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Supporting Military Families: Services and Resources for Active Duty and Veteran Fathers

Transcript

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Moderator:

- Nigel Vann, Product Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

Presenters:

- Jennifer DiNallo, Ph.D., Director of Research with the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness, Penn State University
- Katrina Johnson, President and CEO, Horizon Outreach, Houston, Texas
- Danny Romero, Senior Program Director, Social Advocates for Youth, San Diego

Operator: Please stand by. Good day, and welcome to the Office of Family Assistance, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse "Supporting Military Families: Services and Resources for Active Duty and Veteran Fathers" webinar. As a reminder, today's conference is being recorded. At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Nigel Vann. Please go ahead, sir.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much, and good afternoon, everybody. I think I can actually say that—no I can't, it's still not afternoon on the West Coast, I'm sorry. Anyway, welcome to today's webinar. As the operator announced, it's on Supporting Military fathers: Services and Resources for Active Military and Veteran Fathers. So today we're going to look at some of the unique challenges that are faced by military fathers and their families, particularly during times of deployment and after completion of their military service—so the presenters are going to be focusing on services and resources that are available to military families, and they're going to discuss ways in which community-based fatherhood programs can help Veterans and active military in their communities.

For those of you who are joining for the first time, we do provide these webinars and other resources as part of our learning community that we invite you to contribute to and learn from, and—let me just move the slides along here—so this is a picture of the screen that you're seeing now. Again, if you haven't joined us before, just let me point out, as the operator mentioned at the beginning, the webinar is being recorded, so the recording, a transcript, and all the presentation materials will be posted on our website in a few weeks, so you can come back and check those. And you can also find recordings and all the materials from the previous webinars that we've done, which dates back to 2007. We've only done one webinar before on working with military families, and that was either 2009—I think it was in 2009, 2009 or 2010, so it has been a while.

We always have a question-and-answer session with the presenters at the end of the webinar, so we encourage you to send in questions for them by posting those in the box at the bottom right-hand corner of your screen where it says, "Ask a Question." And you can also chat among yourselves and introduce yourselves to each other in the Chat box in the far

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left of your screen, but we do ask that any questions that you'd like the presenters to respond to, please put those in the Ask a Question box.

You'll also see we have some resources that you can download. You can download the actual slides from the webinar, you can download a list of helpful resources, and you can also download the bios for each of the presenters. In the Web Links box in the bottom left-hand corner, there's various websites that you can click on, including the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse and a website for each of the presenters today.

Let me move on and just give you a quick overview of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse. You'll see we've changed the picture on this slide, for those of you who have joined us before, and Enzo, our technician behind the scenes here, has worked a bit of magic with a few of these slides, actually, that he's put in a little Christmas tree there to get us in the holiday spirit. As you see, the purpose of the Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, which is funded by the Office of Family Assistance, is to provide a national resource to support fathers and families and those who work with them. This just gives you a quick overview of how to find us at www.fatherhood.gov. We always encourage people to check out the toolkit, which has got all sorts of tips for people working with fathers trying to start a program, or trying to take it to the next level. Again, you can access the archives of all our previous webinars at the Webinar link there.

The email that you see is actually in the process of changing, but that still is working at the moment, so email us there. After it changes, you'll get a message telling you what the new email address is going to be. And we always encourage fathers and practitioners to contact our help line—it's manned five days a week, and you can always leave a message if there's nobody there, (877) 4DAD411. There's trained mediators on the end of that line who can help parents talk to each other. They can provide local resources and connections to local fatherhood programs, and you can always connect with us via Facebook and Twitter.

Today again, we're going to focus on the challenges that are faced by military fathers and their families, and you're going to be hearing from the three presenters on the screen: Jennifer DiNallo, who's with the Clearinghouse for Military and Family Readiness; Katrina Johnson, who works for Vets through the Horizon Outreach Program in Houston, Texas, and is herself a former Vet, or a former military person; and Danny Romero, who's with Social Advocates for Youth in the San Diego area. I'll give you a fuller introduction to each of those as we move forward.

Again, I want to encourage you to download their bios, but also download the resources list. I'm just going to highlight a few of the things on that resources list, because there's—I don't know how many there are on that, 30 or 40 on there. But I do see, in the list of folk who have joined us online is Ben King, and his resources—actually, I think the first or second on the list, because it begins with A, is called Armor Down with Mindfulness. So welcome, Ben, to our webinar. You'll find various websites that provide support and connections, including the Military One Source; the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which has some online parenting courses for Veterans; and there's a Veterans crisis hotline, which is a toll-free phone line—it's 24/7, and you can also contact them by online chat or text message, and that phone number is (877) 424-3838.

I just wanted to highlight one other report on there—it's an October 2017 report from the Child and Family Research Partnership, which is housed at the University of Texas in Austin. They have a report on three pilot programs in Texas working with military families and Veterans to prevent child abuse and neglect, and the report details various challenging life circumstances that are faced by quite a few military families, often as a result of the frequent relocations and separations, or the physical and/or emotional trauma of being deployed, and high levels of social isolation and stress as well. One finding that the Office found surprising was the number of active duty military families that needed assistance—there is a great number of active duty military families that needed assistance meeting their most basic needs, and that included housing and food.

The findings also indicate the importance of developing effective community collaborations, although the pilot programs did have mixed levels of success with that, particularly in trying to collaborate with their local military partners. They also,

as all fatherhood programs do, faced some early challenges with recruitment, which were probably amplified with the military families because of the frequent moves, and some of the stigma that may be part of the military culture around seeking help.

So before I move to our first presenter, I'm just going to ask Enzo to pop up the first poll question for you. We have a couple of poll questions. The idea here is just to get a sense of who's on the line, so the presenters have a sense of who they're talking to. So if you could just indicate which of the following best describes the population that your program or organization currently serves. Are you working primarily with active duty military fathers, primarily with Veterans, are military fathers not currently part of your target, etc. I'll just give you a little while to answer that.

OK, it looks like a narrow victory for serving all fathers, but not currently active duty military. But then, quite a few folk are serving primarily Veteran fathers, and also a good number serving active duty. So it's good to have you all here with us today. So thank you very much.

With that, let me introduce our first presenter, who is Jennifer DiNallo, who is the Director of Research with the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State University. Jen has been a part of the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness since 2010, and she's led the development, implementation, and evaluation of several programs and projects for military families, including the THRIVE initiative and the Resource Center for Obesity Prevention. Her recent interests include the impact of health promotion behaviors on obesity outcomes, with an emphasis on parent-focused health promotion interventions. She's got undergraduate and graduate degrees in Exercise Physiology, and she works with the U.S. Marine Corps as a civilian certified fitness instructor and personal trainer at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. Jen is on a mission to promote healthy behaviors by example, and through her work at the Clearinghouse at Penn State. With this in mind, she approaches each day as a balance of family time, work time and physical activities that include trail running, cycling and group fitness instruction. You sound like quite an inspiration, Jen, so the time is yours.

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Thank you—thanks for that introduction, I appreciate it.

Welcome, everybody—I'm here today, as Nigel mentioned, as a Director of Research at the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness. We are here at Penn State University, and we work directly with both the Department of Defense, as well as all of the other services in focusing on professionals who work with military families, so providing services and evidence-based strategies and programs to those folks.

As you see up on the slide here, our primary mission is to engage in applied research and evaluation, as well as implementation science, education, and outreach to advance the health and well-being of military families. We want to ensure that U.S. military families are supported by practices and programs that are known to be effective based on science and evidence, and this is just a really, really important point: back in 2010 when we began this partnership, there was just a small grant, small funding to look at programs that currently exist for military families, and try to understand better the evidence behind them, and present that evidence base not in evaluation of the program itself, but in evaluation of *the* evaluation of the program. So to really look at the quality of the evaluation and understand what is the evidence base behind programs that are available for military families to use, and what are the ones that they're already using.

The Department of Defense was really interested in grasping onto programs that had some level of evidence, in order to better spend the funds that they have, to know that the programs that they're using are yielding the outcomes that they're intended to yield. So we came in at the ground level in working with them on this, and now we have expanded into not only evaluating the evidence, but also into development and implementation of programs, as well as evaluating those programs. We are an interactive web-based platform that involves the selection, dissemination, and evaluation of evidence-based or evidence-informed programs and practices that will help professionals make informed decisions regarding how best to serve these families.

I mentioned this partnership that you see up on the screen—today, we have more than \$20 million in funding, and we're still growing. We went from a small group of about four of us back in 2010, to now we have over 80 faculty and staff—again, still working directly with the Department of Defense, and we now have service-specific funding as well. You can see in the bottom left-hand corner of this screen, it just shows the makeup of the Clearinghouse. We're quite diverse in terms of topic areas. We have 18 Ph.D.s currently, and we all come from different applied research topic areas. I come from kinesiology, but we have folks from human development and family studies, as well as behavioral health, as well as global health. We really have quite a wide arrangement of folks who work for us, and it makes it really conducive to covering all the topics we cover in our program evaluation.

In terms of military family readiness, you may ask what that is, and we are really focused on providing the best programs at the right time for those families. In order for a military family to be “ready,” so to speak, that means that they're prepared to effectively navigate the challenges of daily living, experienced in the unique context of military services. And I think it's really important to note that, while civilian families have challenges as well, military families do have these very unique challenges. If you just think about deployment alone, all the training that goes up to the deployment cycle, as well as the reintegration at the end, these are really unique challenges that can throw off the preparation of the daily living of families. So we really do our best in terms of providing these services and strategies to best support those professionals who work directly with the families.

It also means being equipped with the skills to competently function in the face of challenges, and being aware of what are the resources that are available. In addition, knowing how to utilize the skills and supports when they manage the challenges. It's one thing to kind of know there are resources out there, but how do I get to them, how do I use them, and how can they best help me do what I need to do on a daily basis? And we'd just like to note that ready families contribute directly to the service member's state of readiness to accomplish the mission at hand. So we really view the military family as being so important in terms of the support that we offer to them.

In terms of what exactly we do, I kind of went through this in the beginning. I'll just reiterate—one of the main outcomes that we have as our organization, as an applied research center, is we place programs. I mentioned that we evaluate the evaluations of these programs—so we look at the peer-reviewed evidence that is available, and we look at the outcomes that the programs have yielded. We also develop fact sheets on each program to give the user, whoever that is— whoever comes to our website—a really nice picture of the context of the program: what are the components, what is evidence behind this program, how much does it cost to implement, is there facilitator training, and does the facilitator training cost anything? So it really goes through the nice, big picture of each program. It's a two-page fact sheet, it's viewable on HTML on the website, as well as downloadable by PDF.

We also, as an organization, provide evaluability assessments and evaluation planning. You may ask what an evaluability assessment is, and this is where we look at programs that exist, and we determine if they're in a state that's ready to be evaluated. We get a lot of requests to help folks evaluate their programs, so we've decided from the get-go to go from the beginning and say hey, is the program ready to be evaluated? If not, we share with them the steps that they need to go through in order to get it to that state. And then again, we also do evaluation planning, and we also have some contracts with the Department of Defense and other services to evaluate programs that currently exist.

As noted, we also do research. We actually test and assess the programs that we have developed as an organization. We also implement and evaluate these programs, and we have a really nice-sized learning, designing communications group that help us develop our videos, all of our handouts that we use. We have a wide conglomeration of visual products that we develop here in-house at the Clearinghouse now.

So that's kind of a quick snapshot of us.

Just reiterating that we're not just a website. While we do have the website available—it's searchable and trackable—we also have a really strong implementation and technical assistance team. If you are looking for a specific program, or

you're really thinking about a certain topic that you want to address, we have a team that is available during regular business hours, and we always get back to folks within 24 hours. It's a live support, as well as a 1-800 number that folks can call. We offer continued capacity building opportunities for these professionals who might contact us, and we present the facts on the evidence of existing programs. So while you can search for these on your own, again you can use this live support mechanism, and/or you can call or email us for additional information.

One of the important questions that kind of comes up for us is, what is a program? We mention that we look at the evidence behind programs, but what is that? And it's really important, and we sort of determined this from the beginning of our existence that, in order to say, "this is a program," it has to have some type of curriculum, and it's either a component, or a collection of components, that are related to a specific topic.

Now, the second bullet point that you see there about having a manual or curriculum to guide practitioners is really important—especially with the population who we serve, in that we know that folks are not going to pull out a peer-reviewed publication from a journal and look at the methods section. So it's really important that there is a manual that's been published, that's available to practitioners and clinicians to go and use with the population that they serve. This is important to the fidelity of the program, but it's also important for the ease of use for the folks who are using it, so they actually know what the program is, what are the strategies, and how should they be using those strategies. So all the programs that we evaluate, that we place on our continuum of evidence, they all have some type of a manual or curriculum that folks can follow in order to best implement that program.

I mentioned here just a second ago the continuum of evidence—this is the tool that we have developed internally, and that we use to evaluate and place programs, to better understand what is the evidence behind these programs. I know the font is a little bit small—hopefully it's a little bit bigger on your screen—but you can also download a PDF of this off of our website. I know our website's listed on the Helpful Resources page, www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu, and you can download a PDF of the continuum of evidence.

The other interesting piece that we have up there on our website is, how does our continuum of evidence, as a rating scale, compare to other organizations that are out there that look at the evidence behind programs? So we have a comparison chart so you can see how they compare across the board.

The one thing that is unique about our continuum is that we have this five set of criteria, as you can see down the left side of the slide. We also place it in a category, and then give recommendations for how a program might move up the continuum based on its evidence—what would need to happen in order for the program to go from promising to effective, or from unclear to promising.

In addition, the topics, if you check out our website and do a search, the topics that we cover really cover across several categories. It is not just a continuum of evidence for child welfare or one for prevention of violence—it really covers all topics, from parenting to PTSD, to suicide prevention, to obesity prevention, to health promotion. So there's kind of a wide range of topics that you might find on here. Again, if you're looking for something and don't stumble across it, that's why the live support mechanism is there and will pop up within a minute of being on our website.

This is just an example of what our search page looks like. You can see, across the top, the program search. I put in a keyword—I put in the word "fathering," relatable to our webinar today, and I just did a screenshot—so you could take a quick look before you have time to go onto the website and check us out—but I did a quick screenshot of what the top two results look like. You can sort by title or placement, and the placement is effectiveness behind that program, but it also gives you information on the topic areas, the target population, what sector that program is implemented in, has it ever been used by the military, and then a quick summary of the program itself.

Now, if you were to click over on the left-hand side on the program title, that would take you to the HTML version of our fact sheet, which would provide you with a lot of information about that program. But it is important to note that the second column here, this placement category, that you can click on that so you can see what is the level, the evidence

across programs, that we've vetted on the Clearinghouse continuum of evidence, and what does that look like, all the way from effective down to unclear.

You can also do a more specific search if you look back up at the top of the screen, next to Program Search. You can click on Placement, Topic, Target Population Sector, Military Use. So you can sort by those factors as well.

And then on this next slide, this isn't the full fact sheet, because I couldn't fit it on this slide with a reasonable size, but I just wanted to show you what the top of one of the fact sheets look[s] like in the HTML version. You can see that it allows you, along the top, under the name of this program, which is Supporting Father Involvement, you're able to download a PDF from here. It also tells you what the placement is based on the evidence. It goes down into your target population, sector and topic, and then follows up with your target audience, your summary. Then it gives you a little snapshot here of why the program was placed as "promising," as you see at the top in the yellow.

From there, as I mentioned before, you'll find a description of the program component. You will also find information about, does one need training in order to implement this, [and] what is the cost of the program, if there is a cost. On the back of the fact sheet, we also talk a little bit about what it would take to take you from the current placement of this program, which is promising, to the next one up, which is effective—so we go through all of that. And then, of course, you also see that we reiterate this Live Chat support that's available during normal business hours. So if interested, and you have a program that you're curious about, you can type the name of that program in and see if it's one that we've placed. To date, we have placed 1,145 programs, so there are quite a few of them up there. There are several on fathering, and even more on general parenting, so it might be something that you're interested in checking out.

And that's all I have for you today. Hopefully, you have found this information interesting and can check out our resource at www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu, but also feel free to reach out to me individually, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have, or direct you to somebody who can.

Nigel Vann: Thanks very much, Jen—very helpful. And in fact, you've already answered the first question that came in because Melanie Olivera, I think it was, asked if we could repeat the website that you were talking about where you find the continuum of evidence. So Melanie, you can see that on the screen right now—that is the website to the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness.

Jen, can I just ask you a quick couple of questions? So, in terms of what's in your database for the continuum at the moment, I saw that you have the Supporting Father Initiative. Are they serving fathers in the military at the moment, or are you just including programs that also work in the community?

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Yes—so way back when we started vetting programs, we started out with specifically programs that the military uses, and then we expanded to programs that are also used with civilian families, but could be used with military families, just to broaden the scope of what's available for military families to use. So yeah, in the 1,145 that I mentioned, they are not all currently being used by the military, but they are available for use by anyone.

Nigel Vann: Good—no, that's a great resource, it really is. I really like the idea that you can see how they move up in that continuum. That's a great help to programs, yeah.

One other question for you, Jen. A lot of people on the line, they're working in the community with fathers, but they aren't necessarily connected to any military bases or any military families. If there is a military presence in their community, could they go online and see what's available there in the community?

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Right now, on this particular resource, we do not have our programs linked to specific communities. I am, though, looking at this PDF that you provided, the Helpful Resources, and I would like to say that Military One Source is a really great resource in which you can find out information like you just mentioned. You can also connect with people



through Military One Source, which is nice. It's not just a static resource page—you can also connect with folks and ask specific questions like that. So that might be somewhere to go.

Nigel Vann: OK, great—very helpful. Thank you very much. We'll come back to you again in a few moments.

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Sounds great—thank you.

Nigel Vann: Thank you. So now I'm going to move on and introduce Katrina Johnson who, as you see, is the President and CEO of Horizon Outreach in Houston, Texas, as I mentioned before. I first got to talk to Katrina a couple of years ago when we were preparing for another webinar, which I think was working with people who were dealing with trauma issues. I can't remember the subject, but she was very helpful. I do remember giving her a shout out in that webinar, so it's great that we've been able to include you in this one.

Katrina Johnson: Thank you.

Nigel Vann: So Katrina began this organization in 2010 with the mission of giving everyone a new start, and she's going to explain the services [that] include employment and workforce development, housing assistance, and fatherhood and parenting education. Since founding in 2010, they've connected with over 4,500 individuals and families, 2,000 of whom were military families, and they now have over \$8 million in funding with plans underway to build a campus that will provide housing and support services for families.

Katrina herself is a Veteran of the United States Air Force. She's an Executive MBA graduate of Auburn University, and she also spent 17 years in the oil and gas industry as a senior finance analyst managing large multimillion dollar projects. She's actively involved in the community, serving as an advisory board for various non-profit boards, as well as spending numerous hours supporting homeless and Veterans initiatives. The time is yours, Katrina—thank you.

Katrina Johnson: All right—well, good afternoon, everyone. Certainly very excited to be on the webinar, and to just share some information about supporting Veteran families. As Nigel mentioned, myself, I am a Veteran, and actually I'm a daughter of a deceased Air Force Veteran, and a sister of a Navy Veteran, so I certainly know the specific challenges that military families face, and certainly can expound on that today, and it's just an honor to serve those who have served us.

I'm going to start off talking about the first slide, Challenges for Military Families, and some of the needs that we identified here at Horizon Outreach. This really isn't to scale—we just took probably about almost 300, close to 300, maybe 250 or so, of intake forms that we have here at Horizon Outreach, and also looked at some information that was in nFORM, as well as some of the surveys that we've completed for our program. And one of the things that we saw with some of the resounding themes was that the military families, they really need to have a sense of community. In the military, there was a strong sense of camaraderie—so everyone, regardless of whatever race, ethnicity, background, everybody came together as one, and there was a really strong support system. So when the military members get out of the service, sometimes there's a disconnect with that.

Also, family reunification and support—very important. A lot of times, when the men and women come back from multiple deployments or from wars or what have you, or just from being disconnected from their families, there's a time when they need to reacquaint with them, for them to get reconnected to them, to understand who they are. Certainly the family members—they need to spend some time understanding some of the issues or challenges that those active duty military face, as well as the Veterans.

Employment—definitely a need for employment. Certainly there is a transition from military to civilian life. For those that are active duty, leaving the military where everything is kind of lined out for you—you're in a particular position with the military, and then you get out, and maybe you find yourself having to re-define your career path.

Housing—very, very important. I'm going to spend some time talking about homelessness as it relates to Veterans, and how housing is definitely a major need for our community.

Of course, mental health, substance abuse, and supportive services—those are three of the other main needs that we found with the fathers or military members that we've served, and a lot of that, of course, goes back to trauma issues. And of course the supportive services—that could range from food, clothing, shelter, and other services that they are in need of.

With the next slide, I just want to show you a pathway generally that could potentially happen to active duty military members as they become Veterans, and they transition into civilian life. Certainly this doesn't represent every Veteran, but from what we've seen, and what I've seen myself over the past seven or eight years, and having lived this story with my father, this is potentially the path if they do not receive support and services and get connected in the community. So, an active duty military member—initially, they're employed at a very young age. They go into the military, they're employed in a career position. That position can range from finance, it could be gunnery sergeant—it could be a multitude of things.

The next step is being deployed. Now, not all military members are deployed; some are, some aren't. I wasn't deployed, but I did serve during wartime, so I had a particular role that I had—my job actually focused on getting the military members deployed overseas, or what have you. But, let's go back to this—they go from being employed to deployed. So a lot of times, some of these military members have been deployed multiple times, and we'll talk about that and how that may impact the family.

After their military service is up, then of course, they get out of the military—hopefully with an honorable discharge. Once they get out, then they face unemployment, and as y'all have probably seen quite a few initiatives that have been out over the past year about Hire a Vet, different things that are out there, you certainly understand that there is a definite need to get these Veterans employed.

Now, if this goes on for some time, and these Veterans are unemployed, they don't have support networks, they don't have families that support them, then the next step, generally what we found is homelessness—and that is so true for quite a few of the men and women that have served our country. When you think about that, look at that transition from employed in a career position to deployed, to unemployed, to potentially homeless. That's why it's so crucial, as we're serving these fathers that are Veterans, that we are able to link them to the necessary support services, job training, employment, and also housing to make sure they are stable.

But the underlining factor for most of them is that there's an underlining trauma issue—whether that's PTSD or some time type of physical ailment that they potentially may have, or just the lack of having the necessary retraining skills and retooling to go into another career field. I can certainly identify with this. My father was a Vietnam-era Veteran, and when he came home, it was a different person [than] who actually had gone off to war. And as much as he tried and my mother tried, they were not able to maintain that relationship as far as marriage, and they did end up divorcing. However, one thing that I just remembered, as a child, that he did work very hard to do was to maintain a relationship with his children. Even though he suffered with PTSD—he had some alcohol issues and things—he did manage to do that. So sometimes the Vietnam-era Veterans were looked upon in a different way versus the ones that are getting out now. There was a huge lack of support services during that timeframe.

So I want to share just a little bit more about homelessness, and that's because this is what we see with the dads that are coming into our program. Now, again, not all of them are homeless, but the definition of homeless in relation to them receiving support services, I think, based on the McKinney-Vento Act, is that if you do not have a permanent place of residence, or you do not have somewhere permanent that you could call home that you're paying rent, paying a lease on or what have you, then you're considered homeless. And most of the men that have come through our program have been.



So here's some national statistics that I wanted to share with you, because this is something that the dads face: 39,471 Veterans are homeless on any given night in the United States, and this is despite a 45 percent decline in numbers from 2010 to 2017. One thing that Horizon Outreach is heavily involved in—I'm not sure if you are in your community, but I would urge you to do so—is the Annual Point in Time Homeless Count that is orchestrated by HUD, Housing and Urban Development. That count goes on all across this country in the major cities, and because of that count, that allows the federal government to allocate funds—well, HUD to allocate funds for housing to these Veterans. So it's very important that that count is as accurate as possible. Obviously, we can't count everyone, but it gives them a good idea of where those target areas of the country [are] that they need to allocate funds. Certainly California, Texas, Georgia—those are some of the main entry points for Veterans, and certainly Washington as well.

It also here shows that one in five homeless men are Veterans. 1.4 million Veterans are at risk of becoming homeless due to poverty, lack of support networks, dismal living conditions, and lack of permanent supportive housing. So some of those men, they may be in transitional housing, which is a shelter or what have you, or again, living with someone else, but they don't have permanent supportive housing, which is so necessary to just make sure that there's a good environment for the family.

Forty-five percent of homeless Veterans are African American or Hispanic males. Like I said, most of the men we serve that have been Veterans, we also found that they were non-custodial fathers.

Some of the other unique challenges that are faced by these Veterans—of course, mental health, substance abuse, and physical health issues. Some of the current estimates show that 12 to 20 percent of Veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Although evidence is unclear in terms of divorce rates, research indicates an increase in reports of marital dissatisfaction due to multiple deployments. And the only way you're going to really capture that information in your program is if you do some type of survey with the men that you may serve, where they are actually telling you, these are the issues that we're having, and this is why this is happening to us.

Also, 70 percent of homeless Veterans have substance abuse problems, and 51 percent have disabilities. What we found with the disabilities, that could be some type of physical disability where they hurt themselves in the military, or that disability could be, again, the mental disability. Those are the challenges that they're dealing with, and that's why it's so important for them to connect with supportive services, with the non-profit agencies, but also to establish a service claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs. That way, if it is something that happened during service, they can get service-connected for it, and hopefully, in essence, receive some type of compensation. That compensation can help to support the families as well.

Here's some alarming information in regards to suicide rates: 20 Veterans a day commit suicide, and this is based on information from the Department of Veterans Affairs. And Veterans account for 20 percent of U.S. suicides. You know, that's so alarming—and I think it's even broken down even further than that, based on other research that's out there, but a lot of this goes back to these mental health issues, or different disabilities, or just depression that these men and women are facing, due to the fact that they're re-integrating back into society, and they lack the support networks, or they're dealing with these issues that took place when they were in the military.

Lack of support networks—that's really big. One thing about being in the military, and I can certainly remember this when I was in the service—the military is set up in such a way where they point you from A, B, C, D, or what have you. You know this is the time to get up, this is the time to go to your job, this is where you need to go for this appointment. When you get out of the military, you don't have that type of navigation, so it's very important for the military members, and also for these dads that we're serving, to be able to link them to services.



Some of the things that they face is that, again, they're disconnected from their families, they feel isolated—this results in them being [un]able to access the mainstream services. Another thing is, they may feel overwhelmed because there's so many steps to the process. Certainly I know that the VA hospital has had a negative stigma around it because of that, and that's why there has been change to improve that over the years.

Certainly they have transportation issues. We see a lot of men in our program that need bus passes, or they don't have vehicles, and it's just quite a bit for them to get from one point to the other. So you've got to think about it—yes, I need to go to a food pantry; yes, I may need to go look for a job; I need to do this—but then I've got to take three buses or so to get there.

Discharge classification can have an impact. Whether they got an honorable discharge or a bad conduct discharge from the military, that could also hinder their ability to access services, because some agencies, especially some of the agencies that provide housing grants, they actually may have stipulated in their grant that they do not take Veterans who have a dishonorable discharge. Here at Horizon Outreach, that really doesn't matter so much for us. Because we're serving fathers, we have less restrictions. However, if a dad has a dishonorable discharge, we want to know what is that dishonorable discharge related to, and nine times out of ten, it's the result of some type of trauma. Maybe he was on multiple deployments, maybe he got into it with an officer or something, but a lot of times it goes back to some type of trauma or something he was dealing with.

Locating sustainable employment—that's really key. Probably about 90 percent of the Veterans that we've served over the years, one of their main goals is to locate and sustain long-term employment. Now, the Veterans that perhaps have, I guess, an extended educational background are those that are able to really transition well from the military to civilian life. You won't see a lot of them having those issues unless they've got the underlying trauma issues. But mostly what we're talking about are fathers, or military, or Veterans who, perhaps they've gone through other issues since they've been out. Maybe they're homeless, maybe they're unemployed, maybe they've got the substance abuse, the trauma issues going on—so that's where that inability to locate sustainable employment comes in.

Also, if you had a military member who perhaps was a gunnery sergeant, or something like that, that's a skill that's not easily transferable to something out here on the outside—that could be an issue. But again, trauma is generally the underlying reason why some of them may not be as successful in some of their employment endeavors.

One of the things we do here through our program is we teach the healthy relationships training using the *Active Relationships* curriculum created by Kelly Simpson out of Dallas, and she has a specific book that is active relationship skills, military resiliency [*Active Military Life and Relationship Skills*]. And it really does focus on deployment, how to deal with coming back after deployment. It talks about PTSD, and it talks about conflict resolution and different things. That's very important if a Veteran is going to work somewhere, because his supervisor may not be aware that he's going through these various issues, but if he had a better understanding of that Veteran, and some of those things he's dealing with, then he would know this is why he's reacted to situations the way he is. So it's very good for the supervisors as well to know some of the things that these Veteran fathers may be going through.

Some of the services provided by Horizon Outreach, through our Horizon Eagle Fatherhood program—first of all, we provide priority services for active duty and Veteran fathers. Now here in Houston, it's a little bit different—there's not a huge active duty population here, because we don't have a military base. We do have reserve units, but we don't have particularly active duty, other than reservists or the National Guard. Needless to say, we do provide priority service, so whenever the men and women are coming to our program, or whoever is served, we make sure to identify up front: are you a Veteran? That's on our internal intake form. Once we identify that, the first thing we want to know, are you service-connected? Do you have a disability? Are there any trauma issues? Because most Veterans have some type of service-related injury or something, and maybe they haven't gone to the VA to file their claim, but we do provide linkages to key claims representatives over there who can help them with that process.

They are also assigned a case manager who works specifically with them, and they assess them for trauma. So we have a PTSD trauma scale—a tool that we use to determine if they have any symptoms or issues with PTSD. Also, we do an ACE trauma—we do that for all of our clients, which is Adverse Childhood Experiences, as well as an in-depth case management assessment. Now, the case managers that are here, they're not trained to provide any type of trauma care here—we're just mainly trauma-informed. However, we do have partnerships with domestic violence agencies, with other agencies that provide additional counseling or what have you, where we can refer these fathers there.

Also, the Vet Center is a really good resource—it is a branch of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for those Veterans who do not want to access services through the Department of Veterans Affairs, they can go there and speak directly to a peer support navigator, or someone one-on-one about some of the issues they may be going through.

Something else that is very important, and most agencies are not aware of—there is funding out there for housing for Veterans. So if you have a Veteran come through your program—they say they are homeless, they are in need of support services—there's something that exists that's called SSVF, Supportive Services for Veteran Families, and that is a housing assistance program. Certain agencies such as Goodwill, they are funded. Salvation Army—and what they can do is provide rental, utility assistance. In some cases, they may even pay up to six months for rental assistance, or to get someone off the streets or into housing. They also provide legal assistance, child care assistance—when I say legal assistance, legal aid, just as far as very minor cases. But they provide a lot of things through that SSVF program.

Also, educational opportunities—we link the Veterans to educational training and opportunities. So there's a plethora of training programs here in Houston, free training that's offered, perhaps by the Houston Area Urban League, Goodwill, U.S. VETS—different ones where the Veterans can go through the training and get certifications. And here at Horizon Outreach, once they complete our fatherhood program, the parenting classes, relationship and job readiness training, we will pay for a flagger certification to work at a construction site, for a TWIC card to work at the Port of Houston offshore, or even pay for their forklift certification. So there's quite a bit that we can do there.

Other services—ID assistance, that's very important. A lot of them don't have proper ID, or they have surcharges on their driver's license. If you can provide assistance with that, that's great as well. I already talked about legal, peer mentor, and certainly clothing assistance and food assistance—definitely that.

Also, some of the tips for engaging active duty military and Veteran fathers—definitely it's very important to offer an environment that promotes camaraderie and inclusion. That is what they're used to, that's where they thrive, and certainly that's how we have our fatherhood program set up. Where, when they come here, they feel like they're a part of the family. They're given an Eagle number, and they feel like they're soaring, and they have a brother or sister that they can rely on.

Partner with agencies that serve fathers or offer relevant services, especially military fathers of families. Provide assistance in applying for Veteran claims, vocational rehab services and housing assistance. Utilize peer support mentors—you can make fathers in your program peer support mentors for the other military fathers. Offer family retreats and activities focused on family reunification and conflict resolution, and we do that probably about once a year, when we do our recognition of Horizon Eagle Day, or on Father's Day. Also, you would like to provide engaging services, employment assistance, career readiness, and linkages to mainstream services.

One thing that I know well about Veterans, and I guess the best way to put it: they can recognize a fraud immediately, so if you tell them you're going to do something, they're going to hold you to it. So you always want to make sure you don't overpromise on something if you can't deliver it.

That's pretty much all I have to say about Veterans.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much, Katrina, and I really want to emphasize one of the points you made about the importance of support networks, because I was actually at a session recently where Mathematica was unveiling some of the early findings from the Parents and Children Together, the demonstration projects, which you may have heard of. One of the things that they pointed out was that a lot of the fathers in their programs just didn't have more than a handful of people who they can really rely on. It really is a need for a lot of fathers, and so it's interesting to see that it's the same for guys coming out of the military, and perhaps even worse, in some cases —

[Voices overlap]

Katrina Johnson: Could I just add one more point? In every community—well, I guess the major cities, I'm not really sure—but I'm sure that there should be some linkage to a continuum of care, a COC, and here in Houston we have a COC, and a COC is pretty much like a partnership of all of the non-profit agencies within that community. There's agencies within that COC that actually do serve Veterans, so for those of you that are interested in serving Veterans, link with the COC—that's another good way to link with agencies that have housing grants, so that you can also provide that as an additional support for your Veteran fathers.

Nigel Vann: Oh, that's a great tip. How do they contact the community of care?

Katrina Johnson: I would just Google *continuum of care* for whatever area, wherever they are located—COC.

Nigel Vann: Great—well, thank you very much.

Katrina Johnson: Yes, you're welcome.

Nigel Vann: OK, so Enzo, if we could have the next poll question, we'll go do that quickly, and then we'll move on to Danny's presentation. So we're just interested—you can indicate up to three of the following, but if you do provide services of any active duty or military fathers, what do you see as their greatest needs or challenges? And even if you're not providing services, you can also chime in on this.

I think I'd have a hard time making the choice. What would your top three be, Katrina?

Katrina Johnson: Well, you know, I'm looking at this—I mean that looks real similar to what I said [laughs]. Definitely employment, homelessness, and definitely the relationships, because that's family relationships of being able to connect with anyone when they get out.

Nigel Vann: Yeah—it certainly looks like those are the responses we're getting here—the relationship is the number one. Number two would be help with employment after service.

Katrina Johnson: You see homelessness is slowly inching up in the subject.

Nigel Vann: It is, yeah—it's such a major issue, it really is. OK, well, thank you, everybody for your responses there. And now, I'm going to introduce Danny Romero, who is the Senior Program Director with Social Advocates for Youth in San Diego. Social Advocates for Youth is known as SAY. Danny has worked in the San Diego non-profit sector for 12 years now. He's overseen the SAY San Diego military-focused programs, which include a program called Dads Corps, since October 2016. He first became involved with this work while he was in graduate school. He connected with the San Diego Military Family Collaborative, which is an initiative to support military families through sharing of community resources and information. He's also served as an AmeriCorps member and provided workforce development support for youth and adults by utilizing technology to enhance their opportunities for upward mobility. I can vouch for this being a good program—I got to go there a couple of times. It's been a while, but Danny, tell us what you do in San Diego.

Danny Romero: Well, thank you very much for the introduction, Nigel. It's a pleasure to be on with all of you, and I can say from the West Coast now, it's afternoon from my standpoint.

Yeah, let me get started—just to let you know a little bit about SAY San Diego, and the work that we do. In 1971, SAY San Diego started developing programs and key services to not only connect to the youth, but also to the family and the community surrounding it. So there's a lot of empowerment that goes through, and in a lot of ways, is multi-layered and tier-structured to not only serve military families, but we're also civilian-focused—and so, different populations including refugees, low-income individuals, Hispanics, Latino communities, and more.

So today, I'll be giving you a different perspective than my fellow presenters. For myself, a lot of this work is civilian-focused and community-based, and one of the key aspects, just before I dig a little deeper, is just to let you know that you don't have to necessarily come from the community to understand and connect to it.

And so one of the biggest pieces that I'll share with you is that, for myself, I grew up and live in San Diego, a very military-connected community. And from my father, he actually served in the Navy during Vietnam, but when he finished his term of service, he put away the uniform and really never looked back—and so I was one of the military dependents who really didn't identify or connect with the community, and you will find that in your programs. You may have individuals who may look at their term of service in a similar light, and so having them identify, as Katrina mentioned, with some of the survey tools is where you're going to start finding that individuals will connect or identify as part of the community.

Some of the work that I oversee is really focused on connecting to military families in our local community. San Diego and the local area around me is actually indicative of one of the largest, if not the largest, off-base military housing for active duty families. That comes with, obviously, a large net I'm able to cast, but also it comes with its own set of challenges. As Katrina mentioned, this is a community that you may provide a service, but having a military family engage the service may be an entirely different landscape. It's really important to establish rapport, so let me start kind of obviously getting towards the slides today.

When we talk about military-specific programs, we have six that we'll kind of throw out there, and that includes Dads Corps, which is our military father program. We have services rendered out of our Military Family Resource Center. We have a First Steps home visiting program, which allows some of my staff into the homes of military families to connect with moms, actually, in developing healthy relationships with their child, and making sure that they are developing healthy milestones in terms of their child's development. We're going to talk about play groups a little bit more down the line, but really, it's a lot about parent empowerment, and making sure that we're creating a healthy community.

So as I move forward, the fact of the matter is that SAY San Diego, as I mentioned, is a civilian non-profit, and we try to bring a strengths-based approach and trauma-informed care. There's a few resources you may want to look at as well as download, but if you're not familiar with the terminology, it's just a basic understanding that trauma shows up in a lot of different ways, whether it be psychological, physical, or emotional. I think the best thing that you can do is really start becoming very attuned, if your program is not already in tune with these kinds of interesting dynamics, because there are different signs, there are different patterns, there are different ways of connecting with individuals that you may be serving in the future. One of the things that I really want to emphasize is that, with your staff or your facilitator, or if it's yourself who's starting a program, it's really important to remain attuned to that strengths-based approach, and I'll build on that shortly.

Working with military families, I think it comes, especially if you're not in this community already, with its own vantage point from a lot of, I will say, civilians. I think that oftentimes we associate the following characteristics of being hard-working and dedicated and organized, disciplined and intelligent—and those adjectives are all part of this community, but there's more that exists, as military is its own set of culture, and it does provide its own different sets of language, acronyms, and hierarchies. And I can tell you and attest to the fact that in San Diego, we had multiple branches of service here, and they, too, have their own structures.



And so, while I would love to tell you it's an easy community to engage with and learn from, it's one of those that, the more you put into it, the more you'll get out of it—meaning that showing up and connecting to your community in different outreach events, different opportunities to connect to command leadership, and not always looking at command leadership—also looking at those who just may be a better mouthpiece for you in the community. What does that look like? That might look like having an ombudsman or a family readiness officer carry a message up the ladder, so to speak, so that you're able to garner the same support from command leadership without having to always set foot on base.

One of the things that I feel is a common misperception about military is that, especially with active duty, that they're always given every resource available, and that they don't necessarily require as much support as other families in other communities. And oftentimes, this is not the case—a lot of this is well-informed with Blue [Star] Families—they put out an annual survey, and I invite you to check that out in the resource page that we have provided for you. But more often than not, we're going to find that some of the families are more along the lines of a single-parent household where, because of deployments or because of marital issues, you may find that there's single-parent households where Mom actually is overseeing the care of their family, and Dad has to find a way to re-integrate, as some of my fellow presenters have mentioned.

Other things that compound some of these issues include child care challenges, and especially with the members of service who are enlisted or lower-ranking individuals. They do have a basic housing allowance, but with regard to qualification of certain programs—in California we have our CalFresh, CalSNAP, which is oftentimes known as food stamps across the nation—but for a lot of them, the qualification into these programs really is challenging because of having the basic housing allowance included in the income qualifications. Understanding those obstacles make it important to pull resources to do things like food distributions into the future.

One of the other aspects to really think about are that a lot of these individuals are coming from all parts of the nation, and with that being said, they're not always stationed where their family may reside. Lacking a support system, or creating a system of social isolation, is very indicative of this community—so finding creative ways to bridge that gap is what we try to do. I mentioned play groups earlier. Play groups were a way for us to kind of create a natural stage where families feel comfortable in coming to our facilities just to have an opportunity to bring their child and to really—no pun intended—have fun and play while we do usher in some information or education as a part of the process. It really is important to create social fabric in your community.

Part of the program that I oversee right now looks more like 60 percent active duty members, 30 percent Veteran and about 10 percent civilian. It's an interesting blend. And so, for those who are on the fence of really considering, should my program be focused on Veterans, or should it be active duty or civilian-focused, there's no harm in understanding that all of these create a rich blend that really do work wonders, in terms of your group setting, and the more perspectives, the merrier.

But when it comes to Veteran families also, these are not necessarily the same issues that active duty families are facing. With regard to Veteran families, that assimilation to civilian life, the camaraderie or brotherhood that we've kind of already mentioned, and peeling back the layers, it's almost like a loss of identity—that this individual had a certain rank, a certain position, and that is how, more often than not, they would even introduce themselves. So walking into the civilian world, it is not always the easiest thing in the world to do. And as Katrina mentioned, even things like creating a resume for employment, you really have to crosswalk and take time to work with these individuals in making sure that they're prepared for their next steps.

One of the additional factors to consider is also the community make-up around them. Some communities are very much connected to military, others may be small town communities, but finding ways to make sure that a service member is comfortable in connecting to the services around them is very important. These individuals oftentimes are in transitions, and so, a two- to four-year cycle is something that the community itself may feel might be a deterrent in starting a

fatherhood program, especially if you're working with active duty, as their stint in your community may only be a few years. The propensity of getting them involved is not always the easiest thing to do. More often than not, as I mentioned, social isolation is very high in this community, so finding creative ways to create social fabric is important.

Also, when you're working with a community, language does matter. I would love to tell you there is a dictionary for everything, and there probably is to a certain degree, but there's trigger words that you should avoid when working with this community. So understanding that a term like *support* might be better used versus *help*. Or *PTSD* is oftentimes thrown out there regularly from the community, and it's not a blanket. Everyone that I can tell you that is reflective of the community really would like to have most civilians understand that the most important thing is that they are an individual, and this is not a one size fits all. The most important thing is to, once again, develop that rapport.

One other factor to consider is that perception versus reality—that many service members have a great shared experience that can do wonders for a program. Connecting to your services and having a great experience oftentimes can boost the visibility of a program. But sometimes that chain or linkage may come across its own misnomers about services. Sometimes we'll see that in terms of what on-base supports are for, or civilian resources, so it's really important to demystify that whenever possible.

Other factors to consider when working with military families is that peer navigation that we brought up a little bit earlier was just a very comfortable setting for many fathers to engage this community. I've given two examples that we have here locally, which is Courage to Call and Zero8hundred. These agencies really do a great job in, number one, employing Veterans who have come from this line of work, and doing peer navigation to help them connect to different resources in their communities. And Zero8hundred—as we've alluded to, the transition from active duty to Veteran status is very challenging, so the group does a great job of providing peer navigators.

Additionally, we're going to want to emphasize the fact that this is a holistic approach, so the more layering, the better. Finding ways to engage the spouse in this process is very important as well, and making sure that we're doing our best to incorporate the whole family is extremely important.

You're going to find there's a lot of resources out there, in terms of mental health first aid. It's an opportunity for you or your staff to get trained. Oftentimes, they are an eight-hour course, and doing a quick Google search of what's in your community really is worth the effort. More often than not, a lot of these trainings are made cost-free, so please check those out.

As you start developing the programs around you, think about how you're going to handle those deployments or transitions because, especially when working with active duty, you may have a break in service. Having a way for them to connect back to your program is vital and ideal. In our Dads Corps program, we utilize Battle Buddies to keep one of the participants connected to an alumnus, who will usher them through what's happening while they may be deployed.

Taking time to establish the culture of your program from the start is very important. As I mentioned with the rich blend and mix with civilian, Veteran, and active duty members, you want to take time in your first sessions to develop that common ground. I think many of you who are in this work already, already take time to do ground rules, or to set up goals. It's an important piece that I feel like gets missed on a regular basis, so please try to do your best in creating that piece. More often than not, just think about those extra supports that your families may need.

As I conclude today, just know that with different active duty and Veteran families, they have different needs and oftentimes different challenges. With active duty, you want to think about how to get your messaging out there in a very concise format. We do our best to provide child care and dinner so that there's an opportunity so that Mom gets the night off, and Dad is able to obviously share in some quality time with their children, and also learning at the same point in time. Being very efficient on that level helps us engage the community and making sure that Veteran fathers have an opportunity to re-connect to a community that's lent so much to them and has been a part of their past. Our program is

led by a Veteran who is a former gunnery sergeant, and one of the things that I can attest to is that civilians themselves have shared with us that it's one of the most unique glimpses into the military community. So if you have civilian fathers who are interested, please allow them at least an opportunity to sit in on a session, if you haven't had that opportunity before.

And most importantly, understand that with any program design, you need to think about how you can be a connector in the community, and understand that the world around you has a lot of different supports, whether it be for food assistance, legal assistance. Connecting into those worlds and making sure that—maybe they can come out to do pro bono work, and addressing your fathers can make all the difference.

I think one final vantage point or interesting look into at least our Dads Corps program is that service or volunteering is a very important facet to the work. What we do is a quarterly service project, whether it's feeding the homeless, whether it's creating a community garden. These are key ways that—there's promotional opportunities within every service branch, and one of the facets they look for are volunteer service hours. So finding the common ground in creating projects that they self-select, rather than you prescribing, is a way that you not only empower, but you help promote the fathers in your programs.

As we close here, really understanding that it takes a village, we say often—these are two different groups that I've highlighted: San Diego Military Family Collaborative and San Diego Veterans Coalition. Those groups, or those collaboratives, really do create a rich blend of resources, so if it's not there already, it doesn't take much to set up a community meeting and inviting other folks to the table to talk about how they're supporting military families. And as Katrina mentioned, there are service gaps out there, so here's a few things you should start thinking about, if you have yet to start a program.

Last but not least, finding those unlikely partners, and I think I'm just going to highlight just the theater groups right now. Especially in this time of year where there's a lot of holiday cheer out there, you'd be surprised at how many military families benefit from attending theater. It's a great way to bring in the family unit for fun and a memorable event. And so, as I will leave you, just find ways of incorporating the participants of your programs to give back, so we create that Buddy System, empower them. Have them create a council, and have them weigh in on decision making. And last but not least, educate your staff around them as to the issue[s] they may be faced with—but it's all about having fun and creating that great forum for them to engage.

Thank you for your time, and here are some of those resources I discussed a little bit earlier, but you will once again have an opportunity to download these slides. And if I could highlight one that makes sense on this page, it's a web-based group called PsychArmor Institute. That's a federal group, and they do a great job of familiarizing those who are unfamiliar to the community on a lot of the different facets they may not be familiar with in terms of [the] military. So thank you very much for your time.

Nigel Vann: Thank you, Danny—yeah, and we appreciate some of the resources that you have shared that we got to add onto the list there.

So we've got about 10 minutes now to answer a few questions. You can still ask a question—if you don't get a chance to ask it, our presenters will see if they can answer later, and then we'll post those responses, as I mentioned, to the website. Has Jen joined us back? I know we lost you for a while, Jen—are you on the line with us?

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Yes, Nigel, I'm here.

Nigel Vann: Welcome back—or maybe we didn't lose you from the audio, I'm not sure, but –

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Sure, absolutely. I'm here.

Nigel Vann: OK—I've got one specific question for you, Jen, just asking about the tips that you can offer. So do you have a way of offering any tips on best practices if a program that you've reviewed is not actively used by the military, but it could be used for the military? Would you be able to recommend a program for someone who is looking for that?

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Yes—so basically, what we would do is if somebody were looking for something specific for the community, or the big group of people that they're working with, we can search programs by the components that exist within them to find out what programs are out there that encompass those components. In terms of just general strategies for fathering, they usually fall within those components. So if you know what you're looking for, you can search by that as well.

In terms of just regular, general tips, specifically fathering is not my area of research. While we do a lot of research on parenting and health promotion opportunities in parenting, I knew that one interesting—and I'm kind of answering your question, I'm kind of adding to it—but one piece of information that I think is really interesting about this webinar is that the Department of Defense is really stepping up its effort to explicitly include fathers in the programs that they're using. I think that's really important to note. When we think about a lot of parenting programs, they seem very mother-focused, which is OK because it's important that they're included, but the DoD is really starting to take special efforts to make sure that they're selecting programs that have a fathering component to it. I think that's a really good move by them.

Nigel Vann: Yeah, that's great to know, it really is—yeah, because one of the other questions we've got here is actually asking—whoever would like to respond to this, but there's a lot of general programs in the community, as we know, that serve fathers, but not that many are connected to the military. There's some services in the military, but they're not all necessarily working with the dads either. But I'm just wondering if any of you have any advice for a community program that might want to try and develop a more expective, or to develop any kind of partnership with the military. Would anyone have any tips for how someone might do that?

Katrina Johnson: Hello? This is Katrina. One thing that I would say is, within your community, if there is a military base or reserve base, perhaps to see if you can reach out to, I think they call it—well, they may call it something different now, but what is it—wellness and morale? Something like that –

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Morale, Wellness and Recreation—MWR.

Katrina Johnson: Yeah, that's correct—because that's what we did with a couple of the reserve bases here in Houston, and they were like, oh yeah, we definitely need you to come out and bring your fatherhood program. So that would be definitely one major way to engage with them, because those sergeants, or those who are over those troops, they know the specific challenges they face. They know that they're in need of support services and resources within a community, but they don't know how to connect them to those resources.

Nigel Vann: Yeah, very interesting—so particularly, given what Jen said, that there is more emphasis on that now, you might have a more receptive audience now as well, right?

Katrina Johnson: Yes.

Nigel Vann: Go ahead, Danny.

Danny Romero: You know, I know that we do work with a lot of family readiness officers or FROs, and also ombudsmen—they are the mouthpiece to not only the active duty member, but to the families themselves. So making sure that you're starting to tap into those groups. Sometimes there's outreach events that are opportunities. We do have a unique blend that you will find in the school systems. There's school liaisons. I would also recommend, just to—if you work on Navy,

type in “Navy school liaisons,” and you'll find that, no matter what state that you're representing, there should be at least one office to call into.

Nigel Vann: Interesting—you definitely flipped that question on its head a little bit. So for programs in the community again, that may or may not be connecting with very many Veterans, would you have any tips for how they might reach out to Veterans more intentionally? I took Katrina's point about asking that on the intake form—a lot of programs may not even know if the guy's a Veteran or not, but if you wanted to intentionally involve more Veterans in your program, what might be a way to reach them in the community? How do you do it, Katrina?

Katrina Johnson: I'm sorry—I was listening, and I was like well, we did say the intake—could you repeat that again, Nigel? I'm sorry.

Nigel Vann: I'm just wondering if you have any tips for programs in the community that might want to more intentionally involve Veterans in their services.

Katrina Johnson: So, who they should reach out to?

Nigel Vann: Yeah—how are they going to let those guys know they're there?

Katrina Johnson: OK—well, first of all, if you can get one Veteran to be your mouthpiece, trust me: he's going to spread it to the community. And you need to have something that you're bringing him there for. If you're just saying, oh, we're going to be offering this curriculum and this and that, they're not going to come. But whether it's some type of incentive—even the peer support leaders. If you can get a peer navigator or somebody to come on site and talk about resources, or talk about claims assistance, or as Danny said, those peer support navigators. The Vet Center—it's in every city. I'm sure, I'm almost certain of that. If someone has some type of an issue and they just want to talk about some of their experiences—Veterans love groups. They love when they can talk in a group setting and feel a sense of camaraderie.

I would also reach out to the workforce centers. There's a Veteran representative there, and so if you can get your flyers there and tell them that you're offering services or whatever, they will send them. If you're offering a viable service, they will certainly send the referrals to you.

Nigel Vann: OK, well, thank you. One quick question here, and then I'm going to start wrapping this up, but do any of you know of specific programs that focus on helping children who need to adjust and adapt to their father's coming back into the family?

Danny Romero: Yes, I can start on that level. One of the programs that we have here locally is FOCUS—you'll find them in your resource page as well. Some of the work that they do is really to focus on the resiliency piece that military families face. That oftentimes is connected to deployments, and understanding that Dad may be gone, but the family in it themselves benefit from a lot of the services that are out there. So that's one group. I'll let my fellow presenters weigh in.

Katrina Johnson: Depelchin Parenting Center—Depelchin, D-E-P-E-L-C-H-I-N. They've been around for about a hundred years, and they offer a lot of parenting classes, workshops, nursery and parenting programs. They have a quarterly retreat for Veteran families, where it focuses on re-integration and allowing the parents to engage with their kids and learn positive ways to parent, and to engage with them. And it's really fun—they take them to the camp. They do it on a quarterly basis. They take so many Veteran families—a lot of great positive outcomes with that. And if I'm not mistaken, they use some of the tools from Kelly Simpson's curriculum, *Active Relationships*.

Nigel Vann: Interesting. Actually, could you type the name of that program in the chat box, Katrina, just so people can see it?

Katrina Johnson: Yeah, I can. Hold on a second—let me type exactly so you'll have it.

Nigel Vann: I'll also say on the resource list, if you downloaded that, there's a few other programs there that do these family retreats.

I'm actually going to ask John Allen, who is our federal representative, if he'd like to have a quick word before we finish, and then I'm going to come back to each of the presenters and give you an opportunity to leave us with a final thought. And I'm going to pose one question now as well that you may not want to answer now—you could answer it after the fact when we get your written responses. But we did get a question—this is basically for Katrina and Daniel: in working with Veterans who did not receive honorable discharges, how would you help them navigate their situation? So you can either answer that, or just leave it to the final thought. But before I do that, John, would you like to have a word for the audience here?

John Allen: Sure. I want to thank our expert presenters, Danny Romero, Katrina Johnson and Dr. DiNallo for providing this good information to the practitioners and the grantees who are attending this particular webinar. Thank you so much for giving us some understanding about how to address this population—very important, and thank you, really, for taking the time out to be involved. I just want to express that, because the more experts and folks we get doing the work that are telling and explaining to folks how they do the work, I think it provides a different perspective and allows them to take that information into their communities and see how to implement in that process. So thank you very much.

Katrina Johnson: You're welcome.

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Thank you for the opportunity.

Nigel Vann: So, any final thoughts from each of the presenters? Let me start with you, Jen.

Dr. Jennifer DiNallo: Sure. I think this is really a timely webinar. Like I said, I feel like it's in the program development that we're doing with our THRIVE initiative, around parenting and health promotion—it's being requested that we have very explicit strategies and information for dads to be inclusive in these programs.

And I just did, while we were talking, and while I was listening to everybody, I did a quick search on our website. For example, putting in the search term *fathering* yielded 39 results of programs that specifically focus on fathering behaviors, and most, if not all of them, are community-based programs. Not all of them—actually, very few of them have been used with military families, but there is a handful of programs that have some evidence here, so I think that's really interesting as well, so just highlighting this resource. Not all of the programs may have the components that one is looking for, but certainly there are some that do, and I think it would be a good place to go just to check out programs that might be beneficial for populations that you work with.

Nigel Vann: OK, well, great. It's great to know we have a sister clearinghouse that can help move this work forward. Katrina—final thoughts?

Katrina Johnson: Yes. Final thought is the Veteran—they served us. Let's serve them. Short and sweet.

Nigel Vann: OK, great. Danny?

Danny Romero: Yes—you know, I think at the end of the day, everyone in this world who's working on fatherhood just understands that it takes something special to be a dad, and you wanting to get involved is very important in that process. This is a community that pays it forward and then some, so hopefully you're able to take today's knowledge, apply it, but understand that this is a community that's not meant to be put under a microscope. If anything, it's just meant to be there to help support them in their next steps.



Nigel Vann: OK—well, thank you, Danny, and thank you, Katrina, and thank you, Jen. This is a really important conversation, I think, for fatherhood programs in general, and family support programs in general where we can offer more support for military families as we go forward. We look forward to continuing this conversation. So with that, I'll bid everyone farewell, and please take a minute to complete the short evaluation that's going to pop up at the end of the webinar. Thank you very much, everybody—have a good day.

Katrina Johnson: Thank you, you as well. Thanks for the call, Nigel.

Nigel Vann: And the presenters can stay on the line for just a minute, if you've got time....

Operator: And this concludes today's webinar. Thank you for your participation. You may now disconnect.

[End]