



**Military Family  
Advisory Network**

**ARMY**

# **Emergency Grocery Support Program**

Stabilizing Military Families  
During the 2025 Government Shutdown

## A Letter from Shannon



Before the government shutdown began, MFAN's data was already telling an alarming story: 1 in 4 military families experience food insecurity. Rising costs of living, frequent moves, military spouse employment challenges, and limited financial buffers have left many households operating far too close to the financial edge.

When the shutdown became imminent, we knew what a delay in pay would mean. For families already stretching every dollar, even a short disruption could force impossible choices — between groceries and rent, prescriptions and childcare, car payments and utilities.

The shutdown did not create this vulnerability, but it sharply accelerated strain for families already living month to month. At MFAN, we asked a simple question: What can we do right now to meet this moment?

Because of our PCS Pantry Restock Box program, we already had a logistical framework in place. Within one week, our team retooled that infrastructure to launch the Emergency Grocery Support Program — mobilizing eligibility verification, procurement, and national distribution.

Within 72 hours, more than 50,000 verified military families applied for assistance.

The need was staggering — far more than any one organization could meet alone. But what followed was equally powerful. Corporate partners, foundations, and individuals stepped forward, enabling MFAN to raise more than \$1 million and launch a direct emergency grocery response for military families nationwide.

Ultimately, we provided grocery support to 6,685 families across all 50 states, delivering more than 82,000 meals when they were needed most. Beyond food, this effort delivered something equally important: reassurance. Families told us the support reduced stress, restored stability, and reminded them they were not invisible amid uncertainty.

While the Emergency Grocery Support Program has concluded, its lessons remain. We now have an even clearer understanding of how many military families are living one disrupted paycheck away from crisis — and a renewed commitment to elevate their voices, strengthen systems, and advance solutions that get left of crisis.

When we put our heads on the pillow at night during the shutdown, we wanted to know we had done everything possible to stand with military families. Because of you, we did.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Shannon'.

**Shannon Razzadin**  
Chief Executive Officer

# A Nationwide Response at Scale

**6,685**

Families Served



**82,835**

Meals Served



“

*"We received our food box in the mail yesterday and are completely overwhelmed by your support and generosity. The box was not only physical food, but a sense of relief for the week ahead, and for that, we're incredibly grateful."*

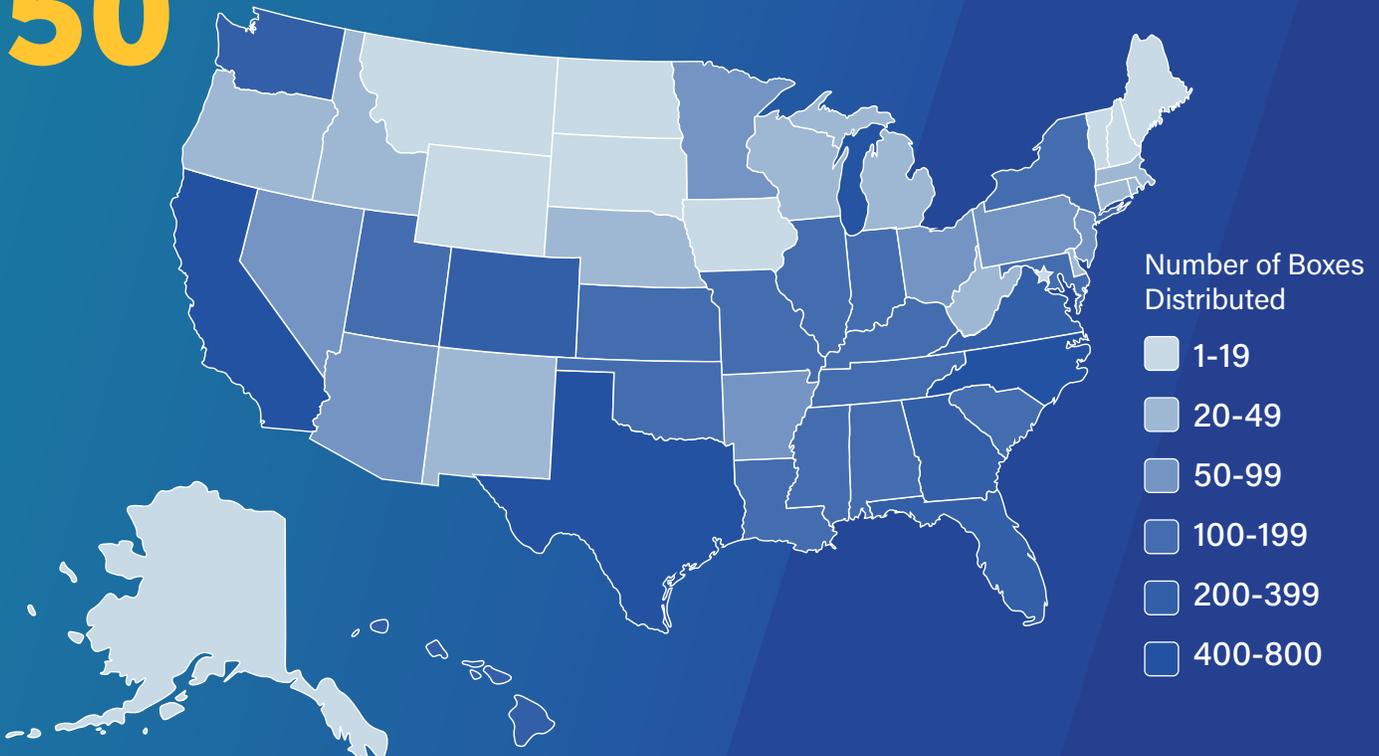
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**50,662**

Verified Applicants

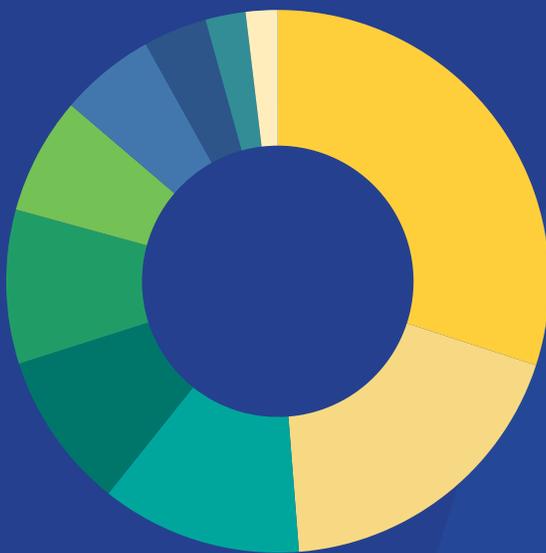
Each verified military family served received a \$200 shelf-stable grocery box designed to feed a household of four for approximately one week - shipped directly to their home - and a \$25 commissary gift card to purchase fresh foods and accommodate a variety of dietary needs.

## 50 States Served



# Demographics & Household Indicators for Families Served

## Branch of Service



- Army – 30.1%
- Army National Guard – 18.8%
- Army Reserve – 11.7%
- Air Force – 9.4%
- Air National Guard – 9.2%
- Navy – 7%
- Navy Reserve – 5.7%
- Air Force Reserve – 3.8%
- Marine Corps – 2.4%
- Other – 1.9%



**Rank**  
**71%**  
E1–E6



**80%**  
Have 4+ household members



**75%**  
Live in off-base housing



**86%**  
Children in the home  
**80%** include children age 12 or under



**68%**  
DFAS only income



**26%**  
WIC/SNAP Eligible



**45%**  
Secondary income impacted by the shutdown

# What Families Experienced

Survey responses from participating households revealed four consistent impact themes.

## Preventing Crisis and Debt

For many families, the grocery support was the difference between stability and crisis. Respondents described how the assistance prevented them from taking on additional debt or making untenable tradeoffs between food and other essentials.

*"The grocery box saved us from having to take out yet another loan just to pay for food for our family."*

This support directly strengthened food security while allowing families to preserve limited financial reserves for rent, utilities, and transportation.

## Reducing Stress and Restoring Breathing Room

Families consistently emphasized the emotional relief created by knowing that meals were covered, even temporarily. This reduction in stress allowed households to regain a sense of control amid uncertainty.

*"Receiving your food support allowed me to take one less worry off my plate."*

For families supported by the program:

**95.6%** reported **reduced financial stress** and **73%** reported **moderate to significant relief**

## Feeling Seen and Valued

Beyond meeting basic needs, families described the support as a powerful signal of recognition and care during a period when many felt invisible.

**26.7%** felt the general public understood what military families were experiencing

**92%** reported MFAN's support made them feel understood and appreciated

*"At a time when it feels like most of America [could not] care less about the effects of a government shutdown, this food box felt like an immense gesture of goodwill and support."*

## Supporting Well-being for Children

Families frequently connected the support to improved well-being and stability for their children. Several respondents noted that the groceries helped preserve normal routines during a disruptive period.

*"Your support saved my family's holiday. It arrived unexpectedly and was way more than I was expecting."*

For families with multiple children or special dietary needs, the grocery box and gift card combination was particularly impactful in maintaining dignity and care.

# Trusted Voice in Uncertain Times

Even before the grocery program launched, MFAN began daily shutdown communications across social platforms — providing legislative updates, resources, and reliable information for families navigating uncertainty.

## Social Media

# 7.1 Million

Digital Media Impressions

# 21K

post clicks

with an average engagement rate of

# 6.4%

ALMOST

# 6X

the industry average

## Website

# 39K

Unique website visitors the week support launched

## Earned Media

Reached a combined audience of

# 1.58K

Earned media mentions

# 1.8B

around the world



Appearances included CNN, Wall Street Journal, Associated Press, BBC, Military.com, and over 700 local and regional television and radio outlets.

## THE BRIDGE PODCAST

### The Mission: Shutdown Support

Hear more from MFAN's leaders and partners about coordinating the emergency effort and lessons learned in the wake of the shutdown:

[Click Here to View:](#)



# Moving from Crisis Response to Long-Term Stability

The Emergency Grocery Support Program was designed to provide immediate relief during a temporary disruption in pay. However, the scale and speed of demand revealed a longer-term challenge: financial vulnerability among military families is widespread, persistent, and highly sensitive to even short interruptions in income.

Within 72 hours of opening registration, more than 50,000 verified military families applied for assistance. This volume reinforced what MFAN's research has consistently shown — many military households are living with limited savings and little financial flexibility. For these families, a missed paycheck does not simply delay purchases; it can destabilize housing, food access, transportation, and medical care.

The shutdown also highlighted how interconnected military family financial stability is with broader systems.

For National Guard and Reserve families, drill pay is often essential to covering routine monthly expenses such as groceries, childcare, or car payments. When drills were canceled and pay was disrupted, these households were among the first to experience acute financial strain.

For many families, the shutdown's impact extended beyond military pay alone. Nearly half of participating households reported that a secondary income was also affected. This finding reflects a critical reality for military families: many spouses pursue civilian federal employment because it is a more stable and portable career path amid frequent relocations. When the shutdown disrupted federal pay and services, it threatened both the military income families rely on and also secondary sources often considered reliable buffers against the financial instability of military life.

The shutdown's effects were further compounded by disruptions to military family services and infrastructures. Federal employee furloughs affected access to installation-based resources, including childcare programs, school supports, and health-related services. For families managing chronic medical needs or prescriptions, these disruptions introduced additional hardship beyond the immediate loss of income such as availability of medications and health services.

Delays and uncertainty in the permanent change of station (PCS) process added another layer of vulnerability. Families facing disrupted move timelines were left without stable housing or carrying significant out-of-pocket costs while awaiting reimbursement. These pressures can accumulate

***“With limited funds, we are going to food pantries and pulling our kids out of day care...”***



quickly, particularly for households already operating close to the margin.

Taken together, these findings reinforce a critical conclusion: the financial hardship military families experienced during the shutdown was not solely caused by the shutdown itself. Rather, the shutdown exposed the degree to which many families are already navigating structural instability - and how quickly an external disruption can move them from stability to crisis.

MFAN is using these lessons to strengthen future rapid-response capacity and to advance longer-term solutions that support military family financial well-being. While emergency relief remains essential, the broader goal is to reduce the likelihood that families will face these crises in the first place.

## With Gratitude

\$1,014,568 raised  
300+ first-time donors

Our sincere thanks to the corporations, foundations, and individuals who generously stepped forward to make this response effort possible.



American Logistics Association | Humana | McKesson | Reingold | Wawa Foundation

## Moving Forward - Together

### This effort illustrated two powerful truths.

First, far too many military families are living close to the cliff's edge - where even a short delay in pay can threaten food security and stability. Second, when communities, partners, and everyday Americans come together, rapid and meaningful relief is possible.

Because of collective generosity, 6,685 families were able to keep food on the table. Children maintained routines. Parents avoided taking out yet another loan. Households preserved dignity during uncertainty.

### But emergency relief is only one part of the equation.

MFAN will continue to respond in moments of crisis. We will continue to advocate for policies that strengthen financial stability. We will continue to gather research that reflects lived experiences. And we will continue to convene partners committed to long-term change.

The families who serve our nation deserve more than short-term stability. They deserve systems that support them - consistently and reliably.

**Thank you for standing with them when it mattered most.**

# Help Build Greater Stability for Military Families

The need revealed during the shutdown did not disappear when pay resumed. Join MFAN in standing with military families during times of crisis and through efforts that set the agenda for long-term system change.

## Support Rapid Response Alongside Long-Term Stability

Contribute to MFAN's Innovation Fund to ensure emergency resources can be deployed immediately when families face unexpected hardship, while also addressing food security programs, financial readiness initiatives, and research-driven advocacy that support the all-volunteer force.

**GIVE ONLINE**

**Or Contact us at**

giving@mfan.org | 202-558-4438

## Amplify Military Family Voices

Share research, stories, and lived experiences to elevate awareness and drive change. Follow, engage with, and share MFAN's work with your networks — together, we can elevate opportunities and make a deeper impact for military families.

**CONNECT**

**MFAN.org**



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