



**Military Family
Advisory Network**

Military Family Advisory Network
MFAN Solutions Summit 2022
Part I: Executive Summary and Summit Report

Report prepared by

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A-G ASSOCIATES
ORGANIZATIONAL CONSULTING SERVICES

MFAN Solutions Summit 2022

Workgroup Recommendations and A-G Final Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Thursday, July 14, 2022, the Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN) presented the data release for the *Military Family Support Programming Survey: 2021 Results*. The release was presented online and in person at the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC. The survey is a compilation of 8,638 survey respondents addressing health care, family relationships, financial readiness, housing, food insecurity, and military community and transition. Following this event, MFAN hosted a Solutions Summit on Friday, July 15, 2022. The summit was facilitated by A-G Associates, Inc, a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) and minority-owned 8(a) consulting firm.

The Solutions Summit brought together stakeholders primarily associated with military, veterans, and their families, including representatives and participants of:

- Previous and current MFAN Advisory Board members
- MFAN staff and Board of Directors
- Private business
- Non-profit organizations
- Advocacy groups
- Representatives from the government space participating as interested parties, but not speaking on behalf of any local, state, federal, or government agency

The goal of the Solutions Summit was to use the MFAN data to convene discussions among invested parties who would identify potential solutions to address issues surrounding military families.

Key Themes, Recommendations and Next Steps

The five workgroups outlined 30 top-line recommendations and 29 second- and third-tier recommendations, each of which are presented in this report. Looking across groups, the following themes and recommendations came up during several workgroups:

1. There are many organizations dedicated to serving military, veterans, and their families (approximately 30,000), all with varying degrees of program focus, scale, geographic location, and quality. There is a need for centralized analysis and programmatic information for those seeking solutions.
2. All groups discussed some elements of desired policy changes to improve the lives of military-connected families. Because legislative and military policy change was

acknowledged by all as worthy long-term efforts and goals, groups identified the need for improved dissemination of properly vetted, valid resources of existing, effective programming.

3. The family-to-family resource sharing network is a very effective way to share resources. Having local liaisons that are well-connected to resources in the area could be an impactful way to help navigate resources. This resource can be scaled through social media and can improve efficiency and effectiveness for already-existing solutions.
4. There were aspects of career development and education that came up in each of the five areas. The conversations noted the need to involve both service members and spouses in programs and opportunities.
5. Expansion of existing surveys and programs to better assess and address diversity, equity, and inclusion. Consider specific workgroup recommendations to better serve the needs that are not always captured in survey results, such as the specific significant stressors in the lives of LGBTQ+, BIPOC, spousal/family needs, service branch/rank, and other areas of difference that impact military-connected individuals.

To address the needs of the military family community, we recommend the following next steps for the next year:

1. Incorporate the feedback gained in both the survey and summit into MFAN's strategic planning process. Once the strategic plan is complete, share a summary of the plan with all participants and discuss how their feedback led to MFAN's areas of focus.
2. Encourage the development of tangible partnerships among like-minded military service organizations (MSOs) and veteran service organizations (VSOs). Partnerships should contain agreements that outline reciprocal relationships to benefit both organizations with measurable performance metrics.
3. Publicize partnerships with the above-referenced organizations through a series of (continued) social media posts. Each post should be intentional and discuss the benefits of using partnerships to solve complex problems in the military family space.
4. Continue the process of using workgroups to address the recommendations identified in this summit and ask for continued participation from the government, private sector, nonprofit, and military community.
5. In collaboration with MFAN partners, look to harness and expand existing online resources and/or working portals designed to compile, sort, and disseminate effective military family programs and opportunities. Identify areas of transition, housing, food

insecurity, telehealth, mental health, and family well-being that may not be fully represented in the existing online portals.

This Executive Summary is presented as a top-line overview of the MFAN Solutions Summit. What follows are the full MFAN Solution Summit recommendations and all workgroup data.

MFAN SOLUTIONS SUMMIT FINAL REPORT

The MFAN Solutions Summit included a detailed discussion of the *Military Family Support Programming Survey: 2021 Results* and active workgroup discussions to develop specific recommendations addressing five specific domains. The day also featured collaborative discussions among the 63 Solution Summit participants, including interested parties, MFAN current and former Advisory Members, and MFAN staff.

Based on the results of the Programming Survey, MFAN identified the five areas below as the focus of the Solutions Summit:

1. Military Transition
2. Telehealth and Health Care
3. Family Well-being
4. Food Insecurity
5. Housing

Summit attendees identified preferences and were assigned to a breakout group according to these five topic areas. Each group was asked to identify the current landscape of available solutions and to develop recommendations to address challenges and concerns experienced by military-connected families. The recommendations were designed to be researched and utilized by any individual, nonprofit organization, corporation, government agency, legislative body, or other entity invested in the care and well-being of the military family.

Key takeaways from the MFAN Solution Summit include:

- A widespread acknowledgement of a great deal of programs that are effective in addressing the needs of military-connected families, along with the accordant frustration with a large military-connected community that reports either underutilization of programs or a lack of awareness of the programs themselves
- A desire to actively collaborate across organizational lines to achieve effective economies-of-scale to address MFAN Solution Summit recommendations
- An active desire to remain connected with MFAN and specific workgroups

WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The following recommendations and next steps highlight the top-line results of the full summit. Due to the length and quantity of data collected by each group at the MFAN Solutions Summit, details of full work sessions, including analysis of the current landscape, variations of workgroup process, raw notes of workgroup discussion, and flipchart captures are presented as individual sections in Part II - Appendix.

Please note that each workgroup recognized the potential expansion of every idea and discussion point as more time and reflection become available.

MILITARY TRANSITION WORKGROUP

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand on MFAN's data release recommendation to improve the One-on-One Transition Process:
 - a. Create a framework evaluation tool to evaluate the needs of each service member throughout service that results in successful transition.
 - b. Collection of above data from baseline to current (6-month or yearly intervals) is presented to TAP counselor. This results in tailored recommendation to service member/family that considers the context and growth of a service member.
 - c. Expand TAP Counseling Services to include broader training, (Higher Ed, Financial Readiness, Professional Development).
2. Expand, strengthen, & streamline SkillBridge, promote the inclusion of spouses, and increase the percentage of service member participation.
 - a. Find a staffing solution, which will require a policy change and take the program involvement out of command decision.
3. Address and expand licensing reciprocity (CDLs, other trades).
4. Create an advertising, communication, PSA campaign to increase awareness of TAP, DoD SkillBridge, and any other effective transition program.
5. Create a single-point transition website.

NEXT STEPS

1. Attendees from USAA and CVS support MFAN connecting with Hiring Our Heroes and Veterans Jobs Mission.
2. Hold additional meetings with the Military Transition Working Group to continue the conversation.

TELEHEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH WORKGROUP

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A centralized/dedicated platform to connect military families with care providers in their current or gaining communities:
 - a. Use health coaches that can work across state lines to serve as care navigators/liaisons:
 - i. Often, the issue is not necessarily mental health related; it may be another health issue, a medical issue, food insecurity, etc. Coaches can help identify what these issues are.
 - ii. They can help with referrals, help direct and connect these families to the correct resources.
 - iii. Consider recruiting military spouses to fill the role.
 - b. Consider one that has the capability to do mental health triage.
 - c. Incorporate translators to ensure all can access adequate, culturally competent care.
 - d. Ensure accessibility for people with visual or hearing impairments and neurological differences.
 - e. Have a “checklist” for active-duty and reservist military families as they transition in and out of the military to help with continuity of care.

2. Create remote opportunities for military spouses and address the shortage of mental/behavior health providers:
 - a. Collaborate with college programs/medical schools/universities to upstream shortage issue.
 - b. Hire military spouses / prioritize military spouses.
 - c. Provide training programs on base.
 - d. Address portability issues about licenses.
 - e. Utilize the workforce that's ready to go.
 - f. Virtual internships.
 - g. Create incentives.

3. Develop a program to address the technology skills gap:
 - a. User experience for most systems is not geared for the elderly. For example, the buttons need to be bigger.
 - b. VA did a project with Facebook Portal:
 - i. Eight thousand were sent to Veterans and caregivers – easy technology, but there were still people who found it challenging.
 - c. Must help people overcome that barrier and get people to engage; help them get over that hurdle.

- d. Having children and a caregiver in the home can help with technology. They can help “soften” it.
 - i. Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts assist in similar programs in the community

NEXT STEPS

1. Conduct research into which services military families are purchasing outside of Tricare and why.
2. Connect with Tricare for Kids Coalition to share MFAN survey data and explore opportunities for partnerships.

FAMILY WELL-BEING WORKGROUP

RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding data and surveys

1. Conduct upstream-downstream and stage of service research—employing a collaborative research approach.
2. Prioritize findings for addressing interventions.
3. Use research and findings to build trust.
4. Map well-being according to a well-being scale and align outreach and resources with the well-being journey.

Outreach

1. Convert subliminal messaging to more active outreach strategies (i.e., voluntelling personnel and/or families to participate in certain programs).
2. Transitioning firehose of resources throughout service time.
3. Conduct outreach with military influencers and administrators on social media to reach younger spouses and family members/caregivers.
4. Fund more non-command events to create connections that can lead to resources sharing and build community across families regardless of rank.

Partnerships

1. Formulate a coalition on well-being.
2. Have coalition and partnership organizer/leaders that will stay on top of enacting action plans at local levels.
3. Build partnerships between LOCAL community business partners and one various coalition organizer using an accountability measure to share resources.

NEXT STEPS

1. Research the most effective methods for conducting active outreach to military families and connecting them with relevant resources.
2. MFAN can connect with other organizations that conduct research in the military/veteran family space (e.g., Blue Star Families) to explore opportunities for collaborative research.

FOOD INSECURITY WORKGROUP
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a cyclical partnership where top-level leaders set the tone and policy, national partners assist with best practices and coordination, and local stakeholders implement plans that are informed by the local needs of diverse communities.
2. Disseminate communication and messaging to promote education and encourage help-seeking behavior around food insecurity and reduce stigma.
3. Encourage all partners to call out military families in DEI policies at all levels to alleviate financial strain, which is a root cause of food insecurity.
4. Improve DOD's policies to provide predictability and stability for families during periods of transition.
5. Improve food distribution and co-locating resources, such as screening, programs based on successful models/best practices.

NEXT STEPS

1. Explore methods to counter the stigma around food insecurity and accessing support services.
2. Research food distribution methods that have been effective in other communities.

HOUSING WORKGROUP
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Rework the BAH. Should be 100% of housing cost in the zip code (not 95%) and combined with cost-of-living benchmarks.
 - a. Partnerships: OSC should work closely with the Office of Economic Development at the state level.
 - b. Tie life skills/financial readiness education for active-duty members and spouses to existing events/activities (e.g., promotion, family bonding events, PCS

(Permanent Change of Station), DEERS (Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System), transition), and incentivize it (e.g., a day off, family event, etc.).

- c. Partnerships: Certified housing counseling agencies through HUD, non-profit agencies, Strong Bonds, Protection of the Force & Family (POTFF), YMCA, and funders, American Military Banking Association (AMBA).
2. Rework NDAA to clarify and standardize resident advocacy program across all branches.
3. Resident advocates contribute to the performance ratings of property owners.
 - a. Partnerships: MFAN can help build partnerships – including, current resident advocates from all branches, military housing, privatized housing, high-level policymakers. Representatives from multiple viewpoints.
4. Use AFI’s quarterly resident councils (gathering of local resident advocates quarterly) as springboard to similar groups in all branches.
5. Create an independent watchdog group for military housing (OIG?).
6. Make sure housing is a component of transition solutions.

NEXT STEPS

1. Explore avenues for MFAN to foster collaboration between military housing office resident advocates across bases and branches
2. Look into the effective, appropriate methods MFAN can encourage cooperation between military housing offices and private military housing organizations

SUMMARY

The Military Family Advisory Network Solutions Summit examined the *Military Family Support Programming Survey: 2021 Results* data release. Five workgroups identified specific recommendations to address concerns and challenges experienced by military families. The recommendations were designed to be researched and utilized by any individual, nonprofit organization, corporation, government agency, legislative body, or other entity invested in the care and well-being of the military family.

MFAN’s leadership is a convening organization that provides tangible paths to address a wide array of topics across specific industry domains. The recommendations and the granular workgroup material presented in this report document the constructive, collaborative effort of the full MFAN organization, advisory network, and Summit attendees.

Submitted July 28, 2022

A-G Associates, Inc.

An SDVOSB, 8(a) Minority-Owned Consulting Firm

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