

Military Family Readiness Council Meeting Minutes
The Pentagon Library and Conference Center, Room B6
June 6, 2018
1-3 p.m.

Meeting Attendees:

Office of the Secretary of Defense:

Ms. Stephanie Barna, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs),
Alternate Chair

Ms. Carolyn Stevens, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military
Community and Family Policy), Director, Office of Military Family Readiness Policy

Army:

LTG Gwen Bingham, USA, Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management
Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel A. Dailey

Air National Guard:

Brig Gen Jessica Meyeraan, Vice Director, J-1, National Guard Bureau

Army National Guard:

Ms. Laura Conley, U.S. Army National Guard Spouse

Marine Corps:

Col Julian Jason, representing Ms. Marie Balocki, USMC Headquarters, Director, Marine and
Family Programs

Ms. Andrea Green, spouse of the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Ronald L. Green (by
phone)

Navy:

RDML (Sel) Philip Sobeck, Director, Twenty-First Century Sailor Office

Ms. Elka Giordano, Spouse of the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Steve S. Giordano

Ms. Jennifer Luscher, Navy Reserve Component Spouse

Air Force:

Mr. Carl Buchanan, representing Brig Gen Kathleen Cook, USAF, Director of Air Force Services
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright

Military family organizations:

Ms. Karen Ruedisueli, National Military Family Association

Dr. Mary Keller, Military Child Education Coalition

Dr. David Rubin, Children's Hospital Association

Advisors:

Mr. Marcus Beauregard, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military
Community and Family Policy), Director, Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO)

Ms. Stephanie Miller, Director, DoD Accession Policy
Ms. Allison Greene, Defense Human Resources Activity, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office
Mr. Kenneth Sorg, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), Office of MWR and Resale Policy
Ms. Valerie Thompson, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Civilian Personnel Policy), Chief of Staff
Dr. Karin Orvis, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), Acting Principal Director
Ms. Sara Egeland, Policy Chief for the Second Lady of the United States, EOP/OVP
Mrs. A.T. Johnston, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy)
Ms. Julie Blanks, Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)
LTC Tony Schlagel, representing COL Donna McDermott, Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program
Mr. Andrew Cohen, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Education and Training), Director, Financial Readiness
Mr. Don Svendsen, DoD Military Personnel Policy (Compensation)
Dr. Linda L. Curtis, DoDEA headquarters, Principal Deputy Director and Associate Director for Academics
COL Mark Gorack, Joint Chiefs of Staff, J-1
Ms. Julie Margolis, Marine Corps Active Duty Spouse (former MFRC member)
Ms. Michelle Padgett, Air Force Active Duty Spouse (former MFRC member)
Dr. Patricia Moseley, Defense Health Agency, Partnering for Readiness
CAPT Ed Simmer, Deputy Director, TRICARE/DHA
Mr. Bret Stevens, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Warrior Care Policy)
Ms. Cecily Burrows-McElwain, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Military Family Readiness Council (MFRC) Designated Federal Officer:

Dr. Randy Eltringham
Mr. William (Bill) Story, Alternate

MFRC support staff:

Ms. Melody McDonald
Mr. Frank Emery
Mr. Eddy Mentzer

Public submissions:

There were no public submissions for this meeting.

Proceedings of the meeting:

On Wednesday, June 6, 2018, the Military Family Readiness Council (MFRC) held its third meeting of fiscal year (FY) 2018 in the Pentagon Library and Conference Center (Room B6). The purpose of this meeting was to draft, discuss and vote on 2018 recommendations for the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) and propose focus areas for Council review during FY19.

A full transcript of the meeting and attendance of members and advisors present is available.

The MFRC Designated Federal Officer, Dr. Randy Eltringham, opened the meeting by welcoming Council members, advisors, and public guests. She explained the Council would be choosing 5 of the 14 recommendations during the first half of the meeting and choosing two focus areas for FY19 during the second half.

Dr. Eltringham then turned the floor over to Ms. Stephanie Barna for opening remarks.

Ms. Barna welcomed everyone and announced that two Council members have ended their terms of service on the Council and have been invited to attend today's meeting as MFRC advisors, including Ms. Michelle Padgett (former active duty Air Force spouse representative) and Ms. Julie Margolis (former active duty Marine Corps spouse representative). She said MG McNeely from the Army National Guard was rotating off of the Council and that Brig Gen Jessica Meyeraan from the Air National Guard would be taking his place. Ms. Barna also welcomed Ms. Marie Balocki via Col Julian Jason who represented her at the meeting. She then announced that this meeting would be Dr. Eltringham's last as she is retiring from federal service. She thanked Dr. Eltringham for revitalizing the Council and making the meetings full of interesting, insightful and important topics. Ms. Barna said Mr. William (Bill) Story will be taking Dr. Eltringham's place.

Dr. Eltringham thanked Mr. Story for taking the helm and announced that the next meeting would be October 18, 2018, at the same time and in the same room as today's meeting.

Dr. Eltringham then explained that 18 members comprise the Council, with 14 present and 2 represented by members of their offices. She said there are also two membership vacancies which are on hold due to a hiatus on bringing replacements onboard.

Dr. Eltringham urged those present who may be less familiar with the Council's work to visit the MFRC webpage and read the orientation slide deck. She explained that while MFRC meetings are open to the public and the Council welcomes family members, staff, key advisors and the press, MFRC meetings are not Town Hall meetings. She invited those present to observe Council deliberations and voting. She also encouraged submission of written public statements to the MFRC email box as an effective way to bring key issues to the Council's attention.

Due to the nature of today's agenda, Dr. Eltringham noted there were no public submissions for review at today's meeting.

Dr. Eltringham explained that while the Council would be choosing five recommendations to move forward to the SECDEF, all proposed recommendations are important. Many members of the Council are already working on these issues and are now seeking enterprise-wide support and assistance. The process of prioritizing proposed recommendations allows the Council and DoD to more effectively carry out its family readiness mission by focusing on specific courses of action and targeted outcomes.

MFRC is currently testing various tracking tools which document progress and accomplishments for each MFRC recommendation. Dr. Eltringham urged Council members to suggest other ways to provide status update information to Mr. Story who will be taking her place as DFO later this summer.

Dr. Eltringham then asked that each recommendation sponsor take up to two minutes to explain their proposed FY18 recommendations, noting full explanations are available in information packets provided to Council members. She explained that voting would be on paper ballots and a few rounds of voting might be required.

Presentations and deliberations resulted in MFRC approval of the following FY18 MFRC recommendations for the SECDEF as well as selection of FY19 Focus Areas for review by the Council next fiscal year:

Recommendation #1: Endorsed (To be combined with Recommendation #2)

Title: Quality-Weighted Assessments of Community and Surrounding Area Support for Spouse Employment and Public Education

Include quality-weighted assessments of community and surrounding area support for spouse employment and public education in strategic basing or mission alignment decisions.

Background: Increasingly, the Air Force is experiencing a higher frequency of family-based choices leading to family separations due to a lack of spouse employment opportunities or poor performing public school offerings for the next assignment. This same degree of concern applies to all the Services as noted in the February 23, 2018 Service Secretaries letter to the National Governors Association. While lawful authority typically resides within States for these issues, and the Department of Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) has made tremendous progress with state legislatures, the Department wields considerable influence in where and when forces and missions are located to best meet the SECDEF's vision of a lethal, resilient, and rapidly innovating force. The impact of Service members being forced to make choices leading to more family separations while attempting to balance mission needs with crucial family concerns directly affects the retention of a quality force and readiness of families.

Discussion: Mr. Carl Buchanan, speaking on behalf of Brig Gen Kathleen Cook, said spouse licensing portability, smooth transfers in educating military children, and safe public school environments are serious concerns when retaining quality force members.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Promote the use of innovative strategies through an Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)-led working group to research, document and analyze the impact of spouse employment and public school offerings on family readiness and report back to the Council within six months with outcomes and recommendations.

- b. Develop qualitative measures for spouse and family concerns that relate to quantitative scoring outcomes used in strategic basing decisions.
 - (1) Assess success of spouse professional licensure portability for temporary licensing, expedited licensing and/or reciprocity of licenses.
 - (2) Assess public school support of military-connected children for quality of education and safety/security of learning environments.
- c. Publish guidelines/policy for strategic basing assessments that incorporate SECDEF-approved courses of action.
- d. Prepare SECDEF communication with the Council of Governors.

For voting purposes, Council members agreed to combine recommendations one and two.

Recommendation #2: Endorsed (To be combined with Recommendation #1)

Title: Spouse Licensure Portability, Education Benefits and Mobility Support

Work closely with the Department of Labor and other government and non-government agencies to collaborate, share ideas, and inform each other on the issues and initiatives that are helping military spouses with employment. Support the efforts of the Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) to continue their work with State legislators, other State officials, representatives from occupations, and military spouses to improve: (1) license portability, (2) access to educational opportunities and benefits, and (3) mobility support for military spouses and family members.

Background: The well-being of a military spouse can significantly impact a Service member's readiness. Military family readiness is often influenced by the well-being of military spouses. An area that is often identified as a stressor for military spouses and families is employment. Gaps in employment and underemployment can lead to additional stress and financial strain for the military family. Many military spouses work in careers that require licenses or credentialing. It is imperative that we have successful legislation that facilitates the portability of military spouse licensure and credentials and offers military spouses the opportunity to maintain employment during geographic relocations which mitigate financial stress for military families.

Discussion: SMA Daniel Dailey told the Council that this second recommendation is similar to the first recommendation. He noted that 61 percent of spouses of enlisted military members must work to make ends meet, making spouse education, employment, and transferability of their licenses and credentials critical to spouse and family well-being.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Continue to work and collaborate to break down barriers that limit spouse education and employment opportunities for military spouses at any location.

- b. Establish working relationships with other government organizations (e.g., the Department of Labor), Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), Military Service Organizations (MSOs), etc.
- c. Continue to support the efforts of DSLO as they work with State legislators, other State officials, representatives from occupations, and military spouses to improve employment opportunities.
- d. Monitor DSLO progress.
- e. Publicize State programs already in place, which may allow licenses to transfer such as license reciprocity and license by endorsement while continuing to standardize acceptance of good-standing licenses across State lines.
- f. Address educational portability (for children and adults) and employment opportunities, professional licensing, and credentials needed to work across State lines.
- g. Examine educational benefits to gain a deeper understanding of how they affect Service and family member readiness.
- h. Open the aperture of tuition assistance for use by both Service members and their spouses who want to pursue professional licensing and technical certifications.
- i. Continue to address mobility and portability areas of concern that support relocating Service members and families.
- j. Study the effects of continuous relocations on military families, including concerns over licensure/certification portability, school district requirements when transferring K-12 students, and lapses in medical care (e.g., breaks in continuity of care for family members).

For voting purposes, Council members agreed to combine recommendations one and two.

Recommendation #3: Not Endorsed as a top priority

Title: Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and Military Cultural Awareness

Use the DoDEA Partnership website (www.dodea.edu/parentership/InterstateCompact), Military OneSource webinars, and the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission website (www.mic3.net) as valuable resources to educate and engage all stakeholders, influencers, pre-school-12 educators, and medical and family support professionals regarding military cultural awareness, Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, and associated resources and tools.

Background: The Department of Defense, in collaboration with the National Center for Interstate Compacts and the Council of State Governments, has developed an interstate compact that addresses the educational transition issues of children of military families. Currently, all 50 states and the District of Columbia participate in the interstate compact that provides a uniform policy platform for resolving the challenges experienced by military children. An additional complexity is that TRICARE medical and family support providers, educators, and pre-school personnel in many locations lack sufficient knowledge of the military and the unique challenges that military children from active duty, guard and reserve families face. Educational presentations made by organizations such as the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) have been helpful in raising military cultural awareness in school, medical and community settings, but funding for such presentations is not always available. Expanded access is needed to available digital platforms operated by DoD and its partner organizations. Such platforms are used for community outreach and educational purposes.

Discussion: LTG Gwen Bingham said she wants to encourage the continued collaboration and coordination among Service-level leaders and representatives to include school liaisons to further educate community members and leaders outside military base gates.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Encourage Service school liaison officers (SLOs) and senior leaders to educate and inform their stakeholders to engage with military families at the following touch points: Service-level headquarters, regions, installation SLOs, Service schools designed for leadership at all levels, including military spouses and National Guard State Coordinators.
- b. Promote the use of innovative tool kits through an OUSD (P&R)-led working group composed of representatives from all of the Military Services (including the Guard and Reserve) and OSD Public Affairs (Outreach and Public Liaison) with a requirement to report back to the Council within six months of the group's establishment.
- c. Adopt a program similar to the Oregon National Guard initiative that provides outreach to TRICARE medical and family support professionals, educators, and pre-school personnel via webinars with associated Continuing Medical Education (CMEs) credits.

Recommendation #4: Endorsed (To be combined with Recommendations #5 and #6)

Title: JBLM CARES: Center for Autism Resources, Education and Services

Evaluate access to medical and special education resources for families with a family member with special needs or on the autism spectrum stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM).

Background: The opening of JBLM CARES has led to a significant number of special needs families with a member on the autism spectrum being assigned to JBLM. Some families report long wait lists for autism therapies. Local school districts, while eager to welcome military families, report being overwhelmed with the number of students requiring special education

services. We would like to ensure the CARES opening has not led to unintended consequences, including demand for services that outstrips supply, even with the addition of the CARES facility.

Discussion: Ms. Karen Ruedisueli recommended an analysis on the JBLM CARES and appointment availability for the number of families sent to this center.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Examine trends for the number of families with special needs stationed at JBLM.
- b. Review the number and content of compassionate reassignment requests to leave JBLM.
- c. Assess appointment availability/wait lists for medical care and therapies needed by families at JBLM with a member on the autism spectrum.
- d. Obtain feedback on special education services availability from the JBLM School Liaison Officer (SLO) and local school districts serving the installation.

For voting purposes, Council members agreed to combine recommendations four, five and six.

Recommendation #5: Endorsed (To be combined with Recommendations #4 and #6)

Title: EMFP/Assignment Coordination Performance Metrics

Require the DoD Office of Special Needs (OSN) to report on progress made on developing common performance metrics for assignment coordination for all Military Service Exceptional Family Member Programs (EFMPs) to use.

Background: This year, the DoD Office of Special Needs provided an update to the MFRC on efforts to standardize EFMP across the Services. Performance metrics are one of the most critical areas lacking standardization. As a result, DoD cannot assess the effectiveness of the Service EFM programs to ensure improvements are made when needed. A recent GAO report (“DoD Should Improve Its Oversight of the EFMP,” May 2018) echoes the findings of a six year old GAO report (“Better Oversight Needed to Improve Services for Children with Special Needs,” September 2012) and highlights the need for common performance metrics to assess program effectiveness across the Services.

Discussion: Ms. Karen Ruedisueli explained that this recommendation asks the Office of Special Needs to report on the progress made on developing common performance metrics, particularly focused on assignment coordination. All Service EFMPs would use this information and standard performance metrics.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Provide an overview of current performance metrics the Services use to assess their EFMPs with a focus on assignment coordination effectiveness.
- b. Determine if any current metrics represent best practices for evaluating EFMP assignment coordination effectiveness.
- c. Provide a status update on the efforts to standardize EFMP performance metrics, including obstacles to completing this task, with an emphasis on evaluation of assignment coordination effectiveness.

For voting purposes, Council members agreed to combine recommendations four, five and six.

Recommendation #6: Endorsed (To be combined with Recommendations #4 and #5)

Title: Exceptional Family Member Program Standardization

The DoD Office of Special Needs should continue to work with the Military Services to enhance and improve EFMP standardization.

Background: The DoD Office of Special Needs is focused on improving support for military families with special medical and/or educational needs through the development of policies and enhanced communication for the EFMP. Efforts to standardize numerous aspects of the program allow families with special needs to have a more consistent EFMP experience regardless of Service affiliation or location.

Discussion: LTG Gwen Bingham said she appreciates the work the Office of Special Needs is doing and the progress of EFMP standardization efforts. She said standardization enhances readiness.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Continue to collaborate and coordinate with the Services and other agencies to continue standardization efforts.
- b. Continue to explore ways to standardize all aspects of the EFMP to ensure the same level of service regardless of Military Service affiliation and location by focusing on: access, policy and procedures, reporting, business processes and forms, information technology solutions and respite care.

For voting purposes, Council members agreed to combine recommendations four, five and six.

Recommendation #7: Endorsed (To be combined with Recommendation #8)

Title: Community Collaboration and Coordination

Continue to use community collaboratives to gain access to a broad range of military family readiness resources, services and expertise needed by Service and family members.

Background: Military communities exist both inside and outside the gates of military installations. With limited resources, the Military Services need to communicate, collaborate and coordinate similar services that support and assist Service members and families. The importance of these partnerships was recently on display in the overwhelming emergency response to Hurricane Maria.

Discussion: LTG Gwen Bingham said this recommendation continues collaboration with members, partners and entities outside base gates for the purpose of expanding access to resource expertise and services needed by Service and family members.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Continue to use community collaboratives to gain greater access to a broad range of military family readiness resources, services, and expertise needed by Service and family members.
- b. Reduce barriers for military agencies and installations to collaborate and partner with government and private sector organizations.
- c. Continue a proactive campaign to inform military and civilian agencies; develop metrics to measure success; and determine needs to focus efforts where and when they are needed most.
- d. Explore how Military OneSource and other digital platforms can be incorporated into this effort, especially using existing technology, social media platforms, and mobile applications.

For voting purposes, Council members agreed to combine recommendations seven and eight.

Recommendation #8: Endorsed (To be combined with Recommendation #7)

Title: Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) Better Together Partnership

Continue to support the important Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) Better Together Military Public-Private Partnership to ensure military families have access to critical programs and services. Pioneer efforts aiming to connect and support 250,000 military families living off-installation over the next three years.

Background: Launched Sept. 8, 2016, the Better Together Military Public-Private Partnership is a groundbreaking, action-focused initiative among government agencies, military-serving organizations, corporations and foundations. This partnership is designed to improve the lives of military families in civilian communities where the need is greatest. For more than 150 years, BGCA has enabled young people most in need to achieve great futures as productive, caring,

responsible citizens. Today, more than 4,200 clubs serve nearly 4 million youth through club membership and community outreach. BGCA also serves military families through military youth programs on installations worldwide.

Discussion: LTG Gwen Bingham said this recommendation would invite the other Services and agencies to educate and inform their stakeholders to engage with BGCA, not only at the Service level, but installation level as well.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Invite the Services and other agencies to educate and inform their stakeholders to engage with BGCA Better Together at the following touch points: Service-level headquarters, installation Child and Youth Programs, and Service schools designed for leadership at all levels, including military spouses.
- b. Promote this partnership through an OUSD (P&R)-led working group composed of representatives from all Services and OSD Public Affairs (Outreach and Public Liaison) with a requirement to report back to the Council within six months of the group's establishment.

For voting purposes, Council members agreed to combine recommendations seven and eight.

Recommendation #9: Not Endorsed as a top priority

Title: Data-Sharing/Data Informed Community Collaboratives and Partnerships

The Council should address the imperative for DoD to institute better and more transparent data sharing agreements and processes that involve and engage with reputable non-profit organizations and academic institutions and, in collaboration, design privacy-protected vehicles for timely exchange of information and ideas.

Background: Institutions and organizations can maximize impact, understanding, problem-solving and innovation through the exchange of ideas. Effective collaboration, which includes critical analyses, is enhanced through the authentic give-and-take of information, contextual applications and lessons-learned. The Council has the opportunity to embrace and encourage this continued commitment to consistent processes, approaches and priorities that help others find new ways to engage for the benefit of military-connected families and children. Thoughtful, open exchanges of ideas and information will increase confidence in our shared abilities to learn from each other, find and solve problems, build trust, enthusiastically tackle tough challenges, and celebrate progress.

Discussion: Dr. Mary Keller recommended more DoD data sharing agreements. She noted that everyone works better together with better data.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Examine current requirements and roadblocks to support accuracy as well as evidence-informed practices.
- b. Discover current examples of collaborations for the study and improvement of practical usage and communication of military life data sources (e.g., Annual Status of Forces Surveys, Spouse Satisfaction Surveys, and emerging data from the DoD Millennial Cohort Study).
- c. Determine how to make demographic data in the Defense Manpower Data Center more readily and proactively available for study and research.
- d. Determine potential policy updates and/or changes in processes as well as reporting systems.
- e. Promote the establishment of systems for information sharing for both innovations and data sharing research collaboratives.

Recommendation #10: Not Endorsed as a top priority

Title: Well-being of Children and Youth

Consideration of child and youth well-being for those with parents serving in the Active, National Guard and Reserve Forces should be an on-going priority for the MFRC.

Background: Frequent school moves, disruptions and discontinuity in access to appropriate services and support, as well as the challenges associated with separations resulting from deployments, all contribute in various ways to stressors on parents, and ultimately, children. The military has long been a leader and innovator in social policies and supports. These have increased over time, but what is working and what is appropriate and relevant for military families both now and in the near-term future?

Discussion: Dr. Mary Keller said it is important for the Council to look at trends, progress, and areas for concern regarding the well-being of children, including child abuse and neglect, problems experienced by family members, and strengths of family members.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Review the current and future state for Services capabilities and capacities to support quality and developmentally-appropriate programs and services for children and youth (both on and off the installations as well as for the Reserve Components).
- b. Identify implications for children and youth with special needs (see the May 2018 GAO report on EFMP).

- c. Examine the performance standards and actions related to Service inconsistencies in EFMP programs and services (May 2018, GAO Report). Require a report back to the Council within six months.
- d. Address the trends, progress and areas for concern associated with child abuse and neglect (e.g., 2017 report by Cozza, et al.).
- e. Monitor the efficacy of follow-up processes for immediate family members after a Service member ideates or commits suicide (risk for children).
- f. Review standards, e.g., process and actions taken by OSD to evaluate/sunset programs (How is data used? By whom? For what purpose?).

Recommendation #11: Endorsed

Title: Childcare Accessibility and Funding

Revitalize the Family Child Care (FCC) program to meet increasing child care demands, including demand for high-quality, full-day care for eligible children and youth 6 weeks to 12 years that enhances the readiness and well-being of the workforce and their families by reducing the conflict between parental responsibilities and mission requirements.

Background: The Department of Defense has the largest employer-sponsored child care system in the U.S., and it is still growing as the military builds its end strength. The demand for child care sometimes exceeds the number of child care spaces provided on installations through Child and Youth Services (CYS) programs (e.g., facility-based or Family Child Care (FCC)). The length of time a family may wait for care varies by location. The DoD child care placement metric should not surpass 90-days from the date care is needed, but oftentimes, this metric is exceeded. Factors contributing to growing wait lists include: lack of child care facility spaces, ages of children needing care, staff shortages contributing to closed rooms, background check completion not timely, FCC provider shortages, etc. The official DoD website, www.militarychildcare.com, allows families to seek childcare and provides families with a single online gateway to obtain comprehensive information on military-operated and military-subsidized child care options worldwide. DoD standardized priorities for care provide consistency for placement across the Services.

Discussion: LTG Gwen Bingham said this recommendation addresses the fact that demand for child care exceeds the number of spaces installations can provide.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Invite the Services to discuss and determine ways to meet the demand for child care on post at the following touchpoints: Service-level headquarters, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, installation Child and Youth Programs, and support agencies.
- b. Promote ways to increase child care on post.

- c. Provide funding to support identified child care requirements.
- d. Hire staff in a timely manner (e.g., complete background checks within prescribed timelines).
- e. Determine ways to expand and revitalize Family Child Care programs.

Recommendation #12: Endorsed

Title: Support for Child and Youth Services (CYS) Staff Dealing with Increasing Behavioral Issues

Continue to expand partnerships established by DoD with external agencies (e.g., Kids Included Together) to support and assist children and youth staff who are experiencing increasing behavioral issues with children and youth in their care.

Background: Military families experience multiple stresses (e.g., deployments, relocations, transitions) throughout the career of their Service member. Although this is a way of life for our military, for families, these pressures increase the burdens placed on children and youth who are faced with the additional strain of separation anxiety and other emotions. CYS staff are addressing concerns that negative child and youth behaviors have increased. Concerns include: (1) Staff are unsure of how to deal with increased undesirable behavior and conduct which disrupts program activities and leads to safety concerns for staff, children and youth; (2) Programs are seeing an increase in “Reportable Unusual Incidents”; (3) DoD Virtual Lab School training states 50% of teachers are stressed while 25-30% of teachers are extremely stressed (*Physical/Mental Health of Head Start Staff: Pennsylvania Head Start Staff Wellness Survey 2012*); and (4) Stress influences the behavior of child and adds to teacher anxiety. Partnerships show that positive guidance creates environments that promote encouraging behaviors and minimize the need for adults to spend time reacting to challenging behaviors.

Discussion: LTG Gwen Bingham said this recommendation would continue to provide education and training for staff to deal with children who have behavioral issues and special needs. This would promote a healthy balance for military children and families.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Invite the Services and other agencies (e.g., Kids Included Together, CLASS) to inform and educate their stakeholders and engage with support agencies to better understand and provide staff with the training and support required to assist children with behavior issues at the following touch points: Service-level headquarters and installation Child and Youth Programs.
- b. Conduct a study to determine the stress factors facing direct care staff who are caring for children in military children and youth programs. If the study shows that staff are stressed, incorporate professional development built around the positive interactions that

can help staff improve outcomes, netting measurable benefits for the children in their care.

- c. Promote positive guidance practices which create a knowledge base for teacher-child interactions which: (1) emphasizes teacher values; (2) demonstrates that interactions are a key component for quality care; and (3) uses positive guidance practices to support the development of an encouraging classroom where adults guide children to express and meet their needs in acceptable safe ways. Partnerships formed with families and peers are supportive and encouraging. Conflicts are seen as part of living in a community where adults help children learn effective conflict-resolution strategies and teach problem-solving skills.

Recommendation #13: Endorsed

Title: Accession and Medical Record Policies and Procedures -- Impact on Military Children Who Received Mental and Behavioral Health Services

Require the Services to report on the policies and processes related to accessing and evaluating military dependent (minor) medical records when a former military dependent enters military Service.

Background: The Military Times published two articles in 2018 about the Services accessing military dependent medical records of children who subsequently join the military. These articles have raised concerns among military families about the impact of mental health notations in their children's records. For years, DoD has encouraged military families to seek behavioral health care to help deal with the strains of military life compounded by 17+ years of combat operations. DoD messaging rightly promoted behavioral health care as a sign of strength and a way of building resiliency. The policy of accessing dependent medical records sends exactly the opposite message. NMFA has many concerns about this issue including the overall impact on stigma. We believe the first step in addressing these concerns is a better understanding of the policy and process for accessing minor medical records of former military dependents.

Additionally, currently, Army and Air Force policies allow the merging of military children's pre-existing military dependent medical records with their military service medical records when they join the military. This means that confidential medical records of military children treated for health-related conditions under the age of 18 years within military treatment facilities (for disorders, including emotional and behavioral disorders) are available to the Army and Air Force if those individuals choose to join the military service as adults.

Discussion: Ms. Karen Ruedisueli and Dr. Mary Keller explained that this recommendation would look into how the accessions process uses dependent medical records. The recommendation also addresses concerns that those accessing electronic medical records are getting appropriate guidance on how to use and interpret those records and that there is oversight to make sure that guidance is happening appropriately.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Provide transparency to the process of accessing military dependent medical records by requesting the Services answer the following questions:
 - What is the scope of the issue?
 - o How many military dependent medical records have been accessed?
 - o How many military kids have been denied enlistment or involuntarily separated due to information in their dependent medical records?
 - o Under what circumstances do the Services access Military Health System dependent medical records?
 - o Is this a random sample or prompted by something specific?
 - o Which military entrants are subject to having their dependent medical records evaluated?
 - Enlistees?
 - Service academy cadets and midshipmen?
 - Reserve Officer Training Corps students?
 - Those entering via other commissioning sources?
 - What guidelines are the Services using when evaluating information in dependent medical records? How is dependent medical information used in “fit for duty” determinations? What other information (medical or otherwise) is used in conjunction with dependent medical records in “fit for duty” determinations?
 - o What oversight is provided to ensure dependent medical record information is interpreted and used appropriately?
 - o What is the appeal process for those who are recommended for involuntary separation based on information in their dependent medical record?
 - o What is the policy for examining minor medical records of entrants who are not former military dependents?
 - Who is charged with evaluating information in dependent medical records? What are their qualifications? What guidance do they receive before conducting such evaluations? What oversight is provided to ensure dependent medical record information is interpreted and used appropriately?
 - What is the appeal process for those who are recommended for involuntary separation based on information in their dependent medical record?
 - What is the policy for examining medical records of entrants who are not former military dependents when they were minors?
- b. Review DoD Instruction 6130.03, “Medical Standards for Appointment, Enlistment, or Induction in the Military Services,” outlining the behavioral health conditions that cause an applicant to be “permanently disqualified.”

- c. Learn about practices, equity, and communication.
 - Examine individualized practices and inconsistencies, e.g., Service branches are allowed to grant a waiver for, or re-evaluation of, such conditions.
 - Discover if/when military-connected children whose parents encouraged behavioral health care at the earliest signs of concern are now, as adults, penalized under this DoD instruction.
 - Identify salient evidence or examples indicating the application of medical/behavioral health standards for military/veteran-connected youth compared to civilian-connected recruits.
- d. Invite the Services and DHA to brief the Council on the implications for various stakeholders.
- e. Invite behavioral health professionals, both within and outside of DoD, to brief the Council on the privacy implications for those who seek behavioral health support for children and teens.
- f. Discover corrective actions that are in progress through personnel offices, DHA, legal and OSD public affairs.
- g. Promote dependent health records and standards designed to decrease the likelihood of increased stigma, reduced access to care, and restricted emotional support and treatments of psychiatric illnesses, all of which could worsen military children's health.
- h. Require a report back to the Council within six months.

Recommendation #14: Endorsed

Title: Modernizing the Definition of Military Family Readiness

Revisit and agree upon the precise definition of “military family readiness” from a “life course” perspective as well as the current and near-term future of OSD and service initiatives.

Background: What are the consistent determiners of “military family readiness” for families and the Force? Families, including children, experience the dynamic nature of both challenges and opportunities. By considering a “life course” perspective, it is essential to establish determiners as well as mediating conditions which may increase the likelihood that Service members and their families thrive.

Discussion: Dr. Mary Keller explained that this recommendation asks that a specific definition of “military family readiness” be developed and modernized as it applies to current and future life in the military for Service and family members, including children.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Discover the key aspects, mechanisms, and implications for defining and monitoring “military family readiness.”
- b. Request DoD demographers educate the Council on the current and projected future profile for the Force (Active, National Guard, Reserve) with special emphasis on dependents.
- c. Invite the Services to illustrate the current landscape for critical indicators of “military family readiness” and the metrics for monitoring. How do the Services adjust for and respond to military occupations (e.g., Special Forces) and conditions (e.g., mission, location and family crisis)?
- d. Examine evidence-based ongoing practices and standards related to social media and the impact on family well-being related to the health of the Force.
- f. Focus on the future: Given the 2017 JAMRS report on the percentage of recruits with a parent or sibling serving, the Council should discuss the family readiness implications for the future of the All-Volunteer Force. Special emphasis areas are to:
 - Understand and discuss the data and trends from the recruiting commands.
 - Understand and discuss the family implications for those leaving the force (exit interviews, etc.).
 - Examine current OSD and Service planning, pilots, and practices in place now with an eye on the future needs of the force.
 - Address the trends and impact of family decisions related to geographic separations (risk, readiness, behavioral health, and well-being).
 - Review the education benefit usage for children and spouses (e.g., Post-9/11 GI Bill).

Final Language for Endorsed FY18 Recommendations

The MFRC Designated Federal Officer agreed to work with recommendation sponsors to draft final language that combines the endorsed recommendations noted above (Recommendations #1 and #2; Recommendations #4, #5 and #6; and Recommendations #7 and #8). Additionally, at the request of the MFRC Alternate Chair, summary language will be developed for use in the FY18 MFRC Fact Sheet and the October 2018 issue of the MFRC Communique (to be posted on the MFRC webpage: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/web/mos/military-family-readiness-council>).

2019 MFRC Focus Areas

Council members selected the following two focus areas for review during FY19.

- a. Accession and Medical Record Policies and Procedures -- Impact on Military Children Who Received Mental and Behavioral Health Services
- b. Service and Family Member Programs Tailored to Millennials

Other topics considered (but not selected) included:

- a. Trends in Military Family Member Suicide Rates
- b. Juvenile on Juvenile Sexual Assaults on Military Installations
- c. Support for Special Needs Families and Recent Improvements (combined with topic j. below)
- d. DoD Millennium Cohort Family Study – Findings and Follow-on Actions
- e. Child and Youth Well-being
- f. Military Family Outcomes after Transitioning to the Civilian Sector
- g. Strategic Basing Decisions Related to Public Education for Military Children
- h. Effectiveness of Spouse Employment Licensure/Credentials Initiatives
- i. Spouse Education and Employment
- j. EFMP Standardization (combined with topic c. above)
- k. Child Care Accessibility in Military Child and Youth Services Programs
- l. Joint Military Family Readiness Centers and Standardization
- m. Community Collaboratives and Partnerships

For voting purposes, Council members agreed to combine focus area topics c. and j. above.

The MFRC Chairman agreed to work directly with the National Guard Bureau on the topic of “Expansion of Safe Haven Evacuation Entitlements and National Health Benefit Coverage for National Guardsmen.” This topic was not included in the voting process, by direction of the Alternate Chair.

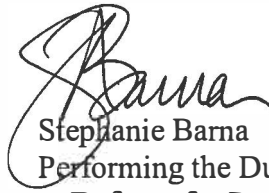
Closing remarks:

The MFRC Chairman thanked members for staying a bit longer than planned in order to complete the voting process. She also thanked them for a good year and said she looked forward to reporting back to them on the results from this meeting as they will be forwarded to the Secretary of Defense and posted on the MFRC webpage. Dr. Eltringham added that a new FY18 MFRC Fact Sheet will also capture today’s results. Attendees at today’s meeting are encouraged to share this document and issues of the MFRC Communique (electronic newsletter) widely

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Next meeting: The Council will meet again on Oct. 18, 2018, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., in the Pentagon Library and Conference Center, Room B6.

Certified by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barna", is written over the printed name "Stephanie Barna".

AUG 17 2018

Stephanie Barna

Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of
Defense for Personnel and Readiness