

Department of Defense

Annual Report to Congress on the Department of Defense Military Family Readiness Council



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Department of Defense

**Report of the Department of Defense Military Family Readiness
Council**

**Annual Report to the Congressional Defense Committees
Pursuant to Section 1781a of Title 10, United States Code**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Per section 1781a of Title 10, the Department of Defense (DoD) Military Family Readiness Council is required to submit a report which provides recommendations and assessments of the adequacy and effectiveness pertaining to military family readiness. This is the third year that the Department has submitted an annual report to Congress.

The heightened operational tempo and multiple deployments over the last ten years continue to pose a significant burden on Service members and their families. As a result of an unprecedented level of activation and deployment of Reserve and Guard members, it became a high priority issue to build service delivery systems to geographically dispersed military families who live too far to take advantage of support resources available on military installations. To address this challenge, DoD launched a formal partnership with the Department of Agriculture (USDA) in May 2010 to enhance support services for military families.

Recommendations: The Military Family Council recognizes that leveraging the existing efforts of the White House, DoD and other federal agencies, state and local governments, and national and local non-profit organizations to strengthen military family readiness is the most effective and efficient way to approach military family readiness. Based on the priority issues for FY 2011, the Council recommends the following three actions:

1. **Adopt the issue areas identified in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Integrated Process Teams (hereafter called "the Chairman's IPTs"):** The Council adopts the five issue areas of the Chairman's IPTs on family support and adds priority issues as necessary. Instead of expanding the list of priority issues, focusing on common themes will minimize the duplication of efforts and help build concerted efforts to effectively address the issues in the military family readiness arena.
2. **Assess the issues surrounding the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) to build robust assistance systems for military families with special needs:** Although some issues related to EFMP overlap with the Chairman's IPTs, the Council determined that the significance of EFMP warrants special attention of the Department as an independent issue area in order to ensure adequate assistance to military families with special needs.
3. **Leverage the existing efforts within DoD to provide the strategic plans, policies, and assessment of programs in the area of military family readiness:** Within DoD, ODASD (MC&FP) plays a pivotal role in the recently established efforts in program assessments and initiatives in addition to military family readiness policy, program and resource oversight. The Council recommends that DoD leverage the existing initiatives and assessment efforts to address the ongoing and emerging issues in the arena of family readiness programs.

Assessment Results: The Department continued its efforts to improve the adequacy and effectiveness of military family readiness programs by promoting research-based programs. In FY2010, the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness (CMFR) was established through a

joint initiative with USDA, led by Pennsylvania State University. CMFR provides helping professionals, family support staff, and community partners with an interactive knowledge-based platform to enhance the implementation of research-based programs, dissemination, and assessment. Below are the highlights of the FY2010 assessment studies:

- **Military Family Needs Assessment Study:** In collaboration with a team of researchers at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, DoD conducted focus groups and an online survey to identify the current issues and what is working and what is not in family readiness programs. This study provided rich qualitative data on the needs of military families.
- **Autism Review Phase I:** DoD worked with the Ohio State University to review the access and availability of evidence-based educational practices for military children with autism spectrum disorders in five states. Findings suggest that military children have access to evidence-based educational practices at school districts near military installations, though the level and type of services do not always meet the needs of families.
- **Military Family Life Project Survey:** Defense Manpower Data Center and the Office of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (ODASD (MC&FP)) fielded the first wave of this survey in May 2010. Approximately 28,500 military spouses participated in the first wave of this large-scale longitudinal survey. This project will survey the same group of spouses again in summer 2011. This study will help the Department assess the current needs and program usage of spouses pertaining to Service members' deployments, relocation, and other life challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report to Congress is submitted pursuant to section 1781a of Title 10, United States Code, which requires the Department of Defense (DoD) Military Family Readiness Council to submit a report to the Secretary of Defense and congressional defense committees annually. This report provides:

- (1) An assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the military family readiness programs and activities of DoD during the preceding fiscal year in meeting the needs and requirements of military families.
- (2) Recommendations on actions to be taken to improve the capability of the military family readiness programs and activities of DoD to meet the needs and requirements of military families, including actions relating to the allocation of funding and other resources to and among such programs and activities.

Three main duties of the Council are listed in Box 1. The Council members are to convene at least twice each year. Though the Council was operated based on calendar year, a change to Council by-laws was proposed to function in a fiscal year, instead of a calendar year-basis, to make the Council more congruent with budgeting cycles and allow a more realistic time period between close of Council business and the due date for the report to Congress on February 1st each year. In the meeting held on December 14, 2010, the Council voted and unanimously affirmed the by-laws change.

Box 1. Main Duties of the DoD Military Family Readiness Council

- (1) To review and make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense regarding the policy and plans supporting military family readiness
- (2) To monitor requirements for the support of military family readiness by DoD
- (3) To evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the military family readiness programs and activities of DoD

Currently, the DoD Military Family Readiness Council (hereafter called “the Council”) consists of 14 appointed members including:

- Chair: Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)
- Vice Chief of Staff, U.S. Army
- Vice Chief of Naval Operations
- Vice Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force
- Assistant Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps
- Acting Director, Army National Guard, National Guard Bureau
- Commander of the Marine Forces Reserve
- The senior enlisted advisors of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps
- Representatives from the following three non-profit organizations supporting military families:
 - The National Military Family Association

- The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
- The Armed Services YMCA

Representatives from the National Guard and the Reserve Component are two members newly appointed as mandated by the section 562 of NDAA for FY 2010. The National Guard membership will rotate between the Air and Army National Guard every three years; the Reserve component membership will rotate among the four Services every three years.

This report starts with the recent strategic planning activities on military family readiness taking place within DoD, and then review the past Council recommendations and action taken, followed by the current priority issues identified by the Council. The report concludes with a summary of key assessment studies conducted during FY 2010.

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING ON MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

2-1. Strategic Planning on Military Family Policy and Programs

Within the Department of Defense, the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (ODASD (MC&FP)) is in charge of military family readiness policy, program and resource oversight. Strategic planning on military family readiness has been taken place periodically at different levels within ODASD (MC&FP). This section features one of the most recent off-site meetings to build consensus on an overall vision and strategy for military family readiness and develop action plans for priorities and efficiencies.

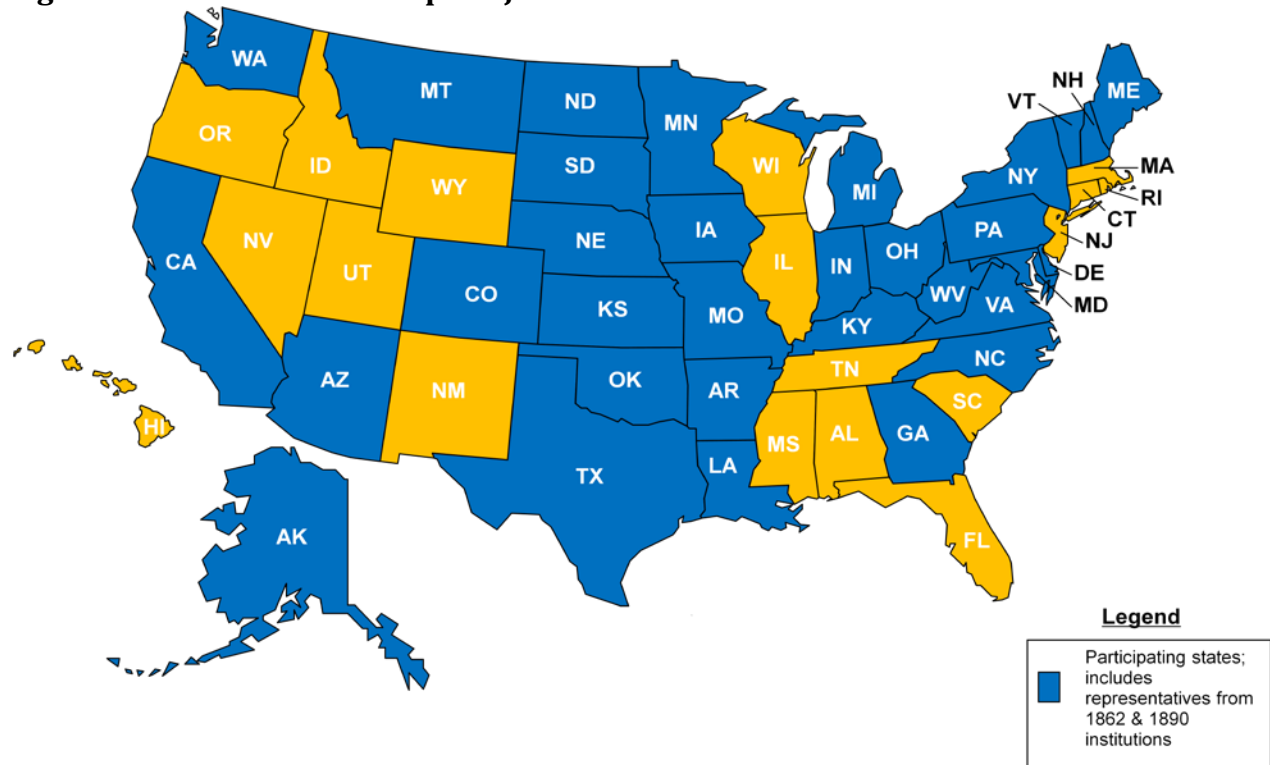
The Off-Site Meeting on Military Family Policy and Programs: The Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth (OFP/CY) within ODASD (MC&FP) meets regularly with Military Service Headquarters, Reserve and National Guard Bureau family program managers responsible for oversight of their respective family readiness policies, programs and resources to coordinate and discuss common policy concerns, initiatives, and opportunities within the family programs arena. Through regular coordination between the Office of Secretary of Defense and the Services, family program managers identified the need to develop a joint strategy that maximizes available resources to provide high-quality family readiness services to Service members and their families. To develop the joint strategy, OFP/CY held an off-site meeting, “Framing the Future of Military Family Policy and Programs,” from January 10 through January 12, 2011, in Arlington, VA.

Meeting participants included representatives from ODASD (MC&FP)); Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs; Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; National Guard Bureau; and Active and Reserve component representatives from each of the Military Services. The objectives of the meeting were to reach consensus on an overall vision and strategy for the future of military family policies and programs; to develop a plan of action for shared priorities.

Meeting outcomes included draft action plans for strategic communication and performance management. The goals and strategies associated with each plan are displayed in

In May 2010, a partnership between DoD Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and USDA (hereafter called “the DoD-USDA Partnership”) was formally launched. This partnership sustains the interagency momentum developed through collaborations with USDA, including its affiliated 111 Land-Grant universities, and the Cooperative Extension Service in providing joint programs in support of military children, youth, and families. The DoD-USDA Partnership leverages the network and programs established by USDA, covering 32 states for the ongoing projects supporting military families and children (see Figure 2). Establishing this inter-agency partnership is responsive to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations on promoting inter-agency collaboration to address future cross-cutting issues and challenges that would be better for multiple agencies to approach.¹ Creating an inter-agency partnership with USDA is particularly helpful to reach out to those who are geographically-dispersed, leveraging USDA’s strong networks of support that have been existing in civilian communities across the nation.

Figure 2. Current Partnership Project States



The purpose of the DoD-USDA partnership is tri-fold: (a) strengthen community capacity in support of military families; (b) increase professional and workforce development opportunities; and (c) expand and strengthen family, child care, and youth development programs. Since its inception in 2010, the DoD-USDA partnership has focused on cultivating

¹United States Government Accountability Office. (2005). RESUTLS-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT: Practices that can help enhance and sustain collaboration among federal agencies (GAO-06-15).

collaborations with educational institutions, non-governmental and community organizations, and other organizations with expertise in early childhood education, youth development, and family studies. Through this partnership, programs that are mutually beneficial to both military and non-military audiences are being evaluated and expanded to meet the needs of families.

Figure 3. DoD-USDA Partnership

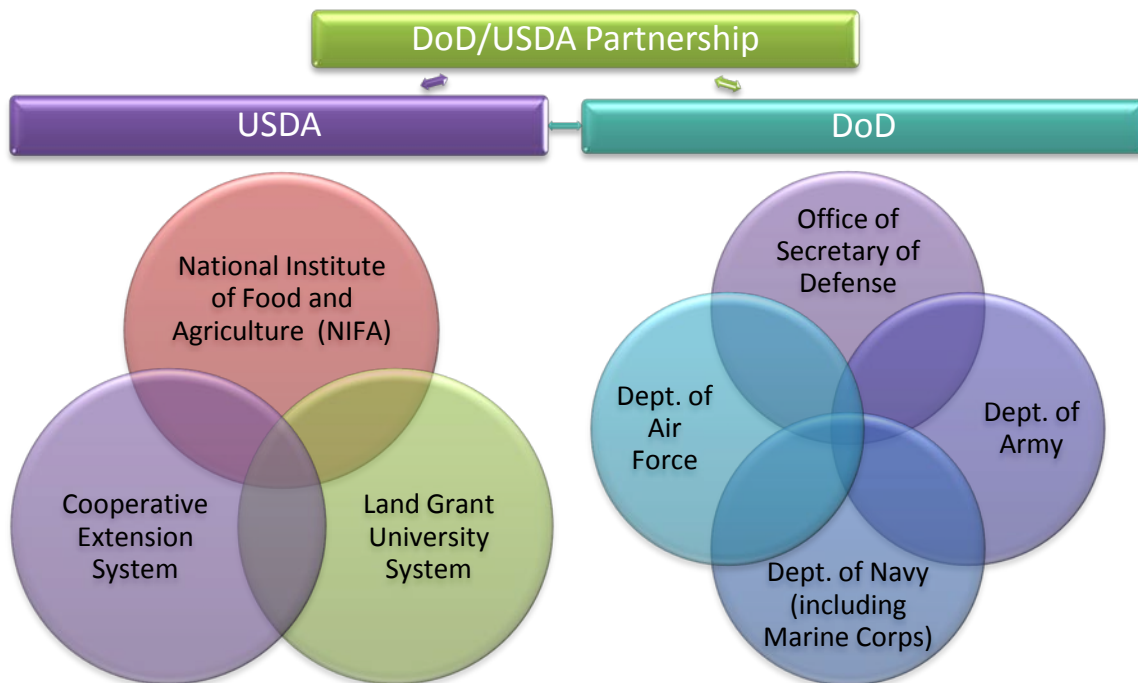


Figure 3 shows the major players in DoD and USDA in this Partnership. Within USDA, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is engaging with the Land-Grant University System and Cooperative Extension System faculty and staff to accomplish the goals of this partnership.

3. COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

3-1. FY2009 Recommendations and Action Taken

In 2009, the Council made nine recommendations aimed at improving DoD military family readiness programs and activities, ranging from improving metrics to social networking and review of programs. These recommendations were included in the FY 2009 Council report to the Secretary of Defense and the congressional defense committees submitted in February 2010. DoD has taken action on all nine recommendations, provided a status report in August 2010, and will continue efforts in these areas. In the Council meeting held on December 14, 2010, all 2009 recommendations were retired unanimously by all 12 council members.

Box 1. 2009 Council Recommendations

1. The Council recommends that DoD incorporate metrics on the implementation of Family Care Plans in place.
2. Assess the needs of medically retired severely injured Service members related to child care.
3. Review reintegration programs in light of today's operational tempo and dwell time realities.
4. Explore empowering peer-based care to address the needs of families who are newly bereaved, capitalizing on existing strengths of military families.
5. Leverage existing technology and social networking tools to a) pursue improved communication with families, and b) integrate the delivery of benefits from across federal agencies.
6. Review instruction for and delivery of school-age, pre-school and hourly child care both on-and-off installations.
7. Ensure adequate transition services in light of the diverse needs of separating Service members, including those of wounded warriors.
8. Sustain current spouse employment programs and initiatives, including continued funding of the My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) program.
9. Submit a Unified Legislative Budget (ULB) proposal to adjust travel policy and regulations to better accommodate participation of non-dependent family members and designated representatives at Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program events.

3-2. Council Priorities and Recommendations

Council members were asked to identify priority issues prior to the Council meeting on December 14, 2010. Council members discussed the priority issues submitted prior to the meeting and consolidated them into the following four priority issues:

1. **Alignment with the issue areas of the Chairman's IPTs:** Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff holds monthly Family Support Meetings, in which IPTs were formed to achieve issue resolution in the following five areas: (1) Childcare, (2) Medical, (3) Employment and Empowerment of the Military Spouse, (4) Educational and Developmental Excellence, and (5) Family/Community Strategic Communication. The Chairman's issue areas also align to the White House Inter-Agency Policy Committee on Military Families.
2. **Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP):** Although issues relevant to EFMP align to the Chairman's IPTs, the Council considers EFMP a critical military family readiness program that may require the Council's support.
3. **Boots On the Ground/Dwell Time:** The Council recognizes the importance of sufficient BOG/Dwell time for Service members and their families in a deployment cycle.
4. **Disability Evaluation System (DES):** The Council is also concerned about the impact of the time-consuming disability evaluation process on families of the wounded, injured, or ill. The Council's primary interest focuses on the DES pilot program, a joint initiative between DoD and the Department of Veterans Affairs to simplify and streamline the evaluation system for the wounded, injured, or ill.

Based on these four priority issues for the Council activities in FY2011, the Council recommends the following actions, derived from the discussion taken place at the Council meeting on December 14, 2010.

1. **Adopt the issue areas identified in the Chairman's IPTs:** The Council adopts the common themes aligned with the five Chairman's IPTs areas. Instead of expanding the list of issues, focusing on common themes will minimize the duplication of efforts and improve the synergy within DoD to create concerted efforts to address the issues relevant to military family readiness.
2. **Assess the issues surrounding Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) to build robust assistance sufficient for military families with special needs.** Although some issues related to EFMP are aligned with the Chairman's IPTs, the Council assess that the significance of EFMP warrants special attention of the Department as an independent issue area in order to ensure adequate assistance to military families with special needs.
3. **Leverage the existing efforts within DoD to provide the strategic plans, policies, and assessment of programs in the area of military family readiness:** Within DoD, ODASD (MC&FP) plays a pivotal role in the recently established efforts in program assessments and initiatives in addition to military family readiness policy, program and resource oversight. The Council recommends that DoD leverage the existing initiatives and assessment efforts to address the ongoing and emerging issues in the area of military family readiness, instead of duplicating efforts.

4. FY2010 ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

ODASD (MC&FP) has worked with other offices within the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) and through the DoD/USDA Partnership to conduct a number of assessment studies to sustain and improve the quality and delivery of military family readiness programs offered by DoD. This section provides a summary of the following four major assessment studies and mechanisms conducted or established in FY 2010.

- Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
- Military Family Needs Assessment Study
- Military Family Life Project Survey
- Autism Review: Phase I
- Military Family Mapping Project

4-1. Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness

The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness (CMFR) is an initiative of the USDA and ODASD (MC&FP), in partnership with the Land Grant University System led by Pennsylvania State University. CMFR is an interactive, knowledge-based platform for helping professionals supporting military families to support their program implementation and

assessment activities. It is specifically designed to promote and support: (1) the use of research-based decision-making; (2) the dissemination of evidence-based programs and practices; and (3) the building of the capacity of professionals assisting military families.

CMFR comprehensively reviews resources (e.g., programs, practices, and strategies) and places them in a continuum of effectiveness based on empirical evidence in order for helping professionals, Services programs managers and directors, and DoD officials to make informed decisions based on efficiency and effectiveness. CMFR also reviews existing and emerging relevant research studies and synthesizes and disseminates comprehensive, research-based information that helps promote understanding, measuring, developing, enhancing, and strengthening military families and communities. Helping professionals can have access to technical assistance and problem-solving support wherever they are, using interactive communication means (e.g., phone, web, Skype, instant messages, and text messaging) to help them adopt research-based programs and practices to enhance family readiness. Ultimately, those resources and professional tools available through CMFR will help build the professional capacity of helping professionals working with military children, youth, and families to make informed decisions to support and bolster military family functioning and resilience. Using a dynamic and interactive web-based platform, CMFR is easily accessible to professionals on military installations, as well as to those who work in the communities where military families live, work, and attend school. This allows helping professionals to access high-quality resources and information in assisting Service members and their families. In addition to providing helping professionals with an interactive online clearinghouse, CMFR also conducts program assessment-related projects, as requested. Table 3 summarizes the program areas of the ongoing projects conducted by CMFR.

Table 3. List of Major Program Areas Covered in CMFR

Program	Description
Exceptional Family Member Program	Establish an Exceptional Family Member Program Support virtual library (EFMPS virtual library) within the CMFR to enhance the knowledge and effectiveness of professionals working with that particular target audience. The “virtual” EFMPS library will catalog and house the latest research findings related to exceptional family members and evidence-informed best practices for addressing challenges to the readiness of these families. The EFMPS virtual library will provide opportunities for interactive learning and proactive technical assistance. By hosting the EFMPS virtual library, CMFR will create a cohesive, supportive virtual community that enables helping professionals, researchers, military and community leaders to make informed decisions about programs, practices and strategies designed to promote resiliency and readiness.
Identify Gaps in the Applied Research	Identify the gap between evidence and practice. Ongoing reviews and user-friendly summaries of research are critical to building the capacity of professional serving military families. Thus, CMFR will continue to synthesize existing and emerging research on topics identified as critical by the DoD-USDA staff. The outcomes of the synthesis of research will be: (i) the identification of robust findings that cut across various research studies; (ii) directions for further research based on the gaps within the extant research; and (iii) guidance of potential prevention and intervention strategies that could be adopted for use with military families.

Program	Description
Homegrown Programs	Identify and select 5-10 homegrown military programs targeted at military families which will be assessed (with practitioners) using established standards of evidence. The assessment of these programs and practices will focus on their theoretical-base, core elements, and malleability for improvement of efficacy and transportability. Next steps, will be piloting the revised homegrown programs in identified sites. A Community of Practice will be formed for those interested in improving their homegrown programs.
Emergency Family Assistance Centers (EFACs) Best Practices	Develop a best practices resource guide for Emergency Family Assistance Centers to build the capacity of those serving military families (e.g., military family support professionals, military and civilian social service providers, base commanders, and volunteers) by providing military families with a comprehensive, evidence-based practices planning guide to maintain readiness in the face of significant and unexpected emergencies. The CMFR will gather and review “best practices” from the civilian community related to emergency response on behalf of families, including the growing research on first responders; gather and review military “best practices” (e.g., Pentagon After Action Report; the military branches’ policies and manuals, etc.); and develop a guide of best practice (DoD-wide Emergency Family Support) that represents a compilation of the common best practices as well as best practices tailored to unique situations faced by military families.
Reserve Affairs - Yellow Ribbon Program (forthcoming)	Reserve Affairs (RA) has a number of requirements centered on the Yellow Ribbon Program (YRP). The CMFR will collect materials and programs from Service contacts; provide comprehensive narrative reports identifying what YRP programs have a strong level of evidence based practice; report on reviewed materials to include best practices, curriculum, and supporting training materials; provide reports and recommendations pertaining to YR surveys, after action reports, and attendance metrics (all when available); provide reports to support Congressional and military reporting requirements on an as needed basis; and develop materials that cover identified gaps.

4-2. Military Family Needs Assessment Study

At the request of ODASD (MC&FP), a research team headed by Dr. Angela Huebner at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University conducted the Military Family Needs Assessment from September 2009 through April 2010. Although there have been a number of studies on Service members and support services for them, very few studies have focused on the needs and experience of family members in seeking support services. This study was designed to fill this gap in our knowledge on military family needs by collecting qualitative data from Service members and their families on what is working and what is not in the arena of family education and support.

Participants in the study were composed of Service members and their adult family members. Each Service branch, both Active and Reserve components, were represented in the sample. Two data collection methods were used in this study: focus groups and an online open-ended survey. The questions asked in focus groups mirrored those asked in the online survey. The following five main themes were identified in the study: (1) accessing resources; (2) barriers to accessing support; (3) National Guard/Reserve issues; (4) child and youth issues; (5) issues

unique to specific sub-populations (e.g., Individual Augmentees (IAs), dual military couples and families with special needs). Box 3 provides a summary of these five main themes from focus groups and the online survey. A full report on this study is available on the MilitaryHOMEFRONT website.²

Service members and their families discussed extensively how to reach and sustain high levels of family readiness in terms of the relationship with their commanders and three major suggestions from the participants are summarized below:

1. Commander Initiated Contact: Participants suggested that they were hesitant to engage with their commander unless the contact is initiated by him or her. Commander-initiated contact would benefit commanders by opening up communication channels to recognize if and when their Service members and families need additional support to overcome challenges associated with deployment and the military life.
2. Training for Commanders: Although there are a number of support programs and services available to military families, it is often overwhelming to find the right program or service to best address their needs. Study participants repeatedly voiced their preference that the chain of command should take the initiative to inform Service members about support programs and resources available to them. Participants suggested that training and information sessions would help familiarize commanders with available support programs and services.
3. Top-Down Messages: Participants were skeptical about the sincerity of the messages from their chain of command about the importance of utilizing the military support programs and services. They were worried about potential negative consequences by using those support resources. Participants stated that it would reduce stigma to use resources if their commander strongly endorses programs (i.e., making some programs mandatory).

² The report is available in the Reports section on the MilitaryHOMEFRONT website at <http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/reports>

Box 3. Five Main Themes Identified in the Military Family Needs Assessment Study.

I. Accessing Resources: Participants reported willingness to seek support depended a great deal on the recommendation of a trusted family member, friend, neighbor, or co-worker. Participants were more likely to access support if someone they knew had already done so and reported a positive experience. Formal classes were highlighted as an important resource.

II. Barriers to Accessing Support: The barriers cited by participants tended to fall into one of three interrelated categories: (1) awareness; (2) accessibility; and (3) acceptability. Information overload was often cited as a barrier to really knowing what participants actually need.

III. National Guard/Reserve Issues: National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families reported some unique concerns from those reported by Active Duty service members and their families. These issues include: (1) their unique culture of service; (2) difficulty accessing support; (3) differences in funding mechanisms; and (4) continuity of support services and programs.

IV. Child & Youth Issues: Participants' discussion of child and youth issues covered a spectrum of topics and varied a great deal in terms of context. These issues grouped into four main categories: (1) programs that help military children; (2) child care; (3) recognition of extended family members and caregivers of military children; and (4) educational issues.

V. Special Populations: This section highlights issues unique to specific sub-populations of the military including Individual Augmentees (IAs), Dual Military Couples and those affiliated with EFMP. IAs and their families discussed difficulty in integrating into a new unit for deployment (not the one they have trained with) and then in reintegrating back into their old unit upon return from deployment. Unique barriers mentioned by Active Duty dual military spouses included: (1) the misperception that spouses on Active Duty do not need the support services as much as civilian spouses and (2) time support is offered conflicts with their duty hours. Issues raised by families with special needs revolved around: (1) access and outreach; (2) gaps in coverage and availability; (3) isolation; and (4) support.

4-3. Military Family Life Project Survey

DoD conducts cross-sectional surveys of military spouses on a recurring basis; however, these research efforts are not able to capture the long-term impact of the deployment cycle. A longitudinal design allows for the effects of deployments to be assessed over time and will provide a more comprehensive view of Active duty families' well-being by tracking the same group of survey participants over time. The Military Family Life Project (MFLP) is a two-wave longitudinal survey study of the impact of deployments on Active duty families, developed through collaboration between ODASD (MC&FP) and the Defense Manpower Data Center. The first wave of the survey was fielded in May 2010. The sample represents spouses from all DoD Services in the Active duty component. Approximately 28,500 spouses of Active duty Service members participated in the survey. Participants were given choices of web-based and paper-and-pencil surveys. To collect the paired sample, the June 2010 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members (SOFS-A) included Service member spouses of the MFLP survey participants in the sample and asked them questions that complemented the MFLP survey.

About 5,000 couples completed the MFLP survey and the SOFA-A matching items. The project will survey the same group of spouses and Service members in the second wave of data collection, which will take place in early summer of 2011. These survey results can help DoD and the Services plan to offer the right family readiness program to the right people at the right time during the deployment cycle. Collection of the second wave data and further data analysis will enhance the efficacy of the MFLP survey in program planning and policy-making in the arena of family readiness.

4-4. Autism Review: Phase I

DoD worked with Ohio State University to review access and availability of evidence-based educational practices for military children with autism spectrum disorders in the following five states: California, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. These states were selected based on their number of assigned military personnel. The project team researched the national and state-level developments that affect the availability and access to autism spectrum disorders-related educational services. Local school districts serving military installations in the five states were surveyed regarding the educational services they provide to children, ages 3 to 21, with autism spectrum disorders.

Study results show that military children have access to evidence-based educational practices at school districts serving military installations, although the levels or type of services do not always meet the needs of families. Recommendations for DoD are to (1) enhance the assignment process for military families of children with autism spectrum disorders to include more specific information about the needs of such children; (2) expand the evidence-based practices covered by TRICARE's Autism Demonstration Project; (3) infuse additional family supports into the Exceptional Family Member Program; (4) add the contents on autism spectrum disorders to the Military Family Readiness Clearinghouse at Penn State University, and (5) monitor the number of military families with children with autism spectrum disorders assigned to specific districts to avoid overwhelming a particular district's resources.

The project team also developed the Education Directory for Children with Special Needs that provides useful advice and resources to help assignment personnel as they assist families in preparation of a new assignment within the fifty states. This directory is available both online and in print. DoD will work with Ohio State University again to conduct Phase II of this project, which will expand the scope of research by adding ten additional states with a high concentration of military families. Phase II will also include a review of early intervention services for children from birth through two years of age as well as services for children with intellectual disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders in all 15 states covered in the Phase I and Phase II studies.

4-5. Military Child and Youth Mapping Project

For the effective service delivery of child and youth programs, it is imperative to analyze the military family demographic data using geospatial analysis techniques. Layering various elements of the geospatial information can help us utilize the existing military family demographic data more effectively to strategize our approach to military family support in communities. DoD has collaborated with the University of Nebraska, Lincoln to map the

locations and county populations of military families across the United States. Phase I of this project is complete and entails the mapping of military children by age, service and component (Active, Reserve, and National Guard). These maps can be utilized to provide a visual as well as numerical representation of the populations of military children and youth in states to help DoD provide family readiness programs. Sample maps are presented in Figure 4 and 5. Phase II and III of this project will map military spouses and families respectively and will be completed in FY 2011.

Figure 4. Concentrations of Military Children/Youth in Virginia

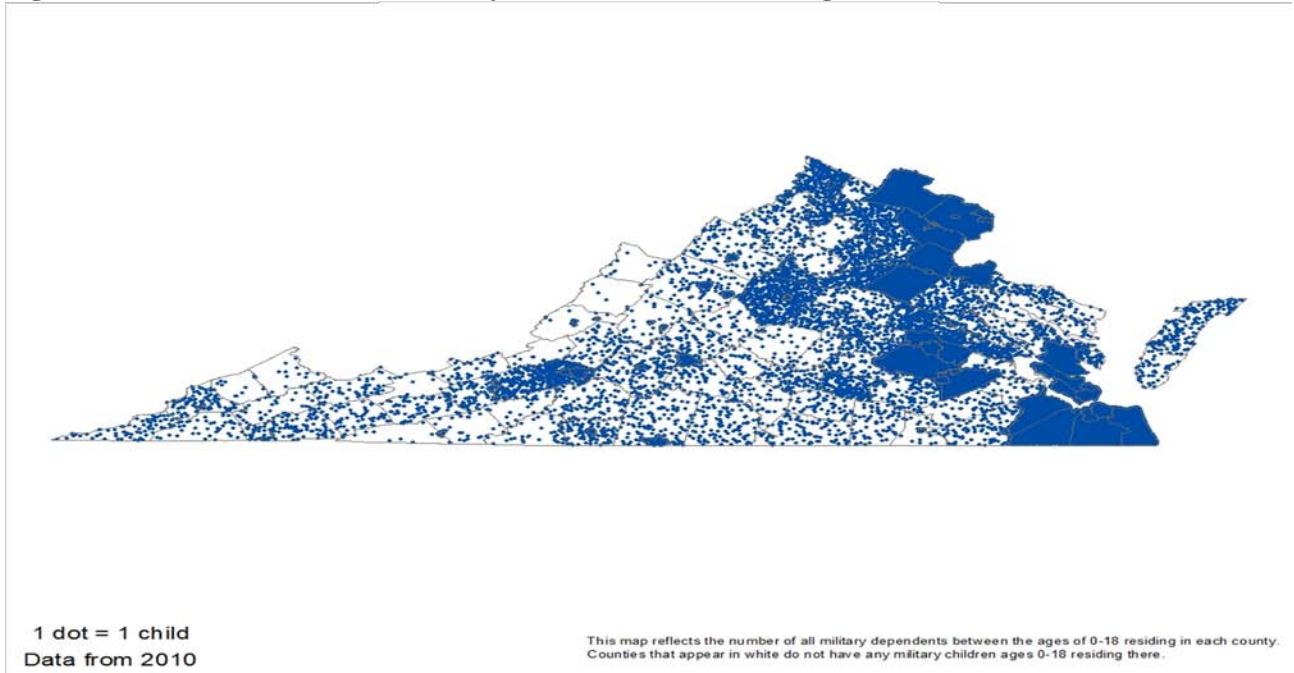
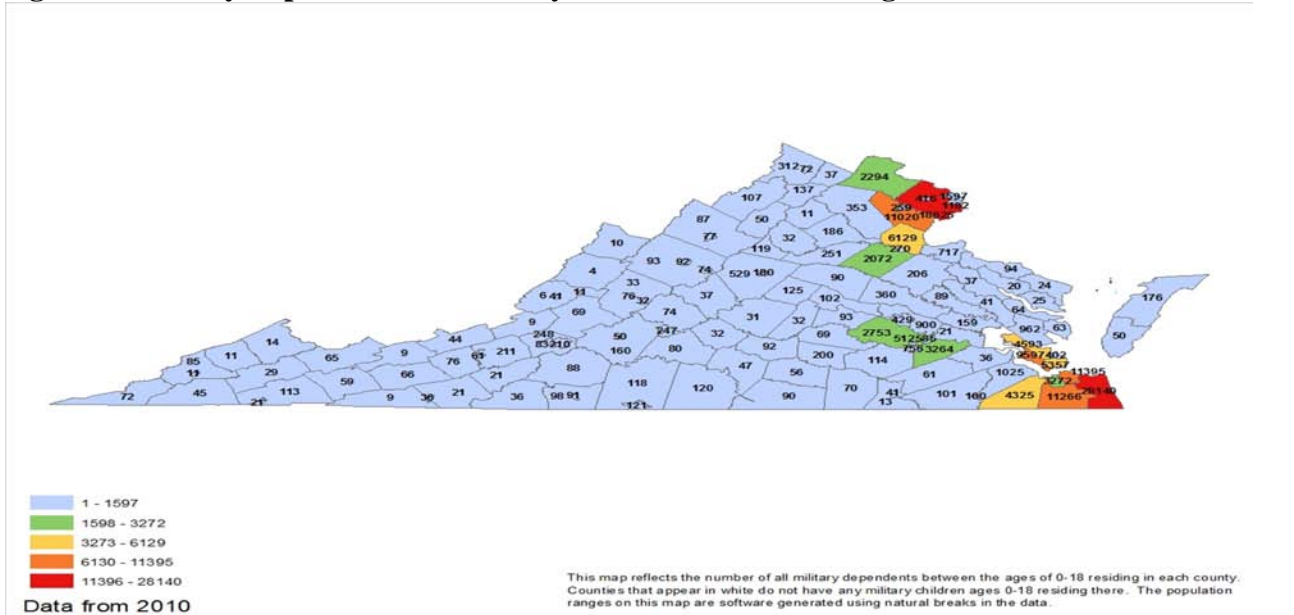


Figure 5. County Populations of Military Children/Youth in Virginia



5. CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, a number of initiatives, assessment studies, and strategic planning efforts for the well-being of military families have been established and are the momentum to address the issues surrounding military family readiness. Instead of expanding the issue areas, the Council recommends leveraging existing efforts to strengthen military family readiness through concerted efforts across all sectors of American society — citizens, local communities, businesses, non-profit organizations, and local and federal governments. In FY 2010, the Department made significant progress in assessment activities of family readiness programs by launching a new infrastructure for program implementation and assessment and conducting several major assessment studies. The Council's recommendations and assessment results presented in this report aim at supporting the Departmental efforts to promote the delivery of the right family readiness programs to the right families and communities at the right time.

**APPENDIX A:
List of Abbreviations**

CMFR – Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
DES – Disability Evaluation System
DMDC – Defense Manpower Data Center
DoD – Department of Defense
EFMP – Exceptional Family Member Program
FY – Fiscal Year
MFLP – Military Family Life Project
NDAA – National Defense Authorization Act
NIFA – National Institute of Food and Agriculture
OSD – Office of Secretary of Defense
OASD (RA) – Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs
ODASD (MC&FP) – Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy
OFP/CY – Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture