

PATHWAYS AND INTERSECTIONS IN THE MILITARY LIFECYCLE: HOW SAN DIEGO SUPPORTS THE MILITARY AND VETERAN CONNECTED COMMUNITY

January 2019



Presented by:
Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and
Philanthropic Research

University of San Diego
**SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP
AND EDUCATION SCIENCES**
THE NONPROFIT INSTITUTE

The San Diego Veteran and Family Wellness Strategy is a collaborative project of the San Diego Military Family Collaborative (SDMFC) and the San Diego Veterans Coalition (SDVC). Collectively, SDMFC and SDVC convene over 150 military and veteran service providers annually.

About The San Diego Military Family Collaborative

The San Diego Military Family Collaborative’s mission is to provide an inclusive forum to maximize the collective impact of community resources to enhance military family life. Administration and staffing support for San Diego Military Family Collaborative provided by SAY San Diego.

About The San Diego Veterans Coalition

The San Diego Veterans Coalition is a catalyst that inspires collaboration and cooperation among service partners to deliver premier support for veterans and their families in the San Diego region.

About The Nonprofit Institute’s Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research

The Caster Center is housed within The Nonprofit Institute in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. The mission of the Caster Center is to provide research, evaluation and consulting services that build the leadership and strategic and evaluative-thinking capacity of local nonprofits, as well as to be the leading source of information, data and research on the local nonprofit sector.

Project Team:

Caster Center

Mary Jo Schumann, PhD
Director of Research

Kim D. Hunt, PhD
Research Associate

Lisa Walker, MA
Research Assistant

SDMFC and SDVC

Derek Armstrong
AmeriCorps Vista, SDMFC

Adrian Edquid
AmeriCorps Vista, SDMFC

Reem Younis
AmeriCorps Vista, SDMFC

Daniel Romero, MA
Senior Program Director, SDMFC

Ronald Stark, MBA, LAADC-CA
Board President, SDVC

Copyright © 2019

All Rights Reserved

Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research

The Nonprofit Institute

School of Leadership and Education Sciences

University of San Diego

www.sandiego.edu/npresearch

Acknowledgements:

We would like to acknowledge the tremendous support of members of the SDMFC Coordinating Council, as well as the many individuals who volunteered their time and provided valuable insight in the Community Conversations.

Cite as:

Hunt, K.D., Schumann, M.J. & Walker, L. (2019). *Pathways and Intersections in the Military Lifecycle: How San Diego Supports the Military and Veteran Connected Community*. San Diego, CA: Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Executive Summary i
- Overview and Background 1
- Methodology 4
 - Community Conversations..... 4
 - Environmental Scan..... 4
- Key Findings..... 5
 - Primary Life Moments..... 5
 - Factors Across the Life Moments..... 7
 - Primary Life Moments and Factors Are Intertwined..... 8
 - Areas of Saturation and Opportunities (Gaps)..... 10
 - Saturation Points 10
 - Opportunities/Gaps 11
 - Lens Matters 13
 - Emotions and Feelings 14
- Dissemination of Project Findings 14
- Recommendations for Next Steps..... 15
- Appendix A: Organizations in San Diego that are Actively Engaged in the Military and Veteran Connected Community 16
- Appendix B: Map of Organizations That Participated in the Community Conversations..... 20
- Appendix C: Examples of Factors From the Community Conversations 21
- Appendix D: Military Terminology and Acronyms List 23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

San Diego County is home to the largest population of active duty military and the third largest veteran population in the United States. There is also a vast network of service providers who strive to meet the many needs of this military and veteran connected community. Many of these service providers are members of the San Diego Military Collaborative (SDMFC) and/or the San Diego Veterans Coalition (SDVC). Together, SDMFC (which focuses primarily on active duty families) and SDVC (which focuses on the transition into veteran status and veterans and their families) create an integrated continuum of support for active duty service members and veterans, spouses/partners, dependents, and families (hereafter referred to as “the military and veteran connected community”) in San Diego County.

SDMFC and SDVC realized that although there is a lot of support to the military and veteran connected community, it is often created and provided in silos and is not always tied directly to critical transition points throughout the lifecycle (referred to as “Life Moments” throughout this project.) Furthermore, some military and veteran families are not connected to supports they need and/or at the time(s) they need them. Thus, SDMFC and SDVC leadership came together in 2017 to discuss how they could collaborate and further support the military and veteran connected community in San Diego at these critical Life Moments and throughout the entire military/veteran lifecycle.

In early 2018, the “San Diego Regional Veteran and Family Wellness Project” was initiated with seed funding from the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and San Diego Grantmakers, as well as contracted support from The Nonprofit Institute’s Caster Center at the University of San Diego.

This first phase of a multi-phase initiative focused on: 1) identifying the primary Life Moments of active duty service members and veterans and their partners, dependents, and families throughout their lifespan and as seen through each of these different “lenses” and experiences; 2) conducting an environmental scan of programs, services, and resources available to the military and veteran connected community in San Diego; 3) identifying gaps (i.e., opportunities) and areas of saturation in those programs and services; and 4) providing experiential and evidence-based recommendations for future phases.

In Fall 2018, a series of four listening sessions (i.e., “Community Conversations”) were conducted throughout San Diego County with 162 stakeholders representing 109 nonprofit military and veteran service providers, community organizations, businesses, military leadership, and military and veteran families. Participants were asked to:

- Identify and discuss Primary Life Moments throughout the military and veteran lifecycle, as well as “Factors” that influence their experiences and needs across the Life Moments
- Share how they currently support the military and veteran connected community
- Identify gaps in services and resources for the military and veteran community, and opportunities for better serving this population

These Community Conversations were very successful in terms of bringing many stakeholders together to provide input for this project, network and help build a cohesive community, and generate buy-in to this first phase of a longer-term effort.

Key findings include:

- **Life Moments and Factors that are associated across the lifecycle do not exist in silos.** They are all interwoven and create a ripple effect throughout the lives of active duty service members/veterans and their spouses/partners, dependents, and families.
- **Life Moments and Factors are perceived and experienced from multiple perspectives.** Although all members of military and veteran families experience the Life Moments, there are differences in how they perceive the experience and the supports that are available to them. For example, there are more service providers who support service members and veterans, compared to spouses/partners and dependents.
- **Gaps create opportunities for the community to collaborate.** Many of the gaps are complex and require the collaboration of multiple service providers to ensure needs are met at each Life Moment, across the lifecycle, and for all members of the military and veteran connected community. Examples of specific gaps in the military and veteran connected community lifecycle include:
 - Entry point into military life/culture for spouses/partners and dependents
 - Divorced and unmarried partners
 - Dependent children as they transition into civilian life
 - Reservists and National Guard and their families

The hope is that Phase 2 of the larger initiative will encompass a strong collaborative effort to address the gaps identified in Phase 1. Specifically, we recommend a joint task force spearheaded by SDMFC and SDVC leadership and including representation from key stakeholders and members to:

- Educate the public, elected officials, funders, and the military and veteran connected community on the process and findings of Phase 1
- Develop a solid plan for Phase 2 to address the following proposed goals:
 - Foster a culture of regional collaboration involving all stakeholders
 - Research and identify potential funding opportunities for collaborative efforts
 - Identify and enhance communication channels between the community, military commands, and military and veteran families
 - Identify Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be shared among the entire San Diego military and veteran connected community
 - Develop a plan for a product, such as an app, that would give the military and veteran connected community and funders access to information, needed supports, shared KPIs, etc.

In sum, Phase 1 of the San Diego Regional Veteran and Family Wellness Project laid a solid foundation and framework for better understanding the lifecycle and primary Life Moments of the broader military and veteran connected community, as well as the supports and services available to them in San Diego County. Equally important, it helped establish and build relationships, create community buy-in, and develop trust in the community. Now it is imperative for San Diego to continue its collaborative efforts in Phase 2 to further strengthen the supports and close gaps in service for the military and veteran connected community in our region and beyond.

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

San Diego County is home to the largest concentration of military in the United States¹ and the third highest population of military veterans.² San Diego has a rich history of collaborating within the military and veteran communities and many service providers have evolved to address critical needs of these groups. Many of these service providers are members of the two primary conveners of San Diego's military and service support organizations:

- *The San Diego Military Family Collaborative (SDMFC)* - focuses primarily on resources, referrals, and information sharing for active duty families.
- *The San Diego Veterans Coalition (SDVC)* - focuses on the transition into veteran status, and tangible resources, referrals, and information for veterans and their families.

Due to the focus of their work, SDMFC and SDVC identified a natural spectrum spanning the work of their members from the beginning of military life (i.e., when a service member initially enlists or is commissioned) to the end of life for a service member, veteran, or the last ID card-carrying dependent of the veteran. This continuum of support is captured in the infinity logo (see Figure 1) created by SDMFC and SDVC with the intersection of services denoting the period of transition from active duty to civilian/veteran life.

Figure 1. SDMFC/SDVC Infinity Logo



With a history of serving the military and veteran connected community, both SDMFC and SDVC recognize that there is a myriad of military and veteran service providers across San Diego County seeking to meet the needs of these families. However, this support often exists in silos, creating a complex landscape of services for military and veteran families to navigate. Furthermore, many longtime service providers have witnessed that challenges to military and veteran families result in very different needs for the spouses/partners and dependents. Therefore, the conveners sought to collaborate with one another to identify what current supports exist across the region and how to better connect to military and veteran families in a way to best meet their needs when faced with challenges. Additionally, there are military families and veterans who are not connecting to services when needed, particularly those who are new to San Diego or have recently separated from active duty and are unaware of the services available to them.

¹ The City of San Diego *Key Facts and Figures* <https://www.sandiego.gov/economic-development/sandiego/facts>

² *Military Employment in San Diego: A look at military veterans in San Diego's labor force.* San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce (2013)

Therefore, SDMFC and SDVC came together in 2017 to discuss how they could collaborate and further support “the military and veteran connected community” in San Diego across the entire military and veteran lifecycle. With funding from the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and San Diego Grantmakers, the San Diego Regional Veteran and Family Wellness Project was formed in early 2018. This project consists of the following phases:

- Phase 1, included in this report, identifies the Primary Life Moments (Primary Life Moments are defined as those key milestones or events that create a disruption in the life of a military/veteran family) of military and veteran families as well as the services and infrastructure that support these families. It also identifies gaps and saturation points of services, and makes recommendations for Phase 2. Phase 1 will serve as an educational tool helping funders identify areas they would like to support through collaborative community efforts.
- Phase 2 will focus on educating the public and funders on the value of collaborative efforts and encouraging service providers to integrate their services to best address identified gaps in services for the military and veteran connected community.
- Eventually, both SDMFC and SDVC hope that this process can become replicated in other military and veteran connected communities with each community’s unique needs and challenges in mind.

In the Spring of 2018, SDMFC and SDVC contracted with The Nonprofit Institute’s Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research (Caster Center) at the University of San Diego for data collection and analysis for Phase 1 which included the following goals:

Goals of Phase 1

Identify Primary Life Moments

Engage key stakeholders within the military and veteran connected community in San Diego to identify milestones and/or life events throughout the service member’s career and into veteran status, inclusive of their family’s experience from birth to grave.

Environmental Scan

Engage key stakeholders within the military and veteran connected community in San Diego to produce an environmental scan of local services and infrastructure available to the military and veteran connected community.

Identify Gaps (Opportunities) and Areas of Saturation

Identify any noticeable areas where there appear to be a saturation of services and/or gaps for addressing milestones and/or life events.

Recommendations for Future Phases

Develop recommendations for Phase 2 in coordination with SDMFC, SDVC, and the Steering Committee

SDMFC and SDVC saw this project as an opportunity to provide an open forum for all military and veteran service providers to gather and share how they currently support this population and provide input on the military and veteran lifecycle. To realize this opportunity, a Steering Committee was formed to help guide the development and execution of a number of listening sessions throughout San Diego County (hereafter referred to as “Community Conversations”). The Veteran and Family Wellness Steering Committee³ was formed in July 2018 and included representatives from key organizations in San Diego County. The Steering Committee assisted with: brainstorming Life Moments; securing venues for the Community Conversations, recruiting participants for the conversations; and disseminating Community Conversation invitations to their networks.

The Steering Committee, along with SDMFC, SDVC, and Caster Center, developed an initial list of Primary Life Moments which was used as the basis for each of the Community Conversations.

³ Steve Alt, SD United, 2-1-1 San Diego; Joe Buehrle, SAY San Diego; Keith Goosby, Navy Region Southwest; Tim Ney, Armed Services YMCA; Becky Sanford, zero8hundred; Lorin Stewart, USO San Diego; Meg Storer, 2-1-1 San Diego

METHODOLOGY

Community Conversations

In order to create shared community “buy in” for this project, it was vital for a wide variety of stakeholders associated with the San Diego military and veteran connected community to come together. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to: nonprofit military and veteran service providers, community organizations and businesses, military leadership, and military and veteran families. SDMFC, SDVC, and the Caster Center worked with the Steering Committee to facilitate Community Conversations that allowed as many stakeholders as possible to provide input on the military and veteran connected lifecycle. To enable the entire community to participate, four separate venues in each of the regions across San Diego County were chosen. The four venues were:

- Central – Mission Valley Library
- North – North Inland Live Well Center
- South – MLK Jr. Community Center
- East – Foothills Christian Church

In August and September of 2018, 162 participants representing 109 service providers that serve the military and veteran connected community in San Diego (see Appendix A), attended community conversations in each of the four regions of San Diego County. At each of the conversations, the initial Life Moments created by the Steering Committee were presented to the participants for their input. Participants were asked to:

1. Check for consensus on the identified Life Moments
2. Add additional Life Moments they thought may be missing
3. Identify other critical points (Factors) in time associated with the Life Moments
4. Recognizing that each Life Moment is experienced differently by members of military and/or veteran families, participants were asked to look at Life Moments from the different perspectives (i.e. lenses) of: 1) a service member/veteran; 2) spouse/partner; and 3) dependents.

Environmental Scan

An environmental scan of services and infrastructure currently available to the military and veteran connected community in San Diego occurred through the research team efforts as well as during the Community Conversations. The research team, in collaboration with SDMFC and SDVC, collected information from multiple databases to gather information on:

- Organizations in San Diego that support the military and veteran connected community
- Organizations to target for disseminating information about the Community Conversations
- Organization partners to invite to the Steering Committee

A total of 253 organizations were identified as actively engaged in serving the military and veteran connected community in San Diego. A list of all organizations can be found in Appendix A. Those who participated in the Community Conversations are denoted with an asterisk. Participants were asked to fill out forms indicating where their organizations were located and where, across the four regions, they served. A map of the organizations who participated in the Community Conversations and where they are located can be found in Appendix B.

KEY FINDINGS

San Diego County, as a whole, has made major efforts over time to address the needs of the military and veteran connected community with collaborative efforts such as the primary convening organizations: SDMFC and SDVC; task groups such as San Diego Military Family Working Group (SDMFWG) and the Military Transition Support Project (MTSP); initiatives such as the creation of zero8hundred; connections and referrals to resources such as Courage2Call and SD United; a myriad of nonprofit military and veteran support organizations (as listed in Appendix A) and military commands that offer a variety of support services. However, awareness of and access to resources is still a challenge for many in the military and veteran connected community, particularly for new families who move into the San Diego region, those who live outside of military housing areas and for Reservists and National Guard members and their families.

The key findings from this report include the identification of Primary Life Moments and Factors that are associated across the Primary Life Moments. These Life Moments and Factors do not exist in silos, but rather are interwoven and create a ripple affect across the lifecycle. Furthermore, each of these moments are experienced and seen from a difference perspective (lens). The scan of resources and infrastructures available to the military and veteran connected organizations revealed some gaps in services provided across the Life Moments which create opportunities for the community to come together and work to address the gaps in services.



Awareness of and access to resources is still a challenge for many in the military and veteran connected community.

Primary Life Moments

The Community Conversations created a rich and vital dialogue culminating in a refined list of 11 Primary Life Moments. Although these moments are defined individually, they overlap and are interwoven with one another. Figure 2 highlights the Primary Life Moments. The first six Life Moments occur only on active duty, however the latter five can occur at any time in a military family's lifetime. While separation from active duty occurs at the end of the active duty years, the transition process from active duty to civilian life begins before separation and continues on into the early part of veteran life.

Figure 2. Primary Life Moments

<p>Entry Point into Military Life</p>	<p>When the service member joins the military. For the family, it occurs at the point they become a part of the service member's family, which could occur before or after the service member joins.</p>	<p>Temporary Military Separations</p>	<p>When the service member leaves his/her family temporarily for military duties. This includes the deployment cycle, temporary and Geobachelor⁴ assignments, and military schools.</p>
<p>Change in Rank</p>	<p>When promoted to a higher rank, when an enlisted service member becomes an officer, or, in cases of discipline, a possible demotion.</p>	<p>Change in Reserve Status</p>	<p>When a reservist is activated to an active duty status and then subsequently deactivated. Activation could be for a deployment or a longer term assignment.</p>
<p>PCS (Permanent Change of Station)</p>	<p>When a service member receives a new set of orders that necessitates a move.</p>	<p>Separation from Active Duty</p>	<p>When a service member is separated or retires from the military and transitions back to civilian life.</p>
<p>Change in Family Status</p>	<p>When a service member or veteran marries, divorces, when a child is born, or when another member of the family, such as an elderly parent, becomes a dependent.</p>	<p>Change in Housing Status</p>	<p>When a service member, veteran, and/or family member experiences a change in housing status: becomes homeless, or is at risk of homelessness.</p>
<p>Illness/ Injury/ Disability</p>	<p>When a service member, veteran and/or a family member is injured, ill, or disabled.</p>	<p>Legal Issues</p>	<p>When an incident occurs that requires legal support or action.</p>
<p>Death</p>	<p>When the last ID card carrying member of the military family (service member, veteran, or family member) passes away.</p>	<p>Primary Life Moments are not necessarily sequential and some may not occur at all, while others could occur more than once throughout the life of a military family from active duty through death.</p>	

⁴ Geobatching occurs when a service member is sent to a new duty station without his/her family

Factors Across the Life Moments

In addition to the Primary Life Moments, Community Conversation participants identified other Factors that can occur across Life Moments. The Factors that emerged from the Community Conversations can be seen in Figure 3 with a brief description. All of these Factors can occur during any point in the life of a military or veteran family, and often more than once. Examples for each of the Factors can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 3: Factors Across the Life Moments

Health and Wellness	Health and Wellness encompasses the overall health and wellness concerns that weave through all of the Life Moments and lenses (service member/veteran, spouse/partner, and dependent). This factor includes physical, mental and spiritual health issues/concerns.
Education	Education can refer to military-connected education and/or civilian education for the service member/veteran, spouse/partner, and/or dependent.
Non-Military Employment	Non-Military Employment covers all facets of employment other than direct military service, including all employment-related items such as resume writing, skill translation to interview skills and job etiquette, and job hunting.
Finances	Financial challenges and/or instability occur throughout every life moment and across all lenses. In particular, the high cost of San Diego and spouse employment difficulties put pressure on the finances of military/veteran families.
Pets	Pets were mentioned as a concern for military families, from associated costs to issues arising from a PCS move with a pet, deployments, and veterinary costs.
Justice/ Legal	Justice/legal occurs in many of the Life Moments and in every lens. Similar to finances, the supports needed for this factor look very different depending on the individual situation as well as whether or not the service member is on active duty or a veteran.
Social/ Personal Connections	Connections to the community and to friends and family are interrupted or discontinued because of multiple military moves and transition to civilian life. Each move requires families to build new social and personal connections.
Resources: Access and Knowledge	Understanding where to find information and how to access, and connect, to the supports that are available is a key challenge for military families

Primary Life Moments and Factors Are Intertwined

Primary Life Moments and Factors do not exist independently of each other, but rather intertwine and overlap with one another. If not addressed early, during the active duty years, many of the Factors can affect a military family over a longer term and carry over into veteran/civilian life. A proactive approach to building strong active duty service members and families, that teaches families how to navigate the available support services, can lead to a smoother transition to veteran life.

Building strong and resilient veteran families begins with building strong and resilient active duty families.

The following vignettes illustrate the inter-connectivity of these commonplace Life Moments and Factors (which are in bold) and highlights the difference in experiences of each of the family members.

Scenario #1: Marine Family with Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders during deployment

Imagine you have been told you need to move for your job (**PCS**). Now, picture yourself thousands of miles away from home and consider how your family will have to manage this entire move without you due to limited communication while abroad (**temporary military separations**). Now consider how your spouse may need to quit their job because of the required preparation and execution of this move. Now contemplate the ramifications that this loss of extra income may have on your family and how your spouse's employment history/career may be negatively impacted because of this relocation (**employment, knowledge and access to resources, finances**). Finally, consider the complexities of such a move with a child with special needs requiring your family to leave your current supports for this child and the need to start all over in a new location (**Health and Wellness, knowledge and access to resources**). Now consider the struggle your other children face with the loss of their friends and their frustrations with their third school in five years (**Health and Wellness, education, knowledge and access to resources, PCS, social/personal connections**).

Scenario #2: Retiring Navy couple is going through a divorce (change in family status, separation from the military).

Imagine the only life you have known your entire adulthood is going to be closed off to you as your partner's military career ends (**change in family status, separation from the military**). Imagine your loss of identity as you make this transition while your military connected friends or "family" resumes their normal activities unaffected by your transition. Consider how you are forced to figure out your next steps without knowing who can support your next steps (**Health and Wellness, social/personal connections, knowledge and access to resources**). Now imagine, you have gone almost a year without obtaining steady employment and have struggled to complete your education because of your family's continual moves (**employment, knowledge and access to resources, finances, temporary military separations, education**). Now imagine your spouse loses their job and your family is struggling to make ends meet and this stress is taking a toll on your marriage as your partner asks for a divorce. Finally, consider how these events impact your teenage daughter going into her senior year of high school and how this financial duress has her concerned about how she will pay for college (**Finances, education, social/personal connections**).

Scenario #3: Active Duty member experiencing significant trauma/PTSD **(Illness/injury/ diagnosis, health and wellness)**

Imagine your spouse has been exposed to multiple and intense work-related traumas, and you notice significant negative changes in his behavior. **(Illness/injury/ diagnosis, health and wellness)**

Now consider that you reach out to the representatives of our spouse Employee Assistance Program to seek support or care and this gets back to your spouse's employer and she/he is placed in a status that does not permit your spouse to continue in her/his current position **(knowledge and access to resources, change in rank, health and wellness).**

Now picture your spouse being further enraged, and their performance spirals downward to the point where they are fired **(separation from active duty, finances).**

This results in the loss of your sole family income, housing, healthcare and access to all or nearly all of your social recreation and support networks **(social and personal connections).**

This foists you and your family into a life of applying for welfare, standing in free food lines, using free community health clinics, unemployment and trying to find a job **(employment, health and wellness, knowledge and access to resources, finances)**

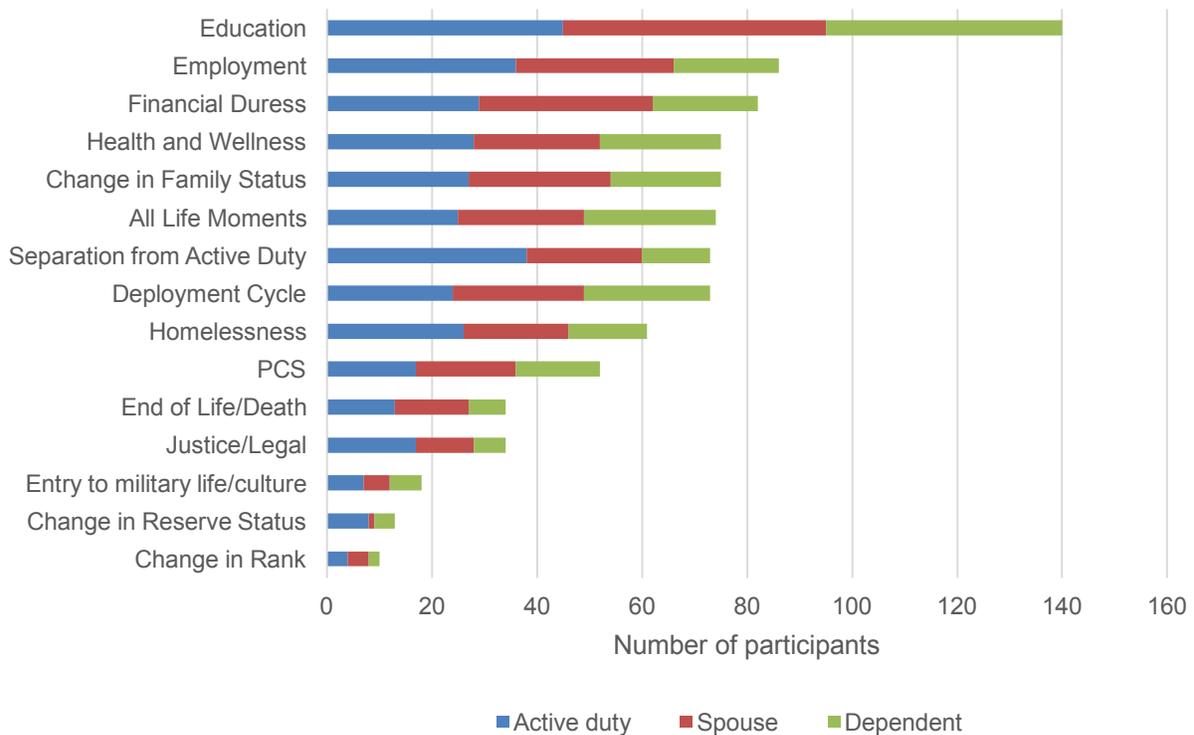
Now, consider how the lives of your young children will change given the lower income and increased stressors facing the family.

Primary Life Moments cause a "ripple effect" by impacting more than one family member in very different ways.

Areas of Saturation and Opportunities (Gaps)

Representatives from the 109 organizations at the Community Conversations were asked to identify the Primary Life Moment(s) or Factor(s) that their organization addresses. Figure 4 summarizes the results and shows the areas of Saturation and Opportunities (Gaps). For example, there is more support for education than for any other aspect of the lifecycle, and there are more supports overall for the service member/veteran than the spouse/partner or dependent.

Figure 4: Support for Military Life Moments and Factors in San Diego



Saturation Points

As Figure 4 reveals, some of the Life Moments and Factors such as education, employment, and finances, had the most support from those organizations represented at the Community Conversations. While there seems to be a saturation in these areas, they are also the areas of greatest need, particularly during the time of transition from active duty to civilian life.⁵

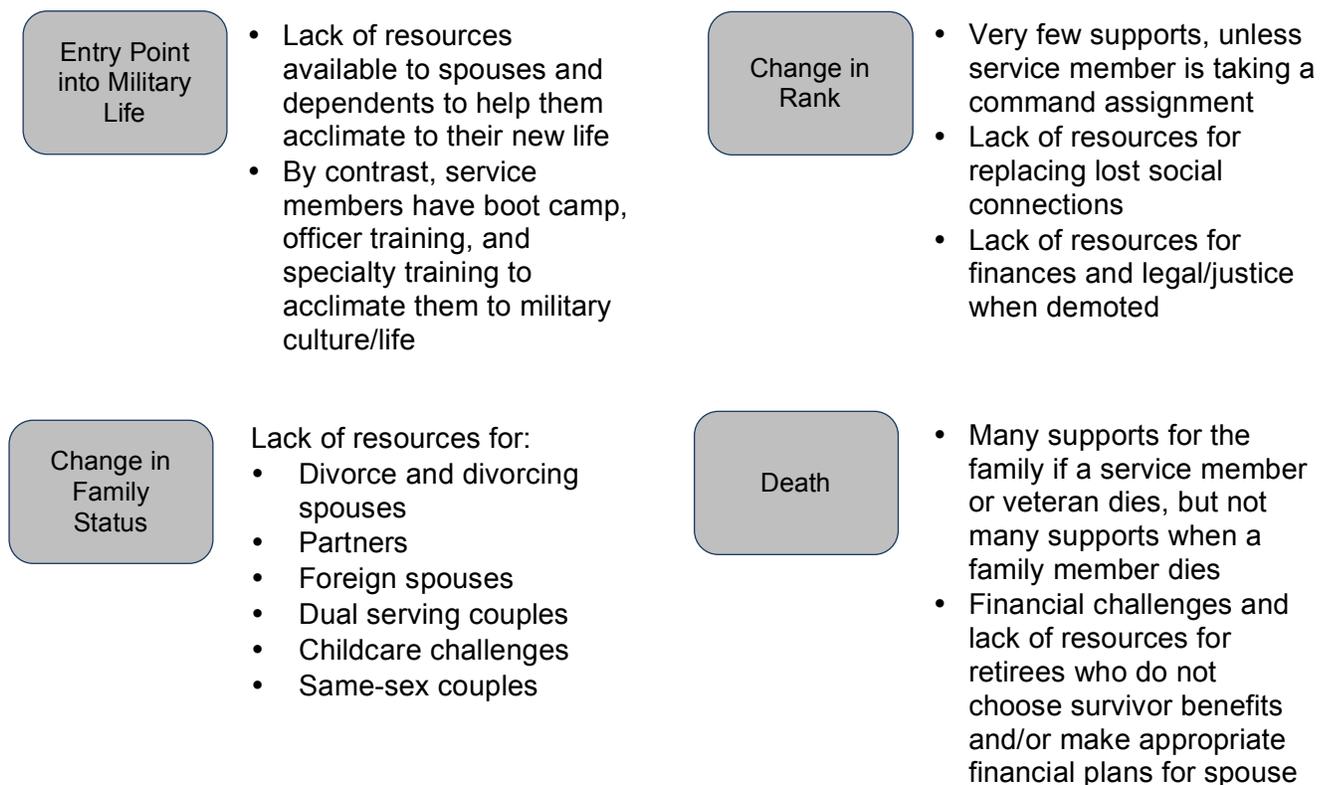
⁵ Hunt, K.D., & Schumann, M.J. (2016). *The promise of a new day: Support for service members transitioning to civilian life in San Diego*. San Diego, CA: Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego.

Opportunities/Gaps

Figure 5 summarizes some of the gaps that emerged from the organizations that participated in the Community Conversations. These gaps create opportunities for the San Diego region to come together to collaboratively support the military and veteran connected population. Many gaps occur because of the high cost of being assigned to a duty station in San Diego. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the overall cost of living in San Diego is 16% higher than the national average, while rents in San Diego County are 67% higher than the national average.⁶ Therefore, for the typical junior enlisted member with less than four years experience, earning just over \$26,000 a year⁷ (44% lower than the national median average salary in 2018)⁸ the ability to afford some basic needs are curtailed.

Gaps and opportunities appeared across the Life Moments and within all of the lenses. Some of the gaps were related to the lens with less supports for spouses, partners, and dependents than for service members and veterans. Others gaps emerged for Reservists, National Guard, and their families.

Figure 5: Opportunities/Gaps for Serving Military-Connected Population in San Diego



⁶ Bureau of Economic Analysis (2018) MARPP Regional Price Parities by MSA - 2016 Statistics <https://apps.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm?reqid=70&step=1&isuri=1&acrdn=8#reqid=70&step=1&isuri=1>

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/military/military-careers.htm#tab-5> Military salary calculated on E4 with less than 4 years of experience.

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) Usual Weekly Earnings of Wage and Salary Workers Third Quarter 2018 <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/wkyeng.pdf>

Justice/
Legal

- Lack of resources for dependents
- Comprehensive legal support is expensive
- Limited options for access to inexpensive legal help

Social/
Personal
Connections

- Across all lenses and Life Moments
- Multiple moves can lead to a loss of social and personal connections with each move
- Can lead to feelings of isolation
- Disconnect from the civilian community

Resources:
Access and
Knowledge

- Most resources geared for service members/ veterans vs. dependents
- Many are unaware of available resources
- Navigating resources is challenging, particularly given eligibility requirements
- Barriers to access include: transportation, hours of operation, feeling that others need more help, pride, concern of others knowing you are accessing services, and childcare

Pets

- Lack of support for pets, such as medical costs
- Restrictions for some overseas moves
- Lack of civilian housing that allows pets

While a majority of the support organizations serve clients throughout the county, accessibility and/or transportation can be an issue, particularly for those living in the eastern and northeastern areas of San Diego County.

Additional gaps/opportunities emerged from the Community Conversations including:

- Lack of services focused on Reservists, National Guard and their families
- A lack of pre-planning for transition on the part of military members and their families emerged as a common theme throughout the conversations
- A lack of resources to support dependents, and to a lesser extent spouses, in the transition to civilian life
- Learning how to manage expectations for the following multiple moments along the lifecycle were mentioned:
 - Entry to Military life/culture
 - Temporary military separations
 - Transition
 - Civilian life
 - Future employment and/or education options

Lens Matters

While the Primary Life Moments and Factors are common throughout the military and veteran connected population, key differences emerge from the unique way each of the lenses experiences them. Figure 6 provides examples of some of these differences. To avoid creating gaps in service as a result of these differences, it is vital for those supporting the Life Moments to use a holistic view of the military and veteran family. Positive family functioning boosts a service member's morale, retention, ability to carry out missions⁹ and facilitates an easier transition to civilian/veteran life.¹⁰

The majority of resources and supports are for the service member/veteran versus other family members.

Despite the differences, a strong sense of identity with military culture and the difficulty coping with loss of identity when the service member separates from active duty or a child ages out of dependent status was common throughout the lenses.

Figure 6: Differences Among the Lenses

Service Member/Veteran	Spouse/Partner	Dependents (includes dependent children as well as some adult children or other family members)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the resources focus on supporting the service member/veteran • Transition from active duty to civilian is one of the most challenging times • Miss a lot of family activities and milestones • Visible and invisible wounds are not always understood and can lead to other mitigating circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the work falls on spouses for family adjustment and moves • Lack of support for divorced/divorcing spouses • Lack of resources for unmarried and same-sex partners • Unemployment and underemployment due to multiple moves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple moves can affect social adjustment • Change in schools (can cause issues with credits/graduation) • Taking on other roles in service member's absence

⁹ Shinseki, E. K. (2003). The Army family. (White paper). Retrieved from http://www.whs.mil/library/Dig/AR-M620U_20080912.pdf

¹⁰ Hunt, K. D. (2017). The resiliency of highly mobile military children: Implications for military and education leadership. Dissertation, University of San Diego.

Emotions and Feelings

An overwhelming theme that emerged from the Community Conversations was the surge of emotions and feelings experienced throughout the lifecycle. These emotions and feelings were influenced by each of the lenses. Due to the focus on providing support for Life Moments during these conversations, negative emotions and feelings associated with challenges emerged most often. However, many positive feelings and emotions connected to the Life Moments also emerged. Feelings that came up most often included: anxiety; fear; stress; confusion; shame; excitement, pride, and anticipation.

Common Language

Throughout the conversations, it was clear some people were not familiar with language used in the military and veteran connected communities. At times, those who did have knowledge of the language used different words to describe the same thing. A common language and glossary within San Diego County would help improve data collection and understanding as well as allow a common story about the military and veteran connected community within San Diego County. A preliminary glossary can be found in Appendix D. During the next phase(s) of this project, the glossary can be expanded and refined.

DISSEMINATION OF PROJECT FINDINGS

Preliminary findings from Phase 1 were presented at the San Diego Military Family Collaborative annual conference on October 26, 2018. In attendance were many of the participants of the Community Conversations, the project funders, member organizations of SDMFC and SDVC, and other key stakeholders in the San Diego Community including: Rear Admiral Yancy B. Lindsey, Commander, Navy Region Southwest; San Diego County Supervisor Kristin Gaspar; and U.S. Congresswoman Susan Davis. A Marine Corps veteran and his spouse shared some of their real-life experiences to bring life to the Life Moments within the lifecycle. Findings were also presented at a SDVC meeting on January 4, 2019 to community stakeholders and SDVC member organizations.

Another presentation of the completed report is planned for January 25, 2019 at the monthly SDMFC convening. In addition, a public release is planned for Spring 2019 with invitations to military and veteran serving organizations, military leadership, political representatives, the military and veteran connected community, as well as the wider civilian community. The press release will also serve as a call to action for Phase 2 of the project.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

This “San Diego Regional Veteran and Family Wellness Project” is just the first phase of what needs to be a multi-phase initiative to best serve the military and veteran connected community in San Diego County. Armed with the information, insight, energy and momentum from this Phase 1 project, the plan is to create a joint task force spearheaded by SDMFC and SDVC leadership to develop and implement a solid plan for Phase 2, giving consideration to the following recommendations:

- Continue to foster a culture of regional collaboration involving all stakeholders, including active duty service members, veterans, their spouses/partners and dependents, military commands, service providers, government agencies and elected officials, funders, businesses, and civilians)
 - Identify and develop collaborative projects that are co-led
 - Build relationships and enhance trust among all the stakeholders
 - Continue to take periodic environmental scans
 - Capitalize on findings from the lifecycle and interdependent Life Moments and Factors, and the need for preventative and proactive interventions
- Prioritize high-quality county-wide communication and education about:
 - The resources available and how to leverage those before creating new programs, services, and organizations
 - The opportunities that exist to fill gaps in serving the needs of the MVCC throughout their entire lifecycle
 - The history of collaboration, successes, and lessons learned in San Diego County’s military and veteran connected community
 - The need to enhance communication channels between the community, military commands, and military and veteran families
- Research and identify potential funding opportunities, including Federal, DOD/military, state and county government, individual philanthropy, corporate philanthropy, venture philanthropy, and social impact investing both inside and outside the San Diego region
- Develop and host convenings, gatherings, workshops and other events for all stakeholders and/or subgroups of them to:
 - Keep everyone engaged and build on the momentum from this project
 - Discuss gaps and opportunities, with a focus on creating solutions
 - Strategize short, medium, and long-term goals, and capitalize on wins along the way
 - Secure funding for longer-term regional sustainability
 - Develop a product (such as an app) to allow the veteran and military connected community as well as funders to easily gain knowledge of and access to needed supports
- Develop a plan for data sharing
 - Aggregate data across service providers to present regional impact
 - Identify Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the military and veteran connected community
 - Leverage existing technologies such as SDUnited

APPENDIX A: ORGANIZATIONS IN SAN DIEGO THAT ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE MILITARY AND VETERAN CONNECTED COMMUNITY

** Denotes organizations that participated in the Community Conversations*

*2-1-1 San Diego	Aurora Behavioral Health Care	*County of San Diego
*American Academy of Pediatrics, CA Chapter 3	*Big Brothers Big Sisters (Operation Big - Military Mentoring)	*County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency
ABA Military Pro Bono Project	*Blue Star Families	*Courage to Call
Able-Disabled Advocacy	Brandman University	Cygnets Theatre
ACT-Today!	Veterans2College	*Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center
Active Duty Families	Brother Benno Foundation	Deployment Kids
*Armed Forces Services Corporation/Magellan Federal	Buy a Home, Save a Vet	Disabled American Vets (DAV)
Air Force Aid Society	*California National Guard	*District Attorney
All-Star Vets	California Department of Veterans Affairs	Dogs on Deployment
Allen Financial	California Family Assistance Program (Operation Ready Families)	E3 (Education, employment, entrepreneurship)
American Combat Veterans of War (Peer-to-Peer Mentor Program)	California National Guard Financial Assistance Fund	*Easter Seals Southern California
American Heart Association	*California Veterans Legal Task Force	Elevate Charter School
*American Red Cross - Service to the Armed Forces (SAF)	Canine Companions for Independence	Elizabeth Dole Foundation
American Red Cross - Women, Infants & Children (WIC)	Casa de Amparo Military Support Program	Exceptional Family Member Program (at MCCS Camp Pendleton)
*American Veterans Coalition	Challenged Athletes Foundation	Fallbrook Union High School District
Amphibious	Chula Vista Public Library	Family Forces Mental Health Services (Military Program)
Construction Battalion 1	*City of Chula Vista	Family Readiness Miramar
Armed Forces Services Corporation New Parent Support	*City of National City	Fan of the Feather, Inc
*Armed Services YMCA San Diego	Community Alliances for Drug Free Youth	Federal Savings Bank
Army Emergency Relief	*Community Health Improvement Partners Connected!	First 5 First Steps
Army OneSource	*CORE San Diego	Fisher House
*Arts for Learning San Diego		Family Life Action Group
		*Fleet & Family Support Center
		Flying Leathernecks

Focus Naval Base San Diego
 GI Film Festival San Diego
 *Guaranteed Rate Foundation
 Give an Hour
 *Goodwill Industries of San Diego Operation: Goodjobs
 *Grand Canyon University
 Grossmont Community College
 Hancock Elementary
 *Headstrong
 Healthy Start Military Family Resource Center
 *Helping Paws Foundation
 Heroes to Hometowns
 Hire a Hero
 Home for the Holidays
 Homefront San Diego
 *Homes for Heroes
 Honor Flight
 Human Performance Resource Center
 Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund
 Interfaith Community Services
 *Jacobs & Cushman
 San Diego Food Bank
 *JBS Transition Experts
 *Jewish Family Services (Military Support Services)
 Kids Korps USA
 *Kids' Turn San Diego (Active Duty Military Family Program)
 *KPBS
 Lincoln Military Housing
 LiveWell San Diego
 Magellan Health
 Make-A-Wish
 *ManKind Project

*Marine Corps Community Services Center
 Marine Corps League (San Diego Chapter)
 Marine Corps Legal Assistance Office
 MarineParents.com, Inc.
 *Mental Health Systems
 Mental Health Veterans Advocacy Council
 *Military Child Education Coalition
 Military Children's Collaborative Group
 Military Crisis Line
 Military Homes Today
 Military in Transition
 Firefighter for a Day
 *Military OneSource
 Military Order of the World Wars
 Military School Liaison Officers - San Diego
 Military Special Needs Network
 Military Youth on the Move
 Militarychildcare.com
 Mission Continues
 Morale, Welfare, and Recreation
 Motiv
 *Military Spouse JD Network
 Murphy Canyon Youth Center
 Music Care
 My Special Needs Connection
 *NAACP San Diego
 NAMI San Diego
 National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (Military Child Care Program)

*National Guard Family Assistance
 National Lawyers Guild
 Military Legal Clinic
 National Military Family Association
 *National University
 *National Veterans Transition Services
 Naval Center Combat and Operations Stress Control
 Naval Consolidated Brig Miramar
 Naval Medical Center
 Naval Officers' Spouses' Club
 Naval Services Family Line
 Navy League San Diego
 Navy Legal Assistance Office
 *Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society
 *Neighborhood House Association
 New Parent Support Program / Marine Family Program
 Newbreak Church
 North County Lifeline
 *Oceanside Public Library
 *Office of Congresswoman Susan Davis
 *Office of Rep. Juan Vargas
 One VA
 *Onward to Opportunity
 *Operation Homefront
 Operation Independence (Camp Pendleton)
 Organizing Resolutions with Starks
 Our Military Kids
 *Outdoor Outreach
 Palomar College

Physician Advocates for Veterans
 *Paws for Purple Hearts
 Physical & Emotional Health Action Group
 *Pendleton Preschool Book Project
 People Assisting the Homeless
 Poway Veterans Organization
 Produce for Patriots
 *PsychArmor Institute
 Pugilistic Offensive Warrior Tactics, Inc. (P.O.W)
 *Rancho Santa Fe Foundation (RSFF)
 Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
 Real Warriors
 REBOOT Workshop
 *Refined Transitions
 *Rep. Susan Davis
 Resounding Joy (Semper Sound Program)
 *Safe Families for Children of Olive Crest
 San Diego Access and Crisis Line
 San Diego Child Support (SDCSS)
 San Diego Children's Discovery Museum
 San Diego Dads Corps
 *San Diego East County EDC
 San Diego Family Justice Center (Military Liaison)
 San Diego Financial Literacy Center (Boost for our Heroes Program)
 San Diego Futures Foundation/TechWORK Training Program

San Diego Military Advisory Council (SDMAC)
 *San Diego Military Family Collaborative (SDMFC)
 San Diego Mom: Military Outreach Ministry
 *San Diego Public Library
 *San Diego State University Joan and Art Barron Veterans Center
 San Diego Unified School District
 *San Diego Veterans Coalition
 *San Diego Women Veterans Network
 San Diego Workforce Partnership
 *Santee Collaborative/Santee School District
 *SAY San Diego
 *San Diego Breastfeeding Coalition
 *San Diego Children's Museum
 San Diego Military Outreach Ministries
 San Diego United Sesame Street Military Families Near and Far
 Sharp Mesa Vista Hospital
 *Shelter to Soldier
 Snap Tap n Sing
 *Sohaila International
 Soldiers Who Salsa
 *Southern Caregiver Resource Center (Operation Family Caregiver)
 Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program
 *Support The Enlisted Project

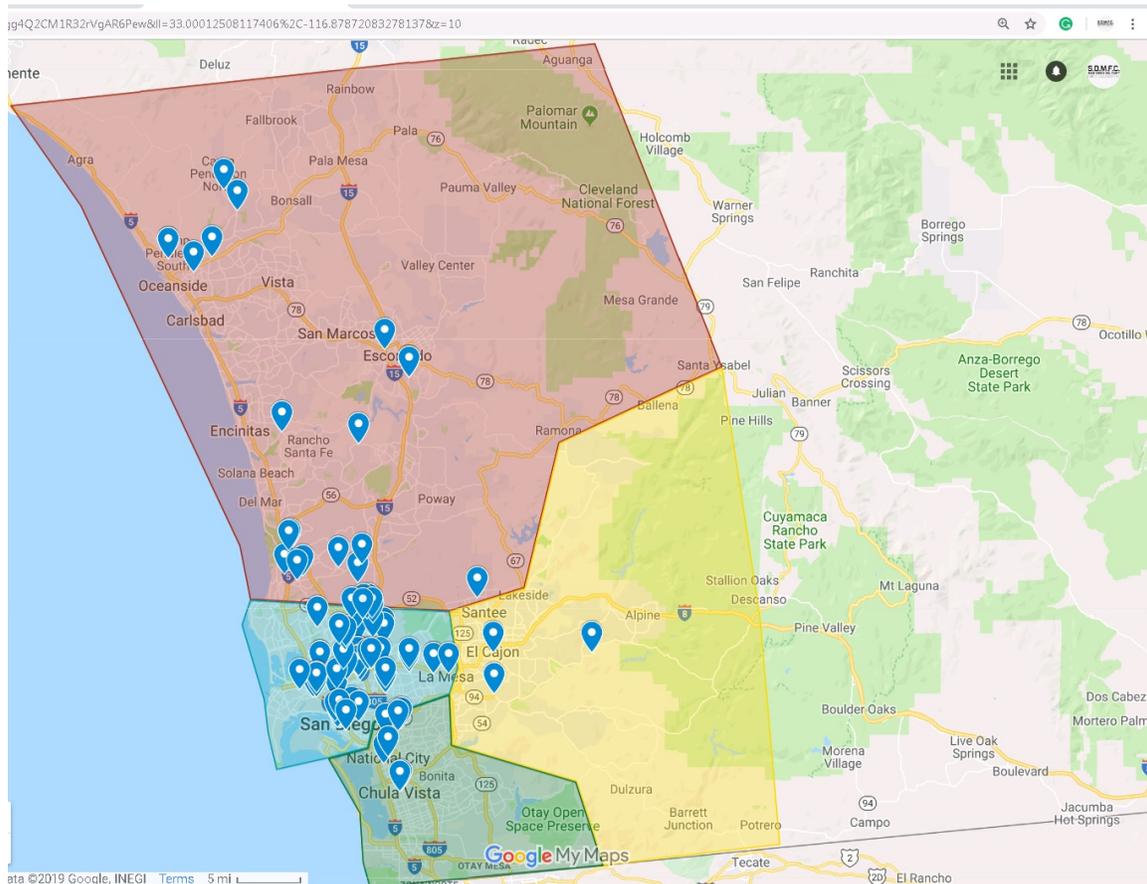
Surface Officers' Spouses Club of San Diego
 *Survivor Outreach Services
 Synergy Learning Institute
 Tailhook Educational Foundation Scholarship
 *The City of National City
 *The Elizabeth Hospice
 The Honor Foundation
 The Learning Choice Academy
 The Old Globe
 The Pegasus Rising Project
 *The Rosie Network
 The Soldiers Project
 *Travis Manion Foundation
 *UC San Diego Center for Community Health
 *UC San Diego
 *United States Navy
 *United Through Reading
 United Veterans Council San Diego
 *University of San Diego, Caster Center
 *University of San Diego, Veterans Legal Clinic
 *US Army Reserve Family Programs
 US Dept of Labor (DOL)/ Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)
 US Dept of Labor Women's Bureau
 *US Dept of Veterans Affairs
 *USA Multicultural Entertainment Group
 US Coast Guard Worklife

USO San Diego
Veteran Family Forum
Veterans Association of
North County
VetCTAP
The Veterans –
Empowered, Successful
and Thriving
*Veterans Chamber of
Commerce
Veterans Community
Services
Veterans Helping
Veterans
Veterans Home Finance

Veterans Museum at
Balboa Park
Veterans Research
Alliance
Veterans Service Office,
San Diego County
Veterans United
*Veterans Village of San
Diego
*Vets Community
Connections
Veterans of Foreign
Wars Foundation
Warrior Foundation
*Wave Academy

We Thank Our Troops
*Wellness Revolutions,
Soldiers to Salsa
Workshops for Warriors
*Wounded Warrior
Project
*Wounded Warriors
Homes
*YMCA Childcare
Resource Service
*Zeiders Enterprises
Zero to Three (Military
Family Project)
*zero8hundred

APPENDIX B: MAP OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS



<http://sdmilitaryfamily.org/sdrfws-asset-maps/>

APPENDIX C: EXAMPLES OF FACTORS FROM THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Health and Wellness

- Issues with the VA health system and lack of VA healthcare specific to female veterans
- Access to healthcare for veterans
- Finding new healthcare providers for family when moving
- Finding culturally competent providers
- Spouses and children as caregivers
- VA health system requires self advocacy. If active duty or veteran can't navigate the system, then the caregiver or spouse needs to take on this role

Education

- Multiple schools for children k-12
- For spouses and service members pursuing higher education, military moves and deployments could result in a loss of credits and/or inability to continue educational goals
- Special needs consideration for schools - EFMP doesn't apply once you become a veteran
- Missed opportunities when education cannot fit into the active duty lifestyle
- Possible loss of extracurricular activities: sports, music, theater, etc.
- Changing social supports for school children

Non-Military Employment

- Spouse employment difficulties that are created through multiple moves and childcare issues
- Dependents of working age have similar difficulties as spouses with multiple moves and lack of network
- Translating military skills to civilian job skills
- Active duty service members do not always understand the corporate environment and the value of degrees/ resumes

Finances

- PCS moves mean restocking basic supplies, often spouses need to find new employment
- High cost of housing in San Diego
- Extreme hardship associated with legal issues, demotion, brig, etc.
- Unexpected expenses such as car repairs put a huge strain on budgets
- Lack of budgeting knowledge
- Cost of childcare

Pets

- Unexpected veterinarian costs
- Cost to transport pets during PCS must be paid by the service member
- Overseas relocations and financial/ emotional implications for pets

Justice/Legal

- Cost of obtaining legal assistance
- Lack of understanding of civilian legal/justice system with military needs
- Other Factors that result from legal/justice issues (finances, homelessness, etc.)
- Lack of knowledge of help available, need for advocate for defense

Social and Personal Connections

- Change of schools and PCS moves can mean loss of social connections and need to establish new ones
- Change in rank or change in reserve status (the impact is greatest when moving into senior ranks or from enlisted to officer)
- Separation from active duty can lead to loss of identify and networks for all family members
- Death of serving member significantly changes social connections

Knowledge of and Access to Resources

- Limited information available to spouses upon joining the military. Where there is information it can be hard to find and understand
- Lack of knowledge of available education resources for spouse and children, GI Bill benefits, yellow ribbon schools
- Navigating and understanding the VA system can be confusing and difficult
- Understanding employment resources to support spouse and dependent employment

APPENDIX D: MILITARY TERMINOLOGY AND ACRONYMS LIST

- **Active Duty** – a service member that is currently in service in the U.S. Armed Forces
- **AWOL** – absent without official leave; absent from one’s post or assignment but without intent of desertion
- **Brig** – a military prison, historically on a warship, but in more modern times at a military installation.
- **Career Readiness Standards** – a set of career preparation deliverables that service members must complete to depart from active duty to be considered “career ready”
- **Civilian** – someone who is neither an active duty service member, reservist, or veteran
- **CONUS** – (within the) Continental United States; term often used with relocation (PCS)
- **COS** – Combat/Operational Stress
- **Demotion** – reduction in rank or status
- **Deployment** – how a unit is organized for combat; often requires a cycle of temporary separation where service member is required to leave their “home station”
- **DHS** – Department of Homeland Security; oversee domestic safety offices, i.e. the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA), immigration services, and the Coast Guard
- **DOD** – Department of Defense; oversee the military/combat operations, not including the Coast Guard
- **DOL** – Department of Labor; oversee employment and workforce of the United States
- **DRC** – Deployment Readiness Coordinators; individuals who implement and organize the day-to-day functions that support the readiness of units for deployment
- **EFMP** – Exceptional Family Member Program; a mandatory U.S. Department of Defense enrollment program that works with other military and civilian agencies to provide comprehensive and coordinated community support, housing, educational, medical, and personnel services worldwide to U.S. military families with special needs.
- **Enlisted vs. Officer:**
 - Enlisted individuals often enter service directly from high school and do not require a college degree; they are required to take basic training carry out orders and complete missions directly from Commissioned Officers
 - Officers possess a Bachelor’s degree (or higher), and are required to enter Commissioning School as they are responsible for managing tasks and missions assigned to them through other Commissioned Officers
- **FFSC** – Fleet & Family Support Center; supports individual and family readiness through programs and resources which help Navy families to be resilient, well-informed and adaptable to the Navy environment. These programs and services are currently delivered from 81 sites worldwide.
- **FMLA** – Family Medical Leave Act of 1993; a U.S. labor law requiring covered employers to provide employees with job-protected and unpaid leave for qualified medical and family reasons – i.e., pregnancy, adoption, illness, or family military leave.
- **FRG** – Family Readiness Group; command-sponsored organization of family members, volunteers, and service members belonging to a unit that work together to provide mutual support and assistance to military families.

- **Geobatching** – Geographic Bachelor-ing refers to when a military member moves to a new duty station unaccompanied by family members. The term only applies to PCS (change of duty station) and not to deployments.
- **GI Bill** – provides educational assistance to service members, veterans, and their dependents.
- **HHS** – Department of Health and Human Services
- **Individual Transition Plan (ITP)** - a plan developed for service members to help them frame their career goals and achieve realistic results
- **HUD** – Department of Housing and Urban Development
- **KIA** – Killed in action
- **MCCS** – Marine Corps Community Services; supports individual and family readiness for U. S. Marines, including personal and professional development, MWR programs, financial education, resource referral, and unit support.
- **MIA** – Missing in action
- **Military Liaison Officers** – individuals who coordinate activities to protect military units from collateral damage, achieve mutual understanding or unity of effort among groups
- **MWR** – Morale, Welfare, and Recreation. A military program that provides recreational, outdoor, fitness, and family activities for military members and families.
- **National Guard** – a reserve military force composed of members or units of each state, including the American territories of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam.
- **OCONUS** – Outside the Continental United States; term often used with relocation (PCS)
- **Ombudsman** – an official appointed to investigate individuals' complaints against maladministration, especially that of public authorities. Used in all branches of the military.
- **OT** – Occupational Therapy
- **OTH** – Other-than-honorable discharge from the military. An OTH discharge sometimes limits eligibility for veteran benefits.
- **PCS** – Permanent Change of Station; the official relocation of an active duty military service member – along with any family members living with him or her – to a different duty location, such as a military base.
- **POW** – Prisoner of War
- **Pre/Post-911** – those who enlisted before and after September 11, 2001.
- **PT** – Physical Therapy
- **PTSD** – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Also known as: soldier's heart, shellshock, battle fatigue
- **Recruiter** – an individual who serves to attract interest in and select others for military training and employment
- **Reservist** – a member of the military reserve forces. Reservists serve as a backup contingent of the military and maintain their training and readiness in case an expansion of the force is needed to support emergency or wartime operations.
- **Retiree** – a service member who is entitled, under statute, to retired, retirement, or retainer pay as well as healthcare benefits and access to military facilities for life. Examples include, but are not necessarily limited to, spending 20 or more years in the military or permanent retirement by reasons of physical disability
- **Roger Up** – an agreement to accomplish an order/task (eg. "Nobody wanted to fix the problem, so John decided to roger up and do it himself.")

- **School Liaison Officer (SLO)** – individual who provides school transition assistance, information, resources, and referrals to military families
- **SCI** – Spinal cord injury
- **Separation** – a voluntary or involuntary military discharge in which a service member is released from their obligation to continue service in the armed forces. Separation does not result in a pension or other retirement benefits.
- **TBI** – Traumatic Brain Injury
- **TDY** – Temporary Duty Station; refers to when a U.S. Armed Forces member is temporarily assigned to a location other than the member’s permanent duty station
- **Transition** – leaving the military (retiring/separating) and returning to civilian life.
- **Transition Assistance Program (TAP)** – a U.S. Department of Defense and VA program providing service members with information/resources to prepare them for civilian life
- **Troop/Service member** – umbrella term that refers to members of the military; “soldier” is not used.
- **United States Armed Forces** – five distinct branches of the US Military: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard
- **VA** – Department of Veterans Affairs. The primary federal agency that provides earned benefits to military veterans and family members, including healthcare, education, compensation, life insurance, end-of-life benefits, and more. Some of these benefits can be accessed while the member is on active duty.
- **WIA** – Wounded in action