

COVID-19 MILITARY SUPPORT INITIATIVE WORKING GROUP FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

"If our commands want us to get 'back to normal,' summer camps and child care need to fully open back up. If it's still unsafe to do so, our commands need to understand this and work around us having small children home because of the crisis."
— Active-Duty Service Member

WHAT WE KNOW

Military readiness is predicated on military family readiness. The pandemic exacerbated pre-existing challenges for military and veteran families, highlighting the importance of addressing systemic issues.

1. Military life challenges – such as gaps in children's education, child care challenges, and spouse employment concerns – worsened during the pandemic.
2. Women – both service members and military spouses – are bearing the weight of increased child care requirements during continued school and child care closures.
3. Local communities' capacity – including strong public-private partnerships – is linked to defense community and military family resilience during a national emergency.

SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

It's time for a "Total Family Force." The pandemic underscored the immediate need for the military to adapt to a 21st century workforce, culturally and structurally, to preserve operational and family readiness during a national emergency.

- » *Child care and military readiness* are inextricably linked: Preserve existing child care capacity and take steps to expand it.
- » *Virtual work was critical to navigating the pandemic.* Still, barriers exist to universal usage: Ensure high speed broadband access and supporting infrastructure for classified telework on installations and in local communities.
- » *Reduce uncertainty to ensure viable spouse employment and support whole family mental health:* Clear and consistent communication from schools and installations, predictable day-to-day work schedules, and the ability to telework during the pandemic enables the whole family to be resilient.
- » *Emphasize collaboration:* Develop strong public-private partnerships before the next crisis and document collaborative strategies that worked during the pandemic.

COVID-19 MILITARY SUPPORT INITIATIVE

The COVID-19 Military Support Initiative was formed by the Association of Defense Communities and Blue Star Families in March 2020. Leveraging the expertise of White Oak Collaborative and ADC members, a cross-sector group of organizations that support military and veteran families, CMSI quickly became the go-to resource for members of the military community as they grappled with the impacts of the pandemic. This effort culminated in a series of working groups designed to capture and document lessons learned and future action recommendations.

Visit covid19militarysupport.org or contact survey@bluestarfam.org for the full findings.

BY THE NUMBERS

180 Participants



44 Recommendations



5 Working groups

