female service members and military spouses faced greater child care challenges than their male colleagues.³⁸
4. National Guard and active-duty service members and families experienced and continue to experience the pandemic differently.^{39, 40}
5. Pre-existing concerns regarding gaps in military children's education have been exacerbated by school restrictions and closures.^{41, 42, 43}
6. Military and veteran families experienced disruptions to their health and mental health care, which contributed to an increasing backlog of care needs.^{44, 45, 46}
7. Military service branches and installations differed and continue to differ in precautions, interpretation of guidance, and policies.^{47, 48, 49, 50}
8. Despite increased availability of telehealth services, stigma continues to deter military family members from seeking mental health care.⁵¹
9. Caregivers faced increased responsibility with less support.⁵²
10. Military spouses are teleworking at lower rates than service members, veterans, or DoD civilians.⁵³

TOP 10 UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

1. Has the COVID-19 pandemic helped increase employers' willingness to offer flexible employment options, such as telework and flexible schedules, especially for military spouses?
2. What have families found to be the most effective alternative child care arrangements?
3. How does the military community's experience with COVID-19 compare to civilians' experiences, particularly with regard to caring for children?
4. What groups were and are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 (e.g. geographic locations, occupational groups, age/rank, those who recently enlisted, racial/ethnic minorities, etc.)?
5. What changes or shortfalls have caregivers experienced?
6. Is telehealth comparable in quality to in-person health care (particularly among providers without past telehealth experience)?
7. How is military families' access to state-level benefits and services affected if they are not residents in the state of record?
8. Are caregiver families earning less income due to reducing employment due to exposure concerns or lack of services (respite, child care, education)? If so, how much?
9. What impact, if any, does the geographic distribution of COVID-19 in the U.S. have on PCS dates and moving in general?
10. How many and to what extent are transitioning service members (separating or retiring) struggling as they exit the military due to the shortage of resources, classes, appointments, etc.?

WORKING GROUP CHAIRS

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FACILITATORS

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PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Blue Star Families
- Military Child Education Coalition
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network's Military and Veteran Families Program
- National Math and Science Initiative
- Our Military Kids
- Partners in PROMISE
- Tutor.com
- USAA
- United Through Reading

WORKING GROUP II: K-12 EDUCATION

Schools play a critical role in our collective ability to operate as a society. As Michael Griffith, senior researcher and policy analyst at the Learning Policy Institute, put it: "The pandemic and resulting school closures have made clear the essential role schools play in the lives of students, families, and communities. Besides their core role of advancing learning, they have fed millions of children and families, provided computers and connectivity to those without, and — in many cases — enabled child care for essential workers."

The K-12 Education Working Group endeavored to identify lessons learned, promising practices, and recommendations for policymakers and military/civilian leaders seeking to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on approximately 1.2 million school-aged military children.¹ The working group split its discussions and analysis into five major sections: social and emotional well-being, school transitions, access to learning, learning gaps, and individual education plan (IEP) and Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) special education. As mirrored by other CMSI working group discussions, the K-12 Working Group discovered that many of the COVID-19-related impacts on education were pre-existing and enduring problems in the military community. The pandemic has helped to shine the spotlight on some of the challenges facing military children — challenges exacerbated by COVID-19 conditions.

CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION IS KEY TO SUPPORTING STUDENTS' SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Routines and communication are important for students, parents, and schools, and will help lower anxiety for kids and parents. The COVID-19 pandemic shattered family and school routines across the country, making way for new work-at-home and virtual schooling models — particularly difficult for single military parents, dual-working, and dual-military families.^{2,3} Especially during crisis, messaging from schools needs to be routine, detailed, easily accessible, and in a consistent format. There are many ways for schools to share information, but the key to success during a crisis such as COVID-19 is consistency.⁴ Open, age-appropriate communication between parents and children helps to set expectations, provides an opportunity for challenges to be discussed, and can help validate a child's feelings.⁵ Transparency between families and schools can help provide peace of mind for all parties involved, and the working group agreed that parents “need a voice” and ways to communicate the difficulties (or successes) of children working under entirely new educational circumstances.⁶ Military children in particular, whether new to a school, trying to make connections after a pandemic PCS move, or during a deployment, need special attention from teachers and administrators during the crisis.^{7, 8}

During the COVID-19 pandemic, without regular social interaction, in-school physical education, and school-sponsored extracurricular activities, children's emotional and physical well-being demands extra attention.^{9, 10} Over the 10-week polling period, Pain Points Poll respondents with school-aged children reported increasing concern regarding their children's behavioral changes due to their child's inability to socialize with peers; in week one, 48% reported behavioral changes in their child(ren) and by week 10 this had increased to 65%.¹¹ The challenge for schools operating in a virtual setting is to continue to bolster the social-emotional learning of children and to help them find connections.¹² Frequent check-ins between schools, teachers, and families can help provide an indication of how the child is doing at key intervals throughout the school year.¹³ Harvard's Graduate School of Education devised an online “COVID Check-In Survey” for various technological/educational platforms, such as Google Classroom, that can help teachers engage “and foster a sense of belonging” despite the challenges of online learning and communicating.¹⁴ Understanding that a crisis like COVID-19 brings on stress of various levels within family units, schools need to anticipate such stress and plan for school outcomes in the classroom.¹⁵ While parents and students are feeling the stressors of COVID-19, so are teachers and staff. School employees need permission from school leaders to introduce flexibility in their personal and professional lives to support whole family mental health.¹⁶

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Parents and teachers should pinpoint alternative options for making connections, particularly for recently relocated military children who may not have an outlet to make social connections. Ideas proposed (or anecdotally observed) by breakout group participants included virtual hang-outs, outdoor (socially-distanced) band or other extracurricular gatherings, virtual implementation of the popular “student-to-student” program

to connect current students with incoming military students, and casual agenda-less Zoom “hangouts” where students could gather for a virtual lunch together.^{17,18}

- Parents and teachers should communicate with each other intentionally, consistently, and empathetically to support all parties in this new academic environment; this also provides an opportunity for parents to discuss challenges that may be presented by remote learning.¹⁹ There is an opportunity at the local and national level to conduct a comprehensive After-Action Review to systematically assess what did and did not work in spring and fall of 2020. It should include a communication plan and best practices that are devised in advance and can easily be “taken off the shelf” for short-notice implementation.

PARENTS AND SCHOOLS CAN PROACTIVELY MITIGATE SCHOOL TRANSITION ISSUES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES, THROUGH PORTFOLIOS AND INCREASED FLEXIBILITY

Transitioning to a new school is always fraught with challenges, but for military children changing schools during a pandemic when most classes are still remote, the transition is particularly onerous.²⁰ Parents need to be able to communicate what their students were doing before a school transition and be able to articulate problems and successes from past schools to teachers at the new school. Importantly, parents need to have a copy of school records, know what worked and what didn't work at the previous school, and what classes were taken.²¹ During a pandemic, transitions are particularly difficult since schools had varying grading policies during the last semester or quarter of the 2019-2020 school year and may have started remotely for the 2020-2021 school year. The working group overwhelmingly concurred that military parents need to maintain a portfolio of their children's grades, activities, class descriptions, sports, and volunteer hours so that with every new transition, educators are provided a personalized snapshot of student's strengths and challenges in order to provide immediate support and appropriate placement for military children. With COVID-19, this portfolio is even more significant, especially for graduating seniors looking to apply for post-secondary educational opportunities.²²

“We PCS'd during the virus, so my children have not had any chance to meet new kids. [...] The teachers have done their best to try and include my children, but it is hard to do over a computer.”
– Air Force Spouse*

Lessons for mitigating the impact of these school transitions during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found in historical case studies, such as those documenting the impact of school displacements on schoolchildren in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The RAND Corporation found that though some schools did well in coordinating an effort for students to settle into new schools, there were certain barriers: difficulties communicating with parents, insufficient staff training, burnout among staff or personnel charged with implementing programs, and “balancing the needs of displaced students [transitioning into a new school] with the ongoing needs of preexisting students.”²³ In addition to voicing these same concerns, 25% of active-duty

Pain Points Poll respondents with children reported that “collecting school records and other belongings from the school if schools remain inaccessible” was a top-five concern for closing out the 2019-2020 school year.²⁴ This suggests schools need to allow for extra flexibility in the 2020-2021 school year with regard to enrollment requirements, as many families may have been unable to obtain transcripts or other documentation prior to a recent PCS move. It is unknown how many students were stranded between an old school and a new school due to movement restrictions (e.g. if the “Stop Movement” order went into effect in the middle of a move), but it would be helpful for schools to have a plan in place to allow these children to engage virtually in the event of a future crisis.²⁵

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Provide clear and consistent communication to parents and staff, and take action to prevent burnout among staff (e.g. setting clear expectations and providing flexibility as able) in the 2020-2021 school year.²⁶
- During education-related in- and/or out-processing appointments, it would be helpful if DoD provided all military families with an “education roadmap” (a more comprehensive resource than is currently provided) for military children’s education, consolidating resources from the school liaison officer, the Military Child Education Coalition, the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission, and others; this resource should also be made available online at Military OneSource.²⁷ Such a roadmap, comprehensively and efficiently communicated to families, could empower parents to be the best advocate for their children in the midst of military moves and/or crisis conditions.²⁸

SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES, AND INSTALLATIONS CAN IMPROVE CHILDREN’S EDUCATIONAL ACCESS BY ADDRESSING VIRTUAL LEARNING DISPARITIES

“Our on-base school campuses are closed, but they’ve started providing all students with FREE breakfast and lunch (Mon-Fri @ curbside pick-up), which is helping out A LOT. We cannot afford internet at home so after work I drive the kids to the school parking lot, where we sit in the car while they log onto the school Wi-Fi and work on school assignments.” – Air Force Service Member²⁹

The Data Analysis, Financial Impacts, and Installation Management working groups all addressed access to technology as one of the major difficulties during the COVID-19 crisis. Children attempting to access school curriculum from a myriad of home situations during the months of remote schooling face a range of challenges.³⁰

School districts and cities need to view internet availability as an equity issue and prioritize addressing it by mapping “internet deserts” and funding “fixes” in these areas.³¹ In the civilian population, low-income children, children in rural communities, and children of color tend to have less access to technology and have “lost more learning” during the spring of 2020 than children in different demographic categories.³² There is also a correlation between access to technology needed for distance education and food insecurity; those children “living in homes where there is often not enough food to go around...” are rarely or never able to get online to learn.”³³ The working group noted that open-source demographic data of this nature does not yet exist for military families, but the concern is that the same correlation — food insecurity and access to devices or internet — is mirrored amongst military children.³⁴ Additionally, with at-home school often requiring added school supply expenses for families, some families already faced with financial challenges may be facing a tipping point.³⁵

Some challenges can be met with better information on demographics of military children most affected by access to learning issues, better understanding by teachers and school administrators of these challenges, and better training for parents or caregivers in how to support their children during remote learning.³⁶ “Access” can indicate access to adequate internet bandwidth to perform remote schooling, access to hardware such as Chromebooks or tablets, and access to an individual equipped to support the child should they encounter difficulties (e.g. a parent or older sibling). While available military-specific data is not specific enough to determine what needs are unmet, it is possible to extrapolate that some of the unmet needs may bleed into the “access to technology” issue. In the Pain Points Poll, 26% of Black respondents noted a need for “financial assistance” as an “unmet community need” during the COVID-19 crisis, six points more than white respondents; this was also the only racial/ethnic group to include this in its top three needs.³⁷ In the general population, as the Brookings Institution notes through analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s “Household Pulse Survey,” poor children and children of color have less access to the technological tools needed to perform remote work during the COVID-19 crisis.³⁸

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Researchers studying the effect of the pandemic on the population should include an analysis of military children and families to determine whether or not economically disadvantaged military children and/or military children of color have less access to the technological tools they need to fully engage in a virtual school environment. This may require an expansion of public data collection; for example, working group participants were unable to easily locate publicly available data related to military children participating in free or reduced-cost lunch programs in order to improve understanding of this important issue.³⁹
- Communities should consider implementing (and evaluating the effectiveness of) the following innovative ideas to help combat challenges with internet access:

- Offer locations (with social distancing protocols in mind) with free Wi-Fi access for families if they do not have consistent access at home. Examples include libraries, chapels, community centers, child development centers, etc.⁴⁰
- Explore the prospect of broadcasting lessons via television through the local stations.⁴¹
- Coordinate with local internet service providers (e.g. Spectrum and Comcast) to encourage late fee waivers for existing customers, increased data caps for mobile hot spots, and free services to new customers with K-12 students until the threat of the virus dissipates.
- Offer and distribute course materials, books, and take-home packets that do not rely on internet connections.
- Prioritize assistance to parents (e.g. through training and improved communication about existing resources) to better manage expectations about remote learning.

PARENTS AND SCHOOLS CAN IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS LEARNING GAPS THAT EMERGE DUE TO SCHOOL TRANSITIONS AND NONTRADITIONAL SCHOOLING

Frequent moves and the “learning gaps” — what children may have missed, forgotten, or never learned during this season of upheaval — that emerge from them were of particular concern long before COVID-19.

“Dependent child(ren)’s education” has been a top-five military life issue in Blue Star Families’ 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey (MFLS) for three years in a row, with 50% of active-duty spouse respondents and 38% of active-duty service member respondents identifying it in their top-five issues of concern in 2019.⁴²

According to the same study, “when asked what were the top two issues they would like teachers or staff at their school to receive training on, military family respondents noted a general understanding of the impact of frequent moves on their child (64%) and strategies with how to work with parents to help children fill in educational gaps that have emerged due to moves (57%).”

“[The school] would tell you they are awesome because they require us to use Google Classroom 3x a week to interact and ‘teach’ a class. Have you ever been in a tele-meeting with 15 screaming kindergarteners trying to sing ‘if you’re happy and you know it’ while the teacher plays a guitar? Our school has beautiful programs and curricul[a] on paper but is SO out of touch with the reality for moms/dads who have never homeschooled and who never had any intent on homeschool because we can recognize our own strengths and weaknesses when raising our children.” — National Guard Service Member⁴³

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the concept of “learning gaps” front and center for many children nationwide, regardless of military affiliation. As of this writing (in September 2020), five states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have state-ordered full or regional school closures in effect.⁴⁴ Earlier this year, in March, 45 states ordered full school closures.⁴⁵ And yet, for parents of military children in particular, the idea of another learning gap not directly associated with military life is of great concern. On average, 70% of active-duty family respondents to the Pain Points Poll identified “addressing content gaps in grade level standards” as a top-five concern about completing the 2019-2020 school year.⁴⁶ Among those respondents whose child will be transitioning into a new school for the 2020-2021 school year, 67% reported they were “extremely” or “very concerned” about “addressing knowledge gaps (content or skill) from the 2019-2020 school year.”⁴⁷

One partial solution is to help parents address the learning gaps if they emerge. Training and education can support parents as they navigate the COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 educational environment. Tools to help parents of military children identify whether or not their child is behind, academically or developmentally, could also be of great use.⁴⁸ Ideally, parents will receive robust information on resources available at the school, in the district, on the installation, and in the community. During remote learning, parents need to be confident that what they are helping to teach is age- and grade-appropriate; likewise, training resources need to be made available to parents. During the COVID-19 crisis, many normally scheduled standardized tests were cancelled. Parents can play a part in communicating the deficits that they recognized while schooling at home by documenting their observations and then relaying that information to the education team.⁴⁹ Finally, continuity across all aspects of education, including curriculum and instruction, is crucial to minimize gaps, support key development, and to identify problems early.^{50, 51}

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Researchers and funders should invest in a systematic, nationwide assessment of the extent to which “learning gaps” have emerged in children as a result of the pandemic and school closures. This assessment should include comparative analysis of outcomes for children who may be particularly vulnerable to them — including military children, children of color, children with special needs, and children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Schools who were able to successfully mitigate this concern should be consulted to discern what practices they employed to support their students through this time.
- DoD should continue and expand policies preventing mid-year PCS moves or PCS moves for families with children at specific, pivotal grade levels, or during standardized testing seasons.⁵² Defense leaders should emphasize stabilization wherever possible to ensure continuity in education.^{53,54} This is particularly important for high school seniors, students with special needs, students in career training programs, and students identified as gifted and talented. Education professionals should explore viable options for virtual public schools, which allow military students to stay in their “home school” even after a PCS.⁵⁵

MILITARY STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS FACE INTENSIFIED IMPACTS

*“None. My children have all only been assigned continued work via online methods. Even my child with an IEP was offered no [accommodation] of services. I have decided to register him, and possibly my other two, as a homeschooler for the rest of the academic year.” — Navy Spouse**

As with many of the items discussed by the working groups, COVID-19 exacerbated pre-existing issues and inequities in the military community. Blue Star Families’ 2019 MFLS highlighted a host of issues related to families with children who have special needs or members who were enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP): “[O]ver one-third of respondents who were caring for a child with special needs reported ‘their community [did] not have all the resources their families need[ed]’ and ‘[a] larger proportion of military family respondents caring for a child with special needs ranked ‘dependent children’s education’ as a top-five issue of concern (59%) compared to military family respondents who [were] not caring for a child with special needs (50%).”⁵⁶ Nine percent of families with members enrolled in the EFMP reported “going without care or otherwise bypassing the health care system due to difficulties in obtaining referrals;” 40% indicated they were “unable to obtain a referral and be seen by a specialist in a reasonable amount of time after relocating.”⁵⁷ Suffice it to say, military life is stressful for most military families, but those stressors are compounded for military families who have members with special needs. COVID-19 further complicated this already difficult situation.

Remote schooling, in particular, was difficult for families who have children with special educational needs. Twenty-one percent of active-duty family respondents to the Pain Point Poll reported their child with special needs “had lost access to the special education and support services their school provides;” this figure did not fluctuate or improve over the 10-week polling period.⁵⁸ Thirty-four percent of active-duty family respondents identified “IEP compliance” as a top-five concern regarding completion of the 2019-2020 school year; it was the number two issue even though the question was offered to all families with school-aged children, not only those who reported they had a child with an IEP.⁵⁹

With these preexisting issues and COVID-19 impacts in mind, the breakout group had a broad-ranging discussion regarding potential strategies and helpful practices schools should consider to ease special educational learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. One suggestion was that “decision-making power” regarding children using remote learning and receiving special education services should be moved from the school district itself to the local school.⁶⁰ Another helpful strategy the group identified was the ability for teachers to collaborate and strategize education solutions for their local student population. Some suggested that local schools facilitate small group chats between parents and teachers to increase direct communication, promote transparency, and enable early detection of emerging issues (a strategy also suggested by the breakout session focusing on social and emotional health). Finally, the breakout group echoed sentiments shared by the Data Analysis Working Group — that civilians, (teachers, in this case) can benefit from

knowledge of how COVID-19 impacts military families differently than civilian families, and employ strategies military families use to support all children through this crisis.

For a number of families, military or not, children with special needs lost the one-on-one support they are accustomed to receiving during the normal in-person school year. Some districts opted against providing one-on-one services during the period of remote schooling, causing concern amongst parents that their child with special needs would rapidly lose ground.⁶¹ Some teachers were able to continue one-on-one teaching through the use of online platforms, and some were not.⁶² One strategy discussed to offset the impact of this interruption moving forward was to provide district-level guidance and address limitations to schools to allow one-on-one teaching for some children with special needs. Even with permissions to teach, some schools simply did not have the remote learning experience to support families, and many districts opted to cancel all one-on-one education for children with special needs because they could not support all special needs children.⁶³

On July 5, 2020, working group participant John McLaughlin, the CEO of McLaughlin Advisors (which helps businesses focused on children with special needs), argued in the Wall Street Journal that there is a “simple solution” for military families with children with special needs: “Grant military families portable IEPs that move with them and keep their children’s services intact.”⁶⁴ In practice, this means that a military family would not need to restart the IEP paperwork process every time a child moves to a new school, which could be up to 10 times during the K-12 years.⁶⁵ McLaughlin advocates that the federal government, within pending COVID-19 relief legislation supporting special education, should grant military children this “portable IEP” so that parents do not need to return to the “emotionally draining nightmare of paperwork, meetings, and phone calls” when a special needs child starts a new school.⁶⁶ Currently, federal law states that the IEP process must start fresh every time a child starts a new school.⁶⁷ Another idea propagated by working group participant Partners in PROMISE, is an initiative included in the PROMISE Act that would allow military parents to retain IEPs for six months after a school transition to assist with routine and consistency of services and support.⁶⁸

While there are many unanswered questions surrounding the possibility of a portable IEP for military families, especially in a COVID-19 environment (e.g. whether portable IEPs not only transfer state-to-state but from the remote/digital environment to that of live instruction), this is an innovative policy solution worth exploring in more depth. Whether a portable IEP is feasible or not, continuity of services, to include distance learning, is the priority for military families.⁶⁹

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Designate a representative within each district who can advocate for military families with a student with special needs and/or an IEP. Doing so would assist them in navigating the legal processes and facilitating important conversations with schools.⁷⁰

- Explore funding for a joint Department of Education and Department of Defense Education Activity study on how portable IEPs would look in practice for the military community, and how the initiation of a pilot program could help assess the broader feasibility of the idea. There is a need for more information to inform the decisions to pursue a “portable IEP” or similar framework. There is ample evidence that special educational programs were not working for many military families, and that these issues caused additional stress for those families. The pandemic underscored the need for policymakers and advocacy groups to seriously consider new and innovative approaches that will fundamentally make life easier for children with special needs during the pandemic and well after it end

WORKING GROUP III: FINANCIAL IMPACTS ON THE MILITARY FAMILY

“With the pandemic, trying to manage money with decreased incomes is hard being in separate countries. The uncertainty of shelter-in-place orders, lockdowns, etc., makes it hard to be prepared in both places adequately. Finances are stretched thin. The uncertainty of managing two separate budgets, for stuff in two different countries is impossible with incomes and regulations shifting so quickly.”
— Air Force Spouse¹

For many military families, the second- and third-order effects of COVID-19 are felt in the pocketbook. Whether a young Army family faces housing insecurity due to a COVID-19-related furlough of a working spouse, or an Air Force family struggles to pay for unexpected home-schooling and child care costs while both parents continue to work in key and essential positions. Rather than “throw money at the problem,” the Financial Impacts on the Military Working Group broke down the major financial problems facing military families due to COVID-19, documented priority issues, and brainstormed possible policy solutions. After the working groups met, the “checkbook issues” facilitator added a fifth section on the significant implications for military families of the federal payroll tax deferral.

WORKING GROUP CHAIRS

- Retired Brig. Gen. Michael Meese, American Armed Forces Mutual Aid Association (AAFMAA)

FACILITATORS

- Tina Atherall, Ph.D., PsychArmor Institute
- Retired Brig. Gen. Michael Meese, AAFMAA
- Elizabeth O’Brien, Freedom Learning Group
- Charlie Williams, Armed Services YMCA

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- AAFMAA
- Association of Defense Communities
- Blue Star Families
- Bob Woodruff Foundation
- Bunker Labs
- Dixon Center for Military and Veterans Services
- Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States
- Freedom Learning Group
- Grant Thornton
- Hiring Our Heroes – U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- Military Officers of America Association
- Operation Homefront
- PenFed Foundation
- Prudential Financial
- PsychArmor Institute
- RallyPoint
- USAA

MILITARY FAMILIES MAY REPORT LIMITED FINANCIAL IMPACTS, BUT SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS MAY HAVE SECONDARY EFFECTS

Despite initial concerns that military families' pocketbooks would be hit severely by the combination of spousal job losses, the financial impact of the "Stop Movement" order, and unexpected child care or home-schooling costs, some families actually benefited over time from COVID-19-related incentives and payouts.² Thanks to the CARES Act, many military families received a \$3,900 financial windfall.³ Though families reported "using credit cards to cover necessary expenses during the crisis," the percentage of military family respondents reporting the use of credit dropped from 44% to 20% between the second and tenth week of Pain Points polling.⁴ Policy questions surrounding "checkbook issues" range from "how do we deal with the positives?" to "how do we help those most affected by loss of income and/or increased grocery costs?" In open-ended responses to the Pain Points Poll question "Please tell us more about how this crisis has impacted your family financially, including any success you have had obtaining help, actions you took prior to the crisis that have supported your family, and/or challenges you have had navigating resources/services," the most commonly-cited financial impacts among respondents were loss of income and increased grocery costs, though fewer than 25% of respondents reported such difficulties.⁵

Prior to the pandemic, some evidence suggested service members save less than their civilian counterparts; for example, a recent survey shows that only 43% of military members are enrolled in the Thrift Savings Plan whereas enrollment of federal civilians hovers at 87%.⁶ While there is no comparative data from 2020 to indicate whether or not this remains the case, Resilience Under Stress Study (RUSS) findings do suggest that many families had less credit card debt and more savings in May 2020 than they did one year prior, which is in line with trends among the civilian population over the summer.⁷⁸ In a paired sample of respondents from the 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey and the 2020 RUSS, the percent of respondents who had more than \$1,000 in savings *increased* from 80% to 86%, and the percentage of those that carried credit card debt decreased slightly from 62% to 59%.⁹

The 10-week period of Pain Point polling and the RUSS both demonstrate that most military family respondents were surviving the financial stressors of COVID-19 fairly well, but this statement comes with heavy caveats. Although the Pain Points Poll did not collect rank as a demographic variable, 95% of the RUSS sample was a rank of E5 or above. Furthermore, this data was collected during or soon after the CARES Act stipend was administered (92% of RUSS respondents reported receiving it), and prior to the cessation of supplemental unemployment insurance benefits. Two things, however, are certain: (1) military families with a working spouse whose employment was impacted took a severe financial hit, and (2) a greater proportion of spouses of junior enlisted personnel were employed in sectors disproportionately impacted by the pandemic (such as hospitality and retail).^{10, 11, 12} Given many military families' inability to consistently earn two incomes due to frequent moves, this is a concerning fact with long-term implications (addressed in a later section). Furthermore, reservists and National Guard service members may have consistently lost some expected income with the onset of the pandemic, either through cancelled drilling and training, or by leaving a higher-paying civilian job when activated in response to the crisis; some efforts have been made to alleviate these

concerns.^{13, 14} Despite some of the unique financial challenges facing military families, the demand for assistance from relief societies has actually dropped since the onset of the crisis.¹⁵

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Military families should prioritize financial savings to lessen the financial effects of a future pandemic scenario or other catastrophic event. The target demographic for such an initiative should be those most deeply affected by the financial impacts of the pandemic — junior enlisted families dependent upon two incomes — in order to support resilience and readiness. Although a causal relationship cannot be determined, active-duty respondents in the RUSS who reported “no stress at all” in regard to their family’s financial situation also reported the greatest levels of individual resilience.¹⁶
- Leaders and resource providers should better educate military families on the process of acquiring assistance through available relief societies; the early days of the pandemic showed low usage of vital assets such as the Army Emergency Relief, Coast Guard Mutual Assistance, Air Force Aid Society, and Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society.¹⁷
- Financial training program providers can seek to better understand what information delivery methods make military families feel most comfortable pursuing such education to maximize the impact of available programs. There is an opportunity to leverage technology, data analytics, and other information from public, commercial, and non-profit organizations to identify and advocate for effective communication strategies and programs.
- Schools should identify methods to facilitate delivery of meals to children to maintain access to free or reduced-cost school breakfasts and lunches, even if school is taught in a virtual or hybrid model.¹⁸ Many military children are eligible for and benefit from these programs, which enhance nutrition, reduce family grocery bills, and enhance school participation.

THE “STOP MOVEMENT” ORDER HAD UNINTENDED FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES INITIALLY, INCLUDING DUAL HOUSING COSTS, BUT THESE DISSIPATED OVER TIME

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper’s March 25, 2020, “Stop Movement” order — a sweeping decision to limit the physical movement of members of the military with the goal of “flattening the curve” of the spread of COVID-19 — and subsequent permutations to the order had unintended financial consequences for military families.^{19, 20} Unexpected mortgage or rental costs were the most substantive concerns.²¹ Some military families expecting to move locations with PCS orders were suddenly put on hold, some in the middle of a PCS, stranded between one duty station and the next, or partway through packing their house or apartment with a soon-to-terminate lease. Families reported financial hardship due to fees incurred from breaking or extending

leases, money lost from halting the sale of a house, double mortgages tackled due to travel restrictions from an old home to a new home, loss of down payments or deposits at a follow-on duty station. Some families faced unforeseen transportation costs due to the shipment of vehicles prior to the “Stop Movement” order, and many incurred extra costs for household goods when items had shipped prior to the order.

“Stop Movement” order-related expenses were not always reimbursable. For those doing “do it yourself” moves, or those service members who moved prior to the “Stop Movement” order but before the family and covered the costs of two households, some of the COVID-19-related costs simply came out of pocket.²² A few weeks into the “Stop Movement” order, as service members publicized and reported some of their difficulties, the military services were able to quickly apply solutions such as the Army’s subsidies (“hardship pay and isolation allowances”) for rental cars and housing for those stranded between duty stations.²³ Congressional support was swift for military families as well, with members from both the House of Representatives and the Senate pledging financial support through legislation — legislation which became an amendment to the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act on August 14, 2020.^{24, 25}

As the policy evolved over time and commanders were given more authority to approve exceptions to policy outlined in the Secretary of Defense’s April 20, 2020, modification of the order, families’ financial woes also dissipated.²⁶ In the first week of Pain Points Polling (March 18-24, 2020), 27% of respondents with current PCS orders had accrued “unexpected out-of-pocket expenses as a result of rescheduling [a] PCS” and 21% of those surveyed would be “paying two leases/mortgages within 60 days due to PCS uncertainty.” By week 10, however, (May 20-26, 2020), the percentages of those surveyed had fallen to 8% and 12% respectively.²⁷ Despite the reduction in unexpected out-of-pocket expenses over time as the DoD adapted to the crisis, 54% of active-duty family respondents, on average, had to cancel a previously planned family vacation due to the “Stop Movement” order, which may have resulted in lost deposits and non-refundable costs; responses to open-ended questions in the Pain Points Poll indicates this caused additional financial and emotional stress for some families.²⁸

Finally, several Pain Points Poll respondents to open-ended responses identified secondary and tertiary impacts of the “Stop Movement” order on the real estate market; these responses were usually provided by military families who are also landlords, lamenting the loss of rent they were going to incur due to a military family being unable to move. Others, however, raised concerns about the increased cost of housing near military bases; claims that increased housing costs are a direct result of the “Stop Movement” order are unsubstantiated as of the publication date of this report.²⁹

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- DoD should conduct a comprehensive survey of families who experienced a PCS this year to ascertain whether or not there are additional policy or legislative steps needed to prevent “Stop Movement”-related financial hardship in the future.³⁰ The extent to which DoD and Congressional solutions to financial challenges introduced by the “Stop Movement” order remains unknown, largely because it is unclear how

many families were not fully compensated/reimbursed for expenses incurred and/or are not covered under the recent amendment to the Servicemember Civil Relief Act, which is retroactive to March.

- DoD should create and implement a financial readiness checklist to ensure military families are ready to move or ready to “halt in place” in the instance of another “Stop Movement” scenario.
- Community organizations should proactively plan to help military families logistically or financially in the event of a future “Stop Movement” scenario.

SPOUSE UNEMPLOYMENT IS LIKELY TO INCREASE, BUT GREATER LEGITMACY OF TELEWORK OFFERS A SMALL “SILVER LINING” FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

The military spouse unemployment rate was 24% before the pandemic and has likely increased to 30% or higher because of it.^{31, 32} The challenges of frequent moving, primary child care responsibility, and service members’ operational tempo/frequent travel/inconsistent schedule, compound to create real and lasting barriers to military spouse careers.³³ The silver lining of the COVID-19 crisis is that the general population has learned something that many military spouses already know: “remote work can work.” As many companies consider shuttering their brick-and-mortar offices, the future may be a remote work heyday, which could benefit highly mobile military spouses already accustomed to working from home with frequently changing conditions.^{34, 35} Nevertheless, during the pandemic, Pain Points Polling suggests military spouses were teleworking at lower rates than other groups surveyed — only 32%, on average, reported this to be the case while at least 42% of every other group reported the same.

Reflecting a larger societal shift due to COVID-19, military spouses may feel increased pressure to opt out of the workforce to manage child care and education while their service member is able to continue full-time work.³⁶ Pain Points Poll data supports this assertion — only 15% of military spouse respondents reported their “work had not been impacted”, while 24% of service member respondents said the same. Similarly, 13% of military spouse respondents reported they had or would take paid or unpaid leave to care for children, while only 6% said the same of their service member spouse. The Center for Economic and Policy Research reports that though women are bearing the brunt of COVID-19 child care and education responsibilities, there are “opposing forces which may promote gender equality in the labor market,” namely, a higher acceptance for the flexibility of remote work and more fathers taking on primary child care burdens.³⁷ This “erosion of social norms” may not translate to the military lifestyle, where only 9% to 20% of the active-duty population, depending on branch of service, are female and such burden-sharing by male spouses may be impossible due to job requirements.^{38, 39} Society’s new toward acceptance of remote work due to the effects of COVID-19, however, is a positive effect for military spouses.

Nevertheless, although unemployment among military spouses was exacerbated by COVID-19, it is a challenge unrelated to the pandemic and requires a holistic solution. Root causes of military spouse employment have been and will continue to be service members' job demands (including day-to-day demands and frequent relocations) and child care (affordability and availability).⁴⁰

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Employers should comprehensively survey the workforce, understanding which employees are also full-time caregivers and/or full-time or hybrid home-school teachers. Military spouse employees need flexibility in work schedules and training, as well as agency and input in scheduling.⁴¹
- Employers should assist or compensate employees for technology and internet access for remote work.
- Military leaders should recognize the need for more day-to-day predictability in service members' schedules as a necessary condition for military spouses to function and excel in a chosen career. The effect of service members' operational tempo on working military spouses was a problem before COVID-19; this is a systemic problem that requires a strategic-level solution.⁴²

COVID-19 INTENSIFIED THE PRE-EXISTING CHILD CARE SHORTAGE

Access to quality child care during the COVID-19 crisis is a national problem, not only a military family problem.⁴³ However, financial hardships endured due to unexpected COVID-19-related child care costs show exactly how grueling the experience of attaining or maintaining child care during a time of crisis can be when one or both parents may be "key and essential personnel." Women, who make up the majority of military spouses, are uniquely impacted by the child care crisis, much of which was reflected by the preceding spouse employment breakout. A 2019 report from the Committee for Economic Development stated that about 59% of children under the age of five in the United States participated in regular "care arrangements" by a non-parental provider. Of the child care facilities that care for these 11.8 million children, at least 30% are expected to shutter due to the COVID-19 crisis.⁴⁴ Considering that only 27% of service member and 12% of active-duty spouse respondents who required child care reported they were using on-installation child development centers (CDCs) for full-time care needs in Blue Star Families' 2018 MFLS, it is clear that the national child care crisis does not and will not exclude the military community.⁴⁵

As reflected in Blue Star Families' and the Association of Defense Communities March 24 and 27, 2020, virtual town halls on the topics of the "impact of school closures for military families" and "supporting early child care and education during the COVID-19 crisis," the discussion around military child care is complicated, robust, and ever-evolving.⁴⁶ The COVID-19 crisis exacerbated a problem that most military families already knew: child

care for military families, either on or off an installation, is hard to acquire, difficult to afford without subsidies, and significantly stressful to working parents or those parents in full-time post-secondary school. During the 10 weeks of Pain Points polling, 17% of civilian and military mission essential personnel surveyed were “unable to find or use child care.” Only 28% of female active-duty service member respondents reported that their family’s child care plan did *not* change during the crisis whereas 55% of their male colleagues reported no change. During week five of polling, 54% of active-duty family respondents stated that their family was “currently unable to use [their] normal child care provider.”⁴⁷

On September 1, 2020, the DoD initiated a policy change to ensure that military patrons were better prioritized to receive child care on a military installation (supplanting “lower priority” patrons such as DoD civilians or contractors).⁴⁸ Though this policy change is a promising step forward, it is still a tiny step in the right direction toward major defense childcare reform— reform that was shown to be so desperately needed when the COVID-19 pandemic affected child care facility workers caring for the children of active-duty personnel on installations, and major child care facilities outside installations closed down during statewide quarantine orders. The National Association for the Education of Young Children notes that daycare facilities around the U.S. “lost nearly 70% of their daily attendance in one week during the pandemic, with many saying they could not last a week without getting paid.”⁴⁹

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Installation commanders should treat child care providers as front-line employees and offer incentives for child care workers to stay on staff.⁵⁰ Recruiting and retention tactics for on- and off-installation child care need to be aggressive; similar efforts could be discussed with local community providers. Ideas put forward during the working group to improve retention and recruitment included tuition assistance for CDC staff, and financial assistance and housing preference for family child care (FCC) providers.
- Under DoD’s guidance, each individual service must clearly define “mission essential” as it applies to its civilian workforce, in particular those providing services to families. Additionally, the individual service and installation must clearly articulate what the “mission essential” status means in terms of prioritization in DoD child care facilities.⁵¹
- Schools and resource providers should offer a diverse array of resources to help navigate non-traditional schooling options. Whether those resources include learning pods, “microschools,” or day camps offering tutoring, policymakers focused on both defense and education must consider how to deliver these resources in constructive and effective ways that fit each individual installation and its military community. Considerations include: numbers of special needs children in the community, numbers of low-income and at-risk children, numbers of “essential” or “front-line” workers, and the level of funding required to make a difference during COVID-19, not after the pandemic.⁵² Anecdotal evidence suggests that parents may lack the experience and resources to educate their children at home, in particular the resources to help navigate cognitive and educational support at home when school remains remote.⁵³

- Military leadership (employers) should be remarkably flexible during this time when parents are struggling to care for and educate children, sometimes while working full-time jobs either in the military or elsewhere. Flexibility to telework must be a priority for as many service members as possible while maintaining readiness.⁵⁴ This should also serve as a learning experience for DoD, and each service should collect data as to how much of its force is able to telework, how that number breaks down as to specialties and communities, and how the telework that does occur impacts current, short-term, and long-term readiness.

PAYROLL TAX DEFERRAL, AND POTENTIAL REPAYMENT, IS MANDATORY FOR SERVICE MEMBERS⁵⁵

On August 8, 2020, President Trump issued a memorandum authorizing the deferral of Social Security payroll taxes to ease economic burdens caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁶ Subsequent implementation guidance from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and implementation by Defense Financial Accounting Service (DFAS) has deferred payroll taxes for all military and federal employees earning less than \$8,667 per month.⁵⁷ For the military, that essentially applies to all enlisted service members, warrant officers through CW-4, and officers through O-4 (major/lieutenant commander).

Those individuals affected will see a temporary 6.2% pay increase in their mid-September pay through December 2020 pay. This temporary increase is a deferral of the Social Security payroll tax and individuals will have to repay the same amount over a four-month period from January 1 to April 30, 2021.⁵⁸ For example, majors or lieutenant commanders with 14 years of service will have a \$500 increase in their pay from September to December. However, in January, their take home pay will decrease by approximately \$1,000 because the \$500 deduction for payroll tax will resume and an additional \$500 will be deducted to repay the deferred payroll tax.

DFAS implemented the deferral automatically beginning with mid-month September pay. Neither military nor federal civilian employees can opt out of automatic deferral.⁵⁹ It is possible that Congress could pass a law to forgive the deferred payroll taxes.⁶⁰ If that happens, employees will not have extra money taken out of their paychecks in 2021 (although normal payroll taxes would likely resume).

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Service members and federal employees should be fully informed that Social Security payroll tax is only a deferral of taxes required and, in most cases, they should save the extra payment so they will have a cushion once the deferred payroll tax resumes in January 2021.

- The military community should assist service members with effective savings plans to ensure that they have the resources to repay the deferred Social Security payroll taxes.
- Congress should consider forgiving the deferred payroll taxes to provide additional funds for families to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

WORKING GROUP IV: MAINTAINING INSTALLATION OPERATIONS

WORKING GROUP CHAIRS

- Harry Kleiser, President & CEO, SIA Solutions; ADC Board of Directors
- Matthew Borron, Executive Director Association of Defense Communities

The Association of Defense Communities (ADC) convened two working groups that proved interlaced in nature: maintaining installation operations and installation-community crisis response. With the help of DoD partners, military service representatives, private industry contractors, and “outside-the-fence-line” community advocates, ADC observed the major changes and problems affecting military installations and their surrounding communities as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and brainstormed potential solutions and areas for further attention. For ADC, the most effective way to address the varied COVID-19-related issues on military installations and within military facilities was to use case study methodology. In other words, ADC and its partners learned best by taking specific examples from Army, Navy, and Air Force installations, or joint bases, and understanding solutions already implemented or brainstorming solutions yet to come.¹

For the Maintaining Installation Operations Working Group, ADC asked how installation managers adapted during the COVID-19 crisis to continue mission support and to deliver installation services. Various case studies show what worked across installations as they started to adapt to pandemic conditions.² Like many companies and organizations across the United States, the challenge for installation management is universal access to technology.³ With the sudden migration to remote work in both the uniformed and civilian sectors due to quarantine orders, leaders and subordinates discovered a tremendous need for technological solutions for comprehensive telework as well as simple technology access requirements. For

large organizations, normal all-hands meetings migrated to a virtual setting, allowing leaders to communicate with hundreds of staff members in live fora and send recorded meetings to the thousands that were unable to attend.⁴

With the advent of COVID-19 social distancing restrictions and workplace safety concerns, installation management performed a huge pivot. Traditional installation crisis planning focuses on natural disasters and access to technology for success and longevity *on base*. With the pandemic, however, the paradigm shifted quickly to planning for successful operations *remotely* with dramatically reduced manning in physical spaces on installations. The particular policy and technology challenges facing the parts of government performing classified work on systems that cannot be replicated within the home or remotely demand attention so that — even during a pandemic — operations can continue on classified networks.⁵ Future installation planning has shifted from a question of how leaders get people to come to work during a time of crisis to how do leaders continue operating with the lowest possible number of people physically working on an installation.

As reflected in the subsequent working group “Installation-Community Crisis Response,” installations benefited greatly from discussions and agreements with institutions in the surrounding communities. Existing intergovernmental support agreements (IGSAs) and other installation-community partnerships help installations acquire the equipment and supplies they need, and the agreements can be built upon and expanded for future crisis management. For instance, Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) is currently considering the acquisition of furniture through their “Blanket IGSA” with the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG), which was signed in September 2019.⁶ The furnishings are used for properly outfitting a socially distanced workspace to ensure employee safety. While both AACOG and JBSA are still in the learning process, ironing out procedures and building experience, the “Blanket IGSA” construct has the potential to accelerate the acquisition of goods and services — a vision that could translate to other installations across the U.S.

For example, the Corpus Christi Army Depot, which is a tenant of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, has been trying to identify contracting vehicles that would allow for the rapid acquisition of temperature scanning equipment to automate the scanning of 4,000 employees daily. If the Military Services promulgate policy directing installation commanders to put IGSAs in place that would cover the rapid acquisition of goods and services during emergencies or disasters, these vehicles could significantly improve spending efficiency and solve an immediate acquisition problem.

Additionally, the Army garrison at Fort Carson, Colorado, is currently working with Colorado Springs Utilities to put in place an IGSA regarding electric, water, wastewater, gas, and storm water management.⁷ This agreement has the potential to greatly streamline community and installation resilience in locations with public utility companies and could potentially act as a model for other DoD installations. This partnership builds off a long history of Fort Carson partnering with both public and private organization to develop and sustain water and energy infrastructure⁸. Similarly, Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Naval Air Station Kingsville, Nueces and Kleberg counties, and the cities of Corpus Christi and Kingsville are together developing an “energy resilience” IGSA that will include “high-efficiency gas turbines, a microgrid serving critical mission

functions on base, a second microgrid to service fire/police substations and critical services off base, and provide water desalination to create a redundant water source for NAS Corpus Christi.”⁹

It is important to note that besides IGSAs with state and local governments other types of installation and community partnerships with private companies, universities, and other organizations were also important for installation COVID-19 management and responses. For example, installation utility privatization partners helped keep installation water and energy systems running despite the COVID-19 working restrictions and challenges during the first six months of the pandemic.

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Bolstering broadband access, or 5G capabilities, should be a top priority for all installations. Like many organizations across the United States, one major challenge for installation management is universal access to technology.¹⁰ One common theme across case studies was that consistent access to technology, both hardware and software, enables success in a remote or distanced work environment and is also key to successful installation management.
- Working group participants suggested that the use of buildings and property on installations to support health and remote work stations could be helpful in planning for future pandemics. In the instance of a future pandemic scenario, large areas normally used for storage or athletic activities can be repurposed for socially distanced work. The key is pinpointing these properties early and having a plan in place to support service members and civilians unable to work in close, enclosed spaces.
- A major concern raised by working group participants was that classified work is almost impossible to complete in a remote setting. Installation managers need to plan how classified work can continue seamlessly and safely in pandemic conditions, reimagining how a sensitive compartmented information facility (SCIF) is configured and how classified data is accessed and used.
- The case studies included in working group sessions underscored the importance of IGSAs and other community partnerships are vital to installations during times of crisis. For future success in managing installation services, military leaders should look to creating alliances with counties, local governments, and utilities “outside the fence line.”

WORKING GROUP V: INSTALLATION – COMMUNITY CRISIS RESPONSE

The Installation-Community Crisis Response Working Group discussed how communities and installations partner to provide emergency COVID-19 response services. The major categories highlighted are manufacturing and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE), supply issues, and cleaning procedures, innovations in testing and tracing, medical partnerships, and bolstering family wellness. The various case studies highlighted by the group are by no means the extent of all the work performed by installation teams or their counterparts on the “outside,” but the studies demonstrate how positive partnerships reap benefits for installations and their communities during times of crisis.¹ The following cases are success stories of rapid deployment of installation and community partnerships as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Military installation leadership saw a need for COVID-19-related services and response and looked to their local communities; likewise, the community looked to military installations for support and vital information.

INSTALLATIONS LEVERAGED EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS TO OBTAIN NECESSARY SUPPLIES DURING CRISIS

Installations with success stories of acquiring or supplying PPE already had partnerships in place with local community advocates or leaders. For example, using an existing relationship with the

WORKING GROUP CHAIRS

- Kathleen Ferguson, Senior Advisor, The Roosevelt Group; ADC Board of Directors
- Matthew Borron, Executive Director Association of Defense Communities

North Carolina State University — which is part of the Research Triangle that also includes the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University — Army leaders at Fort Bragg sourced filtration material to manufacture masks for soldiers when supplies were short.² At Travis Air Force Base, Nevada, the Phoenix Spark Innovation Cell, a group designed to develop collaborative partnerships with military, private industry, academia, and government agencies, used 3D printing to prototype and produce N95 mask covers and face shields for the David Grant USAF Medical Center.³ The West Florida Defense Alliance, “the lead organization for all military-related issues throughout Northwest Florida,” which actively facilitates community and government support to sustain military missions and “promote the region’s contributions to the nation’s defense,” provided over 3,000 masks to Naval Air Station Pensacola — all sewn by local volunteers.^{4, 5}

Local communities were not only giving expertise and resources to military installations, but were receiving as well — which made the partnerships all the more successful. For example, soldiers from Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, worked with local community volunteers and 3D printers to produce face shields.⁶ At Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, Air Force volunteers helped to disinfect local school classrooms in the San Angelo Independent School District in a partnership that has base volunteers using an electrostatic cleaning device. “The system places an electrostatic charge to liquid disinfectants as they leave the spray nozzle, which causes the charged disinfectant to cling to virtually any surface and help with stopping the unnecessary spread of infections.”⁷ Such a partnership is mutually appealing since the school district educates children of the military among its other constituents.⁸

INNOVATIVE COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS “INSIDE” AND “OUTSIDE” THE FENCE HELPED IMPROVE TESTING AND TRACING

Living and working on a military installation does not occur in a vacuum. As such, the spread of COVID-19 affects not only those “behind the fence,” but those outside. Normal “comings and goings” on installations slowed with the advent of COVID-19 work and travel restrictions for service members, families, and contractors. However, the disease itself paid no heed to access control points or barriers, making the partnering of the military with local communities for testing and tracing a vital effort. Military members, community members and those who breach the divide all benefit when military medicine partners with civilian medicine and public health resources.

At Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, where about 70% of military families live outside the installation in Pulaski County, Phelps Health, state and county officials, and the U.S. Army implemented a series of “protection, prevention, and detection measures” aimed at not only protecting service members, but those in the community.⁹ The subsequent COVID-19 testing initiatives and data collection helped not only Fort Leonard Wood inhabitants, but also the substantially intertwined outside community. The testing and tracing happened only because of the partnership of federal, state, local, and private stakeholders — and a community eager to participate in keeping its service members safe and healthy.¹⁰ A similar partnership emerged in Montgomery County, Tennessee, with a population of approximately 210,000 people adjacent to the Army’s third-largest installation, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, which is home to approximately 27,000 active-

duty soldiers and 40,000 family members.^{11, 12} With reasons mirroring Fort Leonard Wood and Pulaski County, Fort Campbell and Montgomery County coordinated COVID-19 testing with the local health department, Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, Tennova Healthcare, and Premier Medical Group.¹³

Fort Bragg, North Carolina, boasts the Army's largest population of active-duty soldiers, with over 50,000 active-duty soldiers and approximately 63,000 active-duty family members.¹⁴ The DoD's National Security Innovation Network (NSIN), which "cultivates a network of innovators and entrepreneurs to focus on national security issues," put out a call for innovative industry response to COVID-19, setting the stage for partnership between DoD assets and local community innovators. NSIN helped a North Carolina startup called MindSumo, Inc., partner with Fort Bragg to automate identification and contact tracing of COVID-19 patients.¹⁵ Similarly inspired by potential technological advances, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, signed a memorandum of agreement with the Army's Medical Materiel Development Activity to produce 3D-printed swabs for COVID-19 testing. This partnership shows that COVID-19 partnerships between different federal agencies, name the Navy-Army technological partnership are also important to installations and communities and this is a great example of "outside-the-fence-line" communication and action.¹⁶

Plenty of press coverage surrounded the COVID-19-related National Guard mobilizations, with some of the "big-ticket" Guard tasks focused on field hospital construction and manning.¹⁷ Another important Guard duty was testing and tracing, which occurred across the country in states needing extra COVID-19 response assistance. In New York, the Guard delivered millions of meals, assembled hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 test kits, and helped administer the tests in local communities.¹⁸ When COVID-19 cases spiked in the city of Guyton, Oklahoma, the Oklahoma National Guard mobilized to help contain the disease within the community by working with the State Department of Health, aiding in testing, tracing, delivering supplies, and mass decontamination in long-term care facilities.¹⁹ Similarly, the Virginia National Guard created "strike teams" trained in collecting and handling samples and facilitating "large numbers of tests quickly and effectively" in long-term care facilities.²⁰

MILITARY PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY COVID-19-RELATED MEDICAL NEEDS

At Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, the installation partnered with the local Baptist Hospital System in preparation for COVID-19-related intensive care unit shortages. On base, facilities were prepped for patient care under the agreement that the installation would house non-COVID patients for the civilian hospital.²¹ In Kentucky, the Air National Guard and the Army Corps of Engineers teamed with Kentucky Emergency Management and the Department of Public Health to transform the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center into an alternate care facility for patients recovering from COVID-19.²² The "rethinking" of civilian and military spaces as a result of the pandemic very much reflects the previous Installation Management Working Group's conclusions about installation management, demonstrating that future planning will depend upon how property is reimagined. Similar efforts were reflected at both Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.²³ Joint response and partnership planning between base hospitals or clinics and local community hospitals, medical service organizations, and companies was, and remains to be, a

mutually beneficial outcome of the COVID-19 crisis, laying the pathway for future civil-military medical collaboration during crisis.

MILITARY FAMILIES AND ORGANIZATIONS STRENGTHEN TIES AND INVESTMENT IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES DURING COVID-19

CMSI's RUSS reports positive statistics about the importance of military families' ties to the local communities and how such ties can bolster health. On average, 23% of active-duty, 21% of veterans, and 18% of National Guard family respondents reported "members of my community have actively provided *emotional* support to my family during the pandemic." Additionally, 13% of active-duty, 12% of veteran, and 7% of National Guard family respondents reported "members of the community have actively provided *tangible* support to my family during the crisis."²⁴ In fact, the RUSS data demonstrates that a majority of military families have stronger ties to their local communities as a result of the pandemic.²⁵

Many military organizations have worked during the pandemic to solidify ties to the community, which can only bode well for the health and welfare of military families who thrive from such community interaction. Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, recently established the Mental Health Resilience Partnership, in which local stakeholders in the city of San Angelo provide resources to manage stress, anxiety, and depression.²⁶ The on-base "resilience team," which includes mental health personnel, social workers, the chaplaincy, military family life consultants, and others, partner with the West Texas Counseling and Guidance Center, Angelo State University, Howard College, and the city, among other local stakeholders. This initiative is part of the larger Air Force Community Partnership program and its goal to "share resources/information ... prepare for contingencies/disasters ... and unify the civic/base community."²⁷ Additionally, since 2017, Goodfellow's chapel has worked hand-in-hand with local churches and ministries, who provide supplemental spiritual requirements that chapel personnel were unable to provide. In April 2020, the chapel held a food drive to help the local community food banks in San Angelo and donated over 900 pounds of non-perishable items.

Goodfellow's food drive was mirrored by military organizations across the country who helped local communities with their food shortages. Marine Corps Base Hawaii, for instance, collected over 4,000 pounds of food for a local community non-profit, Hui Mahi'ai Aina, which performs large-scale support for the homeless community of Waimanalo on the eastern side of Oahu.²⁸ The Missouri National Guard aided vulnerable school-age children across the state in partnership with the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by delivering food. Due to COVID-19-related stay-at-home orders, schoolchildren across the U.S. who normally count on eating breakfast and lunch at their local public school faced food insecurity. Youth food insecurity was one of the missions the Guard tackled when interfacing with local and state aid groups and decision-makers.

The case studies related here are only a sampling of the many community partnerships in effect in and around military installations. Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and their families benefit from strong community

support; likewise, communities depended upon a communicative, open, and forward-looking installation leadership. The effects of COVID-19 emphasized the following takeaways for installations and the communities that surround them:

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Communities and installations need to be in contact before a crisis occurs. A common theme among case studies viewed as successful was that most had a preexisting relationship between the installation and the local community. Recognizing that most key issues require joint installation-community responses, installations and communities should adopt a “one community” philosophy.
- Many states have a state-level office or commission devoted to military affairs which supports local defense community-installation partnership efforts. In the case studies explored by the working group, these bodies proved to be highly effective with regard to coordinating joint military-community COVID-19 crisis response efforts. States should work to strengthen these offices by providing additional resources and decision-making authority.
- The DoD should work with community organizations to document and share “best practices” from partnerships built during the pandemic; for example, many working group participants highlighted the benefits of continuous, two-way communication between installations and outside communities.
- For most effective crisis response, local communities should establish *high-level relationships at the installation, community and state level*, and also joint working groups that meet regularly to address issues such as crisis response, infrastructure challenges, quality of life and installation resilience and readiness.²⁹
- Over the past several years, each of the military services has worked to establish special offices tasked with developing installation-community partnerships.³⁰ These offices work consistently to foster joint collaboration between installations and their host communities, developing partnership agreements with community organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, regional defense alliances, and local and state governments. Case studies addressed herein underscore that the efforts of these offices proved invaluable during the pandemic, having already established a framework for joint response and crisis management partnerships. The services should work to strengthen these offices and incentivize base leadership to institutionalize high-level community-installation relationships.

ENDNOTES

¹ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Events*. Recordings and resources from previous town halls. Accessed September 7, 2020 from <https://covid19militarysupport.org/event/>.

* All call-out box quotations are drawn from the Pain Points Poll

DATA ANALYSIS WORKING GROUP

¹ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *COVID-19 Military and Veteran Family Research Library*. Accessed September 7, 2020. <https://bluestarfam.org/covid19-research/>. This repository harbors COVID-19 Military Support Initiative data, “deep dives,” comprehensive “roll-ups” of 10 weeks of accrued Pain Points Poll data, and qualitative reports. Subsequently cited as “Blue Star Families. *Research Library*.”

² COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. (2020). *Resilience Under Stress Study*. Unpublished manuscript. Subsequently cited as “COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Resilience Under Stress Study*.”

³ Blue Star Families. *Research Library*.

⁴ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: Childcare*. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BSF-COVID-PPP-Qualitative-Childcare.pdf>. *Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: Financial Implications of COVID-19 (Excluding the Financial Impact of the Stop Movement Order)*. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BSF-COVID-PPP-Qualitative-Employment-2.pdf>. Subsequently cited as “Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: Childcare” and “Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: Financial Implications.”

⁵ The idea that military readiness may be affected by access to child care was an issue well before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic, however, exacerbated the problem. Moini, J.S., Zellman, G.L., & Gates, S.M. (2007) *Need for high-quality child care affects military readiness and retention*. RAND Corporation. Accessed August 20, 2020. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9218.html. Shane, L. (2019, February). *The military’s lingering readiness problem: Lack of daycare*. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/02/08/the-militarys-lingering-readiness-problem-lack-of-daycare/>.

⁶ Guyot, K., and Sawhill, I.V. (2020, April 6) Telecommuting will likely continue long after the pandemic. *Brookings Institution*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/upC-front/2020/04/06/telecommuting-will-likely-continue-long-after-the-pandemic/>.

⁷ Cline, D., (2020, August 30). *COVID-19 exacerbates job woes for veterans, military spouses*. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/veterans/2020/08/30/covid-19-exacerbates-job-woes-for-veterans-military-spouses/>.

⁸ Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. *Military Times and IVMF Snapshot Polls of Veteran Community*. (Top Resource Needs of Veterans and Active-Duty Service Members). . Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/military-times-ivmf-snapshot-polls>.

⁹ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Nontraditional Food Accessibility Dilemmas*. Accessed August 30, 2020. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/200526_DeepDive_Nontraditional_Food_Insecurity.pdf. Subsequently cited as COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Food insecurity*. COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points*

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¹⁰ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative, *Resilience Under Stress Study*.

¹¹ National Military Family Association. *Dealing with Food Insecurity in a Pandemic? What Military Families Need to Know*. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://www.militaryfamily.org/dealing-with-food-insecurity-in-a-pandemic-what-military-families-need-to-know/>. Burke, F.T., & Rachidi, A. (2020, May 9). *Many Low-Income Military Families Need SNAP, But Can't Overcome an Eligibility Hurdle*. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2020/05/09/many-low-income-military-families-need-snap-but-cant-overcome-an-eligibility-hurdle/>. For an interesting discussion on how food insecurity writ large affects military readiness, see Allen, J.R. (2020, June 4). *Why COVID-19 threatens military readiness –and how school lunch can help*. Politico. <https://www.politico.com/news/agenda/2020/06/04/coronavirus-military-school-lunch-299331>.

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¹³ Although the following recommendation did not rise to a top recommendation among all participants, it is worthy of mention and consideration: During the main Data Analysis Working Group session and in follow-on conversations, discussions regarding whether mechanisms should be put in place to give the Defense Health Agency authority certain responsibilities and, possibly, powers, to ensure consistence or to guide a coherent response. Augmenting the discussion on better holistic mechanisms for supporting or messaging military families is the expansive 2019 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's report by Kenneth W. Kizer and Suzanne Le Menestrel, eds., *Strengthening the Military Family Readiness System for a Changing American Society* (National Academies of Sciences Press, 2019). The Department of Defense commissioned the report and the findings of which have migrated into "action items" in the House version of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. House Armed Services Committee Press Release, "Thornberry on HASC Passage of the FY21 NDAA," July 2, 2020, <https://republicans-armedservices.house.gov/news/press-releases/thornberry-hasc-passage-fy21-ndaa>.

¹⁴ Szoldra, P. (2020, March 24). *Troops Say the US Military Is Not Taking COVID-19 Seriously*. Task and Purpose. <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/covid-response-military>.

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¹⁶ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative, *Resilience Under Stress Study*.

¹⁷ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Unit and Installation Response*., Unpublished manuscript (2020). Subsequently cited as COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll: Unit and Installation*.

¹⁸ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative, *Resilience Under Stress Study*.

¹⁹ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Wrap-Up Weeks 1-10*. Accessed September 7, 2020. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PPP-Wks1-10_Wrap-up_Part-1.pdf. Subsequently cited as COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll: Wrap-Up 1-10*.

²⁰ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll: Unit and Installation*.

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- ³³ The ordering of the top ten lists were done methodically by the Data Analysis Working Group. Breakout groups were asked to identify unanswered questions during their sessions. Answers were reviewed and redundancies were removed (and noted for working group facilitators). Facilitators were asked to vote via survey on the answers they felt should be

included in this white paper based on their own research and working group conversations. Those answers which resulted in a tie were further refined based on prevalence in working group sessions and quality of available data.

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⁴³ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Childcare*.

⁴⁴ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Mental Health*.

⁴⁵ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Final Data, Part 3: Whole Family Health*.

⁴⁶ There is extensive reporting on veteran care backlogs, both before COVID-19 and exacerbated by COVID-19. Two examples are: Shane, L. (2020, May 29). *Veterans Disability Exams to Resume at Some Sites as Backlog Hits 114,000, Nearly Doubling in Six Months*. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/05/29/veterans-disability-exams-to-resume-at-some-sites-as-backlog-hits-114000-nearly-doubling-in-six-months/>. Kime, P. (2020, September 3). *Millions of Veterans Are Still Waiting for Their Pre-COVID VA Appointments to Get Rescheduled*. Task & Purpose. <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/va-covid-appointment-reschedule>.

⁴⁷ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Unit and Installation*.

⁴⁸ Blue Star Families, *Resilience Under Stress Study*.

⁴⁹ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: Personnel, Readiness, and Transitioning Service Members*. Accessed September 21, 2020. <https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BSF-COVID-PPP-Qualitative-Personnel.pdf>. Subsequently cited as COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: Personnel*.

⁵⁰ Szlodra, *Troops Say*.

⁵¹ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Mental Health*.

⁵² Elizabeth Dole Foundation. *Survey of Military and Veteran Caregiver Needs*. Presentation of Results. Accessed September 21, 2020. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QXYHRigtC_AsOIXg79nQ-w2mVX24aVmM/view.

⁵³ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Military Spouse Employment*.

K-12 EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

¹ U.S. Department of Education. *Military Families and Veterans*. Accessed September 20, 2020. <https://www.ed.gov/veterans-and-military-families>.

² Kelly-Herard, A.R. (2020, May 18). *Virtual Learning Produces Routine for Military Children During COVID-19*. 15th Wing Public Affairs, U.S. Air Force. <https://www.15wing.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2190931/virtual-learning-provides-routine-for-military-children-during-covid-19/>.

³ Five percent of active-duty family respondents reported they were unable to provide adult supervision for older children while schools were closed. “K-12 School Closure Concerns for Military Families” in *Pain Points Poll Final Data, Part 3, Whole Family Health*.

⁴ The break-out group agreed that the Parent Teacher Association could be used as a resource for information sharing and schools could organize a series of virtual town halls for increased communication and discussions of “what’s working and what’s not working.” The use of surveys before and during school is another way to gauge the amount of information communicated and whether there needs to be changes in the system to ensure that all parents are learning as much as possible about the school’s plan for education.

⁵ Examples of parent-child communication techniques abound; one example advocated by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry can be found at: Fassler, D. *Talking to Children About Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. Accessed September 21, 2020. https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/Docs/latest_news/2020/Coronavirus_COVID19_Children.pdf.

⁶ Polikoff, M. (2020, July 23). *Parent Dissatisfaction Shows Need to Improve School Communication During Coronavirus Pandemic*. Brookings Institution: Brown Center Chalkboard. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/07/23/parent-dissatisfaction-shows-need-to-improve-school-communication-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>.

⁷ MCEC advocates the “Student 2 Student” (S2S) program that helps military high school children make connections with a “buddy” whose parent(s) are civilian. Having a shared connection “in the know” about a local school, its environment, academics, and sports helps military children find a buoy during turbulent times. Accessed September 21, 2020. <https://www.militarychild.org/programs/student-2-student>.

- ⁸ Barnhill, J. (2020, April 7). How will the coronavirus impact education for military kids?" *Military Families Magazine*. <https://militaryfamilies.com/military-education/how-will-the-coronavirus-impact-education-for-military-kids/>.
- ⁹ Kennedy-Moore, E. (2020, June 27). Helping lonely children during the coronavirus pandemic. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/growing-friendships/202006/helping-lonely-children-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>. Peterson, A. (2020, June 15). The toll that isolation takes on kids during the coronavirus era. *Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-toll-that-isolation-takes-on-kids-during-the-coronavirus-era-11592236617>.
- ¹⁰ Varea, V., & Gonzalez-Calvo, G. (2020) Touchless classes and absent bodies: Teaching physical education in times of COVID-19. *Sport, Education, and Society*: 1-15.
- ¹¹ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Final Data, Part 3: Whole Family Health*.
- ¹² Walker, T. (2020, April 15). Social-Emotional Learning Should Be Priority During COVID-19 Crisis. National Education Association. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/social-emotional-learning-should-be-priority-during-covid-19>.
- ¹³ Bowen, J. (2020, April 14). *Check-In With Students, Prioritize Mental Health and Well-Being During (COVID-19) School Closures*. NC State University, College of Education News. <https://ced.ncsu.edu/news/2020/04/14/counselors-and-educators-should-check-in-with-students-prioritize-mental-health-and-well-being-during-coronavirus-covid-19-school-closures/>.
- ¹⁴ Making Caring Common Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education. *For Educators: COVID Check-In Survey*. Accessed September 21, 2020. <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/covid-check-in-survey>.
- ¹⁵ Soland, J., Kuhfeld, M., Tarasawa, B., Johnson, A., Ruzek, E., & Liu, J. (2020, May 27). *The Impact of COVID-19 on Student Achievement and What It May Mean for Educators*. Brookings Institution: Brown Center Chalkboard. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/05/27/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-achievement-and-what-it-may-mean-for-educators/>.
- ¹⁶ Porter, T. (2020, June 22). *Reflecting on Teacher Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Regional Educational Laboratory Program. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog28_reflecting-on-teacher-wellbeing-during-COVID-19-pandemic.asp.
- ¹⁷ Over the 10 weeks of Pain Points Polling, analysts observed an appreciable rise in military family respondents who "reported they have noticed changes in their child(ren)'s behavior, which they believe is due to their inability to socialize with peers." (The high was 70% of respondents during Week 8 and the low was 48% of respondents during Week 1.) COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Mental Health*.
- ¹⁸ Examples of virtual hangouts for military children are "Bloom: Empowering the Military Teen," accessed September 28, 2020, <https://www.bloommilitaryteens.org>, and the "MilTeen Chat App," available through the Military Children's Collaborative Group, and accessed September 28, 2020, <https://militarychildrenscollaborativegroup.org/milteenchat-app/>.
- ¹⁹ An example of information and training on communication between schools and parents, to include example forms and letters to support parent/school communication, see the Military Child Education Coalition's *Toolkit for Military-Connected Parents* in a COVID setting. Accessed September 28, 2020, <https://www.militarychild.org/cprlparents>.
- ²⁰ MIC3 keeps a running list called the "State Department of Education/Public Instruction COVID-19 Information/Guidance on School Closures and Reopening," which is a fluid one-stop shop for military parents looking for updated guidance for their local CONUS or OCONUS schools. Updated September 21, 2020, accessed September 22, 2020, http://www.mic3.net/assets/27-school-update_20200921_final.pdf.

²¹ Military Child Education Coalition. *Guide to Understanding Military-Connected Student Transition*. Accessed September 20, 2020. <https://www.militarychild.org/studenttransition>.

²² Columbia University Center for Public Research and Leadership and the Military Child Education Coalition. (2017, October). *The Challenges of Supporting Highly Mobile, Military-Connected Children in School Transitions: The Current Environment*. Accessed September 21, 2020. https://www.militarychild.org/upload/files/resources/Military_Student_Transitions_Study_2017.pdf.

²³ Jaycox, L.H., et al. (2007). *How Schools Responded to Student Mental Health Needs Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita*. RAND Corporation. Accessed September 22, 2020. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9291.html.

²⁴ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Final Data, Part 3: Whole Family Health*. Scott, M.M. (2020, June 18). *Making High School More Flexible and Supportive for Teens after COVID-19*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/making-high-school-more-flexible-and-supportive-teens-after-covid-19>.

²⁵ The goal of the Interstate Compact of Educational Opportunity for Military Children is to make school transitions smoother across states, counties and even countries. Issues of enrollment, placement, eligibility for activities, and graduation can all be affected by moves — and such issues were further affected by the COVID-19 crisis and its effect on PCS season. Though there is no polling data on the difficulty of accessing or delivering school records during COVID-19 for PCSing and transitioning military children, the breakout group had enough anecdotal data to make the recommendation plausible. Another wrinkle with the COVID-19 crisis is increased privacy concerns regarding student data: Herold, B. (2020, August 11). *School Re-openings Bring Wave of COVID-19 Student-Data-Privacy Concerns*. Education Week, <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/08/11/school-reopenings-bring-wave-of-covid-19-student-data-privacy.html>. Sellery, K. (2020, March 31). *FERPA and Virtual Learning During COVID-19*. CSBA Blog. <http://blog.csba.org/ferpa-covid19/>.

²⁶ The need for consistent and clear communication was discussed in the previous section, but lessons learned from the Hurricane Katrina case study also underscore the need to support school staff through this challenging time.

²⁷ In dissent, the National Math and Science Initiative's (NMSI) experience across more than 1,300 schools nationwide undermines the concept of a comprehensive "education roadmap." "Education pathways are in a continual (year over year) state of change and vary greatly on a state-by-state basis," according to Ed Viega, senior director of the Military Families Mission for NMSI.

²⁸ One place to find a partial "roadmap" is through the Military School Liaison Office, though breakout group participants discussed the need for something more comprehensive. All installations should have School Liaison Officers (SLOs) able to assist military families as advocates or go-betweens with the local county or state school district administrators. SLOs should be able to offer a "roadmap" to military families, but anecdotal reports suggest there is not always a consistency of message or sameness across military services/installations; more research is needed to determine whether or not this issue is limited in scope. Moreover, some military families are unaware of the existence and role of a SLO. Branch Military Parent Technical Assistance Center. *Role of the School Liaison Officer*. Accessed September 20, 2020. <https://branchta.org/role-school-liaison-officer-slo/>. Department of Defense Education Activity. *School Liaison Officers*. Accessed September 20, 2020. <https://www.dodea.edu/partnership/schoolliaisonofficers.cfm>.

²⁹ Annotated survey responses from COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll: Weeks 1-10*.

³⁰ Jowers, K. (2020, August 14). *COVID Cash Crunch Because of Your Military Child's Remote Learning Costs? Here Are Some Options*. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/pay-benefits/2020/08/14/covid-cash-crunch-because-of-your-military-childs-remote-learning-costs-here-are-some-options/>.

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- ³¹ The working group agreed that there are multiple potential funding sources that should be pursued to address “internet deserts,” be they local, state, or federal government funds, philanthropically generated funds, or corporate-sponsored funds.
- ³² Levander, C. & Decherney, P. (2020, June 10). *The Covid-igital Divide*. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/blogs/education-time-corona/covid-igital-divide>.
- ³³ Collis, V. & Vegas, E. (2020, June 22). *Unequally Disconnected: Access to Online Learning in the U.S.* Brookings Institution.. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/06/22/unequally-disconnected-access-to-online-learning-in-the-us/>.
- ³⁴ Leibman, A.J. (2020, May 6). *Congress Must Act Immediately for Military Families Facing Hunger*. Military.com. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/05/06/congress-must-act-immediately-military-families-facing-hunger.html>.
- ³⁵ Picchi, A. (2020, September 16). Chromebook, headphones, desks: COVID-era virtual school supplies come with real spike in spending. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/09/16/virtual-school-families-paying-more-chromebook-desk-bluetooth-headphones/5810336002/>.
- ³⁶ One example of military child demography was facilitated by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University and the academic paper was published by Clever, M., & Segal, D.R. (2013) “The Demographics of Military Children and Families,” *The Future of Children* 23, no. 2 “Military Children and Families” (Fall): 13-39. The working group participants advocate for better demographic studies to best determine the COVID-19-related challenges to military children.
- ³⁷ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on Black and Hispanic/Latinx Families*. Accessed September 22, 2020. <https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BDG-PPP-DeepDive-Black-Hispanic-Respondents.pdf>.
- ³⁸ Collis and Vegas. Also, U.S. Census Bureau (2020, May 20). *Household Pulse Survey Results*. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/household-pulse-results.html>.
- ³⁹ “Though we do not have CONUS-wide number for military children receiving free or reduced school lunches, the OCONUS numbers may act as a guide. In 2007, AAFES reported that 30% of Europe-based military children were eligible for free lunches. Of the lunches provided to children in February 2007, 22% of 315,830 lunches were free and 21% was reduced. Battdorff, A. (2017, April 13). More military families eligible for reduced price, free school lunches. *Stars and Stripes*. <https://www.stripes.com/news/more-military-families-eligible-for-reduced-price-free-school-lunches-1.62814>.
- ⁴⁰ In Austin, Texas, schools “deployed” 110 buses around the city to perform as mobile hot spots for schoolchildren without internet access. Aitken, P. (2020, September 5). *School Districts Deploy Buses as Wi-Fi Hotspots to Support Remote Learning*. Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/school-buses-wi-fi-hotspots-support-remote-learning>.
- ⁴¹ In Mexico, due to “spotty” internet, schools have worked with local government authorities to broadcast lessons on television. de Cordoba, J., & Montes, J. (2020, August 25). School in Mexico during COVID-19 means turning on the TV,” *Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/school-in-mexico-during-covid-19-means-turning-on-the-tv-11598362936>.
- ⁴² Blue Star Families. (2020, February). *2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report*.
- ⁴³ Annotated survey responses. COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll: Weeks 1-10*. Unpublished.
- ⁴⁴ Education Week. (2020, July 28). *Map: Where Are Schools Closed?*. Accessed September 23, 2020. <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/map-covid-19-schools-open-closed.html>.

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- ⁴⁵ Kennedy, M. (2020, March 20). *45 States Have Closed All Schools Because of the Coronavirus*. American School & University. Accessed September 23, 2020. <https://www.asumag.com/safety-security/crisis-disaster-planning-management/article/21126638/friday-morning-update-45-states-have-closed-all-schools-because-of-the-coronavirus>.
- ⁴⁶ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Final Data, Part 3: Whole Family Health*.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Military Child Education Coalition. *Parent to Parent Webinars*. Accessed September 20, 2020. <https://www.militarychild.org/webinars>. An example of web-based parent training is “Transitioning Schools with Children with Exceptional Needs.”
- ⁴⁹ The working group discussed some of the “off-the-shelf” options for diagnostic testing, such as Khan Academy, and concurred that “data speaks volumes.” The more data that schools have regarding what their students know and do not know — especially with the dramatic shift in education tactics during COVID-19 “stay-at-home” periods — the better students will be served. Also important is the sharing of data across organizations so that the learning gap puzzle can be better put together to best serve children.
- ⁵⁰ Shafer, L., Walsh, B., & Weber, M. (2016, November 9). *For Military Kids, Resilience and Challenges*. Harvard Graduate School of Education. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/11/military-kids-resilience-and-challenges>.
- ⁵¹ L.R. Allen and B.B. Kelly (Eds.) (2015). “The Importance of Continuity for Children Birth Through Age 8,” in, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth to Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (National Academies Press) Accessed September 23, 2020. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK310544/?report=printable>.
- ⁵² Harkins, G. (2017, December 29). *Pentagon Weighs Limiting PCS Moves to Create More Stability for Military Families*. Military.com. Originally published by Military Officers of America Association. Accessed September 14, 2020. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/01/02/pentagon-weighs-limiting-pcs-moves-create-more-stability-military-families.html>. Gresh, J. (2018, November 15). *Reassess the PCS: Stop Moving Soldiers Every 2 Years*. Breaking Defense. <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/11/reassess-the-pcs-stop-moving-soldiers-every-2-years/>.
- ⁵³ Burke, T., O’Hanlon, M., & Burke, F.T. (2020, May 2). Rethinking the military life cycle in a time of COVID-19. *The National Interest*. <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/rethinking-military-life-cycle-time-covid-19-150476>.
- ⁵⁴ Oishi, S., & Schimmack, U. (2010). Residential mobility, well-being, and mortality,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 98, no. 6: 980-994. Paul, P. (2010, July 9). “Does moving a child create adult baggage?” *New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/11/fashion/11StudiedMoving.html?_r=1.
- ⁵⁵ Jowers, K. (2020, August 3). *About 9,000 children are signed up for the virtual option as DoD schools reopen*. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/2020/08/03/about-9000-children-are-signed-up-for-the-virtual-option-as-dod-schools-reopen/>. Through anecdotal examples submitted to the research team, the working group is aware of successful use of virtual public school for military children. This is an area and concept in need of more data and analysis.
- ⁵⁶ 2019 MFLS.
- ⁵⁷ 2019 MFLS statistics quoted in Lilley, K. (2020, March 4). *Key Survey Shows Challenges Faced by Military Families with Special Needs*. MOAA. <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2020-news-articles/key-survey-shows-challenges-faced-by-military-families-with-special-needs/>.
- ⁵⁸ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Final Data, Part 3: Whole Family Health*.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ The working group agreed that local schools can adapt better and be more flexible if districts give them the freedom to make certain choices for their classrooms and students as appropriate.

⁶¹ Adely, H. (2020, April 23). 'No one to help me:' Special education families struggle with coronavirus school closures. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/04/23/coronavirus-special-education-students-disability-school-closures/3008234001/>.

⁶² Stein, P., & Strauss, V. (2020, August 7). Special education students are not just falling behind in the pandemic — They're losing key skills, parents say. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/special-education-students-are-not-just-falling-behind--theyre-losing-key-skills-parents-say/2020/08/05/ec1b91ca-cffd-11ea-9038-af089b63ac21_story.html.

⁶³ Boyd-Barrett, C. (2020, August 12). *Amid Pandemic, Young Kids With Special Needs Missing Out On Services*. Disability Scoop. <https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2020/08/12/amid-pandemic-young-kids-with-special-needs-missing-out-on-services/28720/>.

⁶⁴ McLaughlin, J.M. (2020, July 5). Military families need portable special ed. *Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/military-families-need-portable-special-ed-11593973767>. McLaughlin participated in the IEP/EFMP breakout group.

⁶⁵ DeSimone, D. (2018, August 15). *5 Things You Need to Know About Military Families*. USO. <https://www.uso.org/stories/2277-5-things-to-know-about-military-families>.

⁶⁶ Maggie Hassan, M., & Murphy, C. (2020, June 24). We Urge Our Senate Colleagues to Approve More Aid for Schools — and \$11 Billion for Students With Disabilities — in the Next COVID-19 Relief Bill. *The 74 Million*. <https://www.the74million.org/article/murphy-hassan-education-aid-special-education-cares-pandemic/>.

⁶⁷ Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Section 300.323: When IEPs Must Be in Effect. Accessed September 23, 2020. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/d/300.323>.

⁶⁸ Norman, M., DeBlock, S., Kim, G., McCarley, K., & Barnhill, J. (2020, June 2). *Partners in PROMISE White Paper: Advocating for Military Families with Special Needs*. Partners in PROMISE. <https://thepromiseact.org/2020/06/partners-in-promise-white-paper/>.

⁶⁹ Office of Special Education Programs. *Continuity of Learning During COVID-19*. Accessed September 24, 2020. <https://osepideasthatwork.org/continuity-learning-during-covid-19>.

⁷⁰ Partners in PROMISE recommends advocates at the district level and/or providing special education attorneys to assist in EFMP-centric locations with legal support. The initiative was included in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (House Version, H.R. 6395, Subtitle G, Section 570A.) See Barnhill, J. (2020, July 30). Partners in Promise offers support to EFMP families ahead of uncertain school year. *Military Families Magazine*. <https://militaryfamilies.com/military-kid/partners-in-promise-offers-support-to-efmp-families-ahead-of-uncertain-school-year/>.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS WORKING GROUP

¹ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Point Poll Qualitative Report: Impact of Stop Movement Order on PCS Moves*. <https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BSF-COVID-PPP-Qualitative-Financial.pdf>. Accessed September 11, 2020. Subsequently cited as COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: Stop Movement*.

² COVID-19 Military Support Initiative, *Resilience Under Stress Study*.

³ The \$3,900 figure is based on a military family with three children filing a joint tax return with income less than \$150,000. Payments are \$1,200 for two adults and \$500 for each child. See Still, A., Long, H., & Uhrmacher, K. (2020, April 2). Calculate how much you'll get from the \$1,200 (or more) coronavirus checks. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/coronavirus-stimulus-check-calculator/>.

⁴ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Wrap Up: 1-10*.

⁵ This question was fielded from April 15, 2020, to June 2, 2020. COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: Financial Implications*.

⁶ Brook, J., & Swanson, E. (2020, September 3). Poll: More Shoring Up. *JBLM Living* Vol. 69, No. 36. Federal civilian workers have a greater incentive to participate in the TSP because they receive government matching of up to 5% on their TSP contributions. The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (FRTIB) meetings minutes from May 2020 cite different numbers, though it should be noted that the military numbers are now incorporating the Blended Retirement System. According to FRTIB, 93% of federal employees and 71% of uniformed personnel (active duty) participated in the TSP in May 2020. "Participation Rates," accessed September 28, 2020. <https://www.frtib.gov/pdf/minutes/2020/June/MM-2020June-Att1.pdf>.

⁷ Haughwout, A.F., Lee, D., Scally, J., & van der Klaauw, W. (2020, August 6). *A Monthly Peek Into Americans' Credit During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Federal Reserve of New York. <https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2020/08/a-monthly-peek-into-americans-credit-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.html>.

⁸ Fitzgerald, M. (2020, May 29). U.S. savings rate hits record 33% as coronavirus causes Americans to stockpile cash, curb spending. *CNBC*. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/29/us-savings-rate-hits-record-33percent-as-coronavirus-causes-americans-to-stockpile-cash-curb-spending.html>

⁹ The response rate for active-duty paired respondents was too low to analyze independently; these statistics also include National Guard and Reserve members and their spouses, as well as veterans and their spouses. See Blue Star Families, *Resilience Under Stress Study*.

¹⁰ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative, *Resilience Under Stress Study*.

¹¹ Office of People Analytics (Analyst Malikah Dorvil). *2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses*. Accessed September 21, 2020. <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Surveys/Survey-Active-Duty-Spouses-2017-Overview-Briefing-MSO.pdf>.

¹² Workers with the largest increase in unemployment were those without a college education, which is often the characteristic of junior enlisted family members, according to the Office of People Analytics (see previous citation). For example, in April 2020 unemployment among those with a bachelor's degree was only 8.4%, while unemployment for those with only a high school diploma and without a high school diploma was 17.3% and 21.2%, respectively. See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment Situation News Release*, accessed September 11, 2020. https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/empsit_06052020.htm.

¹³ Harkins, G. (2020, March 17). *More military reservists face drill cancellations due to Coronavirus*. *Military Times*. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/03/17/military-reservists-missing-drills-due-coronavirus-might-be-eligible-waivers.html>.

¹⁴ Several respondents to open-ended questions in the Pain Points Poll indicated drilling and training cancellations were causing unexpected financial stress. As one spouse of a National Guard member wrote, "[w]e are a National Guard

family that relies on orders for income. Cancelled TDYs have left a gap in income. The service member has no additional income from civilian work due to the high ops-tempo of his unit.”

¹⁵ Jowers, K. (2020, May 18). *Why are so few military families seeking COVID-related financial help from these relief societies?* Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/pay-benefits/2020/05/18/why-are-so-few-military-families-seeking-covid-related-financial-help-from-these-relief-societies/>.

¹⁶ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative, *Resilience Under Stress Study*.

¹⁷ Jowers, K. (2020, May 18). *Why Are So Few Military Families ...*.

¹⁸ Duret, D. (2020, May 31). School lunch programs are losing millions feeding hungry kids; they could be broke by fall. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/05/31/coronavirus-school-lunch-programs-going-broke-because-kids-hunger/3101507001/>.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Defense. (2020, March 25). *Overseas Stop Movement Order in Response to COVID-19*. <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2125725/overseas-stop-movement-order-in-response-to-covid-19/>.

²⁰ Burke, F.T. (2020, April 10). *What does an extended ‘Stop Movement’ order mean for military families?* AEIdeas. <https://www.aei.org/foreign-and-defense-policy/what-does-an-extended-stop-movement-order-mean-for-military-families/>.

²¹ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: Financial Implications*.

²² Correll, D.S. (2020, April 23). *Pentagon’s stop movement order extension a hardship for some PCS’ing families*. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/coronavirus/2020/04/23/pentagons-stop-movement-order-extension-a-hardship-for-some-pcsing-families/>.

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⁵² DoD helps fund free access to the Virtual Lab School which offers “innovative, research-based professional development for child and youth education.” Accessed September 4, 2020. <https://www.virtuallabschool.org>. Additionally, DoD has funded free access to Tutor.com which offers on-demand, online tutoring and homework help to military members. COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Childcare*.

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⁵⁴ COVID-19 Military Support Initiative. *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Unit and Installation*. See also *Pain Points Poll Deep Dive: Childcare*.

⁵⁵ Subsequent to the working group meeting, a Social Security payroll tax deferral was implemented that affects most service members. Although it was not specifically addressed in the workshop, it is a significant part of financial effects on the military family. This section is based on information provided by AAFMAA to its members to help them better understand the effects of the payroll tax deferral.

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INSTALLATION OPERATIONS WORKING GROUP

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⁸ For more information on some of this partnership history see “Colorado and Fort Carson Water Case Study,” in Beth E. Lachman, Susan A. Resetar, Nidha Kaira, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, and Aimee E Curtright, *Water Management, Partnerships, Rights, and Market Trends: An Overview for Army Installation Managers* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 189-240.

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<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/04/30/53-of-americans-say-the-internet-has-been-essential-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>.

INSTALLATION-COMMUNITY RESPONSE WORKING GROUP

¹ The categorization of the installation-community crisis response was suggested by Beth Lachman, the RAND Corporation, via e-mail correspondence, July 28, 2020. Further analysis on public-private partnerships specific to military installations can be found at www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports.

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¹³ ClarksvilleNow.com. (2020, March 19). *The Montgomery County Health Department gives information on local COVID-19 testing*. <https://clarksvillenow.com/local/the-montgomery-county-health-department-gives-information-on-local-covid19-testing/>. Tennova Healthcare is one of Tennessee's largest healthcare networks; Premier Medical Group is a "primary care hub" in Clarksville, Tennessee.

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