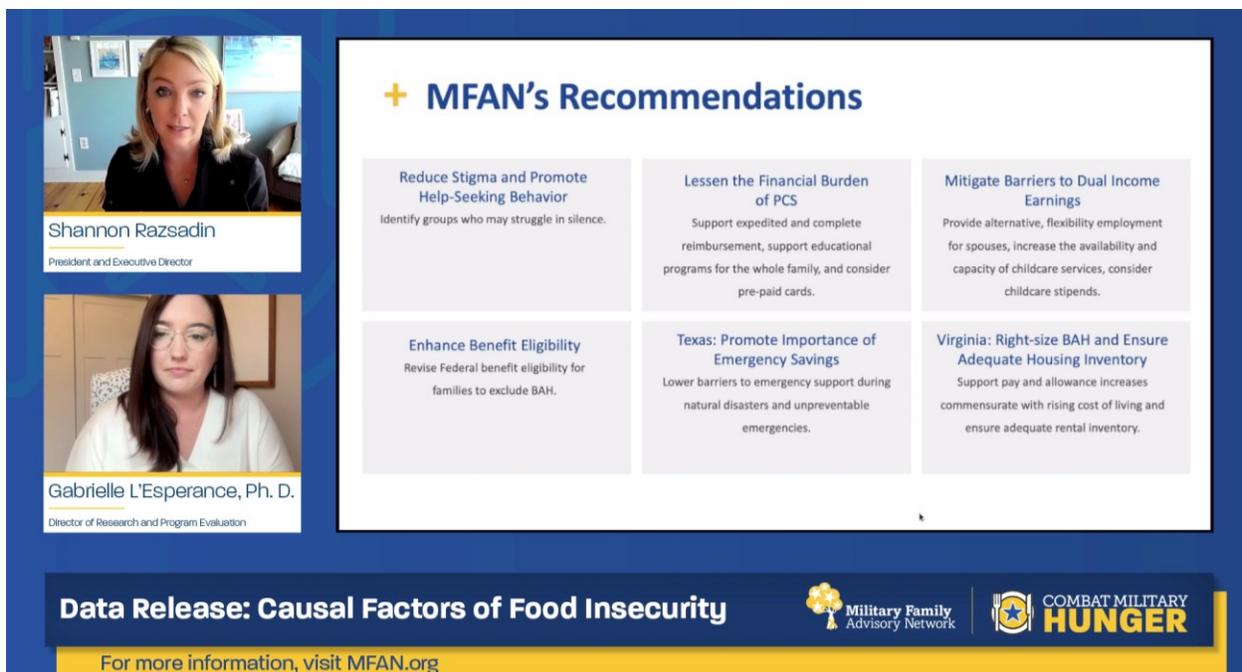


**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 1, 2022

## **Military Family Advisory Network’s latest research pinpoints causal factors of military and veteran family food insecurity**

WASHINGTON – Today, the [Military Family Advisory Network \(MFAN\)](#) released their latest research report: *Causal Factors of Military and Veteran Family Food Insecurity*. This first-of-its-kind qualitative study illuminates the challenges those who serve face every day when attempting to put food on the table.



**+ MFAN's Recommendations**

<p><b>Reduce Stigma and Promote Help-Seeking Behavior</b> Identify groups who may struggle in silence.</p>	<p><b>Lessen the Financial Burden of PCS</b> Support expedited and complete reimbursement, support educational programs for the whole family, and consider pre-paid cards.</p>	<p><b>Mitigate Barriers to Dual Income Earnings</b> Provide alternative, flexibility employment for spouses, increase the availability and capacity of childcare services, consider childcare stipends.</p>
<p><b>Enhance Benefit Eligibility</b> Revise Federal benefit eligibility for families to exclude BAH.</p>	<p><b>Texas: Promote Importance of Emergency Savings</b> Lower barriers to emergency support during natural disasters and unpreventable emergencies.</p>	<p><b>Virginia: Right-size BAH and Ensure Adequate Housing Inventory</b> Support pay and allowance increases commensurate with rising cost of living and ensure adequate rental inventory.</p>

**Data Release: Causal Factors of Food Insecurity**

For more information, visit [MFAN.org](#)

*(Click the image above to watch the full research release)*

"Over the past decade, MFAN has devoted countless hours to understanding the lived experiences of military families. It is through our research that we discover where they most need support," said MFAN President and Executive Director Shannon Rzsadin. "Unfortunately, we know that families are struggling to provide healthy food. Now we've made it our focus to learn why so that we and our colleagues in this space may work towards lasting solutions."

In 2021, an MFAN survey found one in five military families were experiencing food insecurity. That number rose from one in eight in 2019. Now for the first time, MFAN is shedding light on the casual factors of food insecurity in the military community.

With the help of the [Bob Woodruff Foundation](#) and [Wounded Warrior Project](#), MFAN interviewed 312 food insecure military families from April 2021 through March 2022. Each family resided in a major military community in Texas and the Tidewater region of Virginia. These results come directly from the experiences of actively serving households (75 percent), veteran households (10 percent), and retiree households (5 percent).

"MFAN has the unique ability to understand the evolving needs of military families through our peer-led network and trusted research," said Director of Research and Program Evaluation Dr. Gabby L'Esperance. "I want to thank our military families who bravely participated in this effort. These findings will allow us to advance the dialogue and help prioritize solutions for combating military hunger."

Most notably, this study identified six causal factors of food insecurity. These factors have compounded pre-existing pressures and demonstrate the resultant journey of arriving to the point of food insecurity.

- 1. Spousal Unemployment** - Families mentioned their military spouse is unemployed or underemployed. These families struggled to afford meat and produce but let their children eat balanced meals first.
- 2. Growing families** - Families' expenses grew exponentially after having children. They faced budgeting challenges, and many needed to prioritize paying bills over buying balanced meals.
- 3. Recent PCS** - These families struggled to make ends meet after a move. Some faced delays in permanent change of station (PCS) reimbursement through the military and many could not put balanced food on the table after a spouse was unemployed following a move.
- 4. Unexpected Expenses** - Whether facing a vehicle repair or veterinary bill, these families were pushed into food insecurity because they incurred unexpected expenses.
- 5. External Systems Shock** - Families on the brink of food insecurity who faced an uncharacteristic natural disaster in their area (i.e., ice storm) that disrupted their typical balance and shifted them into food insecurity.
- 6. Rising Cost of Living** - Military pay has not risen to meet growing inflation, carrying these military families into food insecurity.

From these research findings, MFAN has also developed key recommendations for stakeholders to take actionable steps towards long-term solutions.

"It is important to us as an organization, and vital to our military-connected community, that this research does not sit on a shelf," added Rzasadin. "We want you to ask us questions. We

encourage you to dig into this information so that you or your organization can best determine what systems and solutions to put in place in order to alleviate this burden on military family members. There is plenty of work to go around and we must get in front of this together.”

Review the full reports [HERE](#).

\*\*\*MFAN’s president and executive director, Shannon Razsadin, and director of research and program evaluation, Dr. Gabby L’Esperance, are available for interview. If interested, contact Derek Doyle at [doyle@mfan.org](mailto:doyle@mfan.org).\*\*\*

To learn more about supporting military families experiencing food insecurity, visit [combatmilitaryhunger.org](http://combatmilitaryhunger.org).

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**About MFAN:** The Military Family Advisory Network is the authentic voice of the modern military family and the bridge that connects military families to the resources, people, and information they depend on to successfully navigate all phases of military life. Learn more at [mfan.org](http://mfan.org).

**About Bob Woodruff Foundation:** The Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF) was founded in 2006 after reporter Bob Woodruff was wounded by a roadside bomb while covering the war in Iraq. Since then, BWF has led an enduring call to action for people to stand up for heroes and meet the emerging and long-term needs of today’s veterans, including mental health, caregiver support, food insecurity, and service-connected fertility issues. To date, BWF has invested over \$85 million to Find, Fund and Shape™ programs that have empowered impacted veterans, service members, and their family members, across the nation, reinforcing the message that BWF has ‘Got Your Six’. For more information, as well as stories of success and innovation from BWF’s network of partners, please visit [bobwoodrufffoundation.org](http://bobwoodrufffoundation.org).

**About Wounded Warrior Project:** Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is committed to serving the post-9/11 generation and all future generations of injured service members, ensuring they get the care, attention, and support they deserve. WWP also serves the family members and caregivers who are an integral part of the warrior’s recovery and transition back into civilian life. Learn more at [woundedwarriorproject.org](http://woundedwarriorproject.org).

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