DPRR COMMUNITY LINK

THE DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS NEWSLETTER | OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2026



November is Military Family Appreciation Month, when we honor the sacrifices and contributions of Military Families. (U.S. Army photo illustration)

Supporting Army Families Through the Holiday Season

By Kevin O'Brien, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The holidays can bring connection and celebration, but Army Families may experience the season differently. Deployments, duty requirements or distance from support networks can alter plans. Travel, schedules and the cost of celebrations add pressure. Separation, added responsibilities or Family tension can make the season feel overwhelming.

A genuine check-in can be one of the most useful ways to support a Family, said Dr. Carmen Leggett, Family Advocacy Program Specialist.

"Feeling connected can make the biggest difference for an Army Family, especially during a busy or stressful time," Leggett said.

Changes in behavior can signal that someone is dealing with more than a busy calendar. A Soldier or Family member may pull away from usual activities, appear unusually tired, have trouble sleeping or become more irritable or unfocused. These signs can be a reason to reach out.

Start by acknowledging that the season can be demanding and asking how the person is doing without assuming there is a problem. Then listen. If the person wants help, ask what would be useful.

Specific offers are easier to accept than a general "Let me know if you need anything." Invite a Family to a holiday gathering, offer to bring a meal, help with an errand or provide a short child care break. Check first so the Family can decide what feels comfortable.

For Families separated by deployment or distance, regular conversations can make the season feel less isolating. Local activities provide ways to stay engaged and meet people who may become a support network at a new duty station.

Leaders also influence how Families experience the holidays. Sharing schedules and staffing information and available resources as early as possible gives Families time to plan. When mission requirements make advance notice difficult, timely updates and communication still help.

"Even small steps toward predictability can help Soldiers and Families feel more prepared and supported during a busy season," Leggett said.

Families can reduce tension by deciding what matters most and letting go of activities that feel like obligations. With the frenzied pace of the holidays, it's easy to let stress affect our mood. When emotions rise, pause before responding. Familiar routines and connections with supportive people can help everyone regain perspective.

Realistic holiday expectations also include deciding what a Family can comfortably afford without creating financial strain in the months ahead. Dr. Kenitha Woodhouse, the Army's Acting Financial Readiness Program Manager, recommends planning before the first holiday purchase.

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DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Team,

I am filled with gratitude for the extraordinary professionals who make up this team. Despite evolving priorities, demanding workloads and complex challenges, you have consistently demonstrated resilience, collaboration and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Your efforts have delivered meaningful results that enhance the readiness and well-being of Soldiers, Families and Army Civilians. The accomplishments highlighted in this issue reflect the exceptional talent and commitment that continue to drive our mission forward.

Nothing exemplifies this spirit of excellence, collaboration and teamwork more than the outstanding work of our Senior Leader Engagement Division, led by Mr. Brent Jurgersen, in support of the three Warfighter and Family Forums during October's Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting. Planned and executed by Ms. Heather Hassinger and Ms. Joey Cocci, these events were among the most successful forums we have hosted to date. They provided an opportunity for the Army to showcase the many programs and initiatives that support Soldiers, Families and Army Civilians every day. Read more about the important work the Army is doing to support and improve the lives of our Army Team members on pages 8–10.

The myriad Soldier, Family and Quality of Life programs we deliver across the Army also serve a dual purpose: building resilience while preventing harmful behaviors that can negatively impact the readiness of individuals, Families, units and the

See ***DIRECTOR'S COLUMN*** on page 13

Ensuring Installation Readiness Through Integrated Prevention

By LeWonnie Belcher, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Planning is essential to every military operation—from preparing Soldiers mentally and physically to understanding the threat environment and selecting the appropriate target set. Senior Commanders must apply this same disciplined approach to preventing harmful behaviors across their installations.

To support commanders in this mission, the Department of the Army equips the prevention workforce with resources and tools to develop Comprehensive Integrated Prevention Plans, or CIPPs. These installation-specific plans are prepared by the Integrated Prevention Advisory Group, or I-PAG, for Senior Commander review and approval and serve as a cornerstone for effective, data-informed prevention.

Across Army installations, Senior Commanders' prevention priorities are operationalized through the CIPP. This strategic document identifies local readiness risks and addresses them through a clear, evidence-based process. CIPPs help leaders strengthen their communities, prevent harmful behaviors and set long-term goals that support overall readiness.

The CIPP provides a strategic framework that aligns and integrates prevention efforts already underway across an installation. It guides military leaders through a structured process to assess needs, select effective prevention activities, implement initiatives and evaluate results. This coordinated approach enhances efforts to reduce harmful behaviors such as sexual assault, harassment, child abuse, domestic abuse and suicide.

Before developing or updating an installation CIPP, the Senior Commander's I-PAG, installation prevention program leads, stakeholders and commanders collaborate to conduct a Community Needs Assessment, or CNA.

"The CNA is the intelligence-gathering portion of the process that informs the CIPP," said Sarah Sullivan, a prevention specialist with the Integrated Prevention Division of the Army's Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness.

Through the CNA, leaders assess installation-specific conditions, including readiness enablers and readiness threats—formerly known as protective factors and risk factors. Readiness enablers help individuals and units perform well, remain resilient and avoid harmful behaviors. In contrast, readiness threats increase stress, reduce performance and make harmful behaviors more likely.

"Readiness threats can affect people, Families, units or the entire installation," Sullivan said.

Other factors analyzed during the CNA include available resources, leadership engagement, connectedness, and additional elements within leaders' control that may enhance readiness and prevent harmful behaviors.

"To reduce harmful behaviors, military communities first have to identify what they are trying to change, such as common readiness threats," said Dr. Brantley Jarvis, a prevention specialist and DPRR's primary prevention research coordinator. "Alcohol use, for example, can contribute to several harmful behaviors."

Armed with actionable, evidence-informed data, military communities—working with their prevention workforce—use their CIPPs to operationalize commander prevention priorities, guide decision-making and evaluate prevention activities within their communities.

"For example, if data indicate a need for stronger connectedness or reduced stressors, the CIPP may identify prevention activities or policies to address those specific needs," Jarvis said.

Beyond providing leaders with a common operating picture of installation gaps and needs, CIPPs require regular evaluation of implemented actions. Evaluations may include surveys, focus groups, interviews with prevention partners, unit climate assessments and other locally available data.

"Leaders not only use data and evidence to decide what they are going to do—they also need data and evidence to ensure their CIPP is working as intended," Jarvis said.

Because integrated prevention is a sustained process rather than an immediate solution, CIPPs include both short-term and long-term objectives approved by Senior Commanders and their installation prevention partners. Short-term efforts may focus on increasing installation-wide understanding of individual prevention roles, while long-term goals may involve behavioral changes, such as reducing alcohol consumption.

Thinking beyond short-term results benefits both current installation leaders and their successors.

"Leaders may rotate every two or three years, but the CIPP communicates the long-term plan and helps leaders sustain progress toward cultural change and the upstream prevention of harmful behaviors," Jarvis said.

Senior Commanders sign an updated CIPP annually in May. This strategic document enables leaders to identify installation-specific prevention priorities, align resources to support those efforts, and reinforce leadership accountability for preventing and responding to harmful behaviors.

"The bottom line is that CIPPs are about readiness," Jarvis said.

Sullivan added, "Prevention allows commanders and leaders to focus less on responding to problems so they can ensure Soldiers are ready to fight and accomplish the mission."

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Conversations That Build Trust: Strengthening Our Soldiers and Families

By Sgt. Mayra Herrera-Dominguez, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division

Prevention is one of the strongest tools we have to protect our Soldiers, our Families and our readiness. Domestic Violence Awareness Month gives us the chance to reinforce the readiness enablers that keep our formations strong: trust, connection, help-seeking, support systems, resilience and leader engagement. In my experience, stressors such as deployments and financial strain increase the likelihood of harmful behaviors, making it harder for Soldiers and Families to cope. That is where prevention and support matter most.

When our unit returned from deployment to Poland, leadership made sure every Soldier had access to Military and Family Life Counselors during reintegration. MFLCs provided a safe space to decompress, talk through stressors and reconnect with Family routines. This early support strengthened readiness enablers by encouraging help-seeking, rebuilding connection at home and reminding Soldiers that reaching out is normal and expected. Reintegration is a critical moment for readiness, and having MFLCs available helped our Soldiers return focused, grounded and supported.

Prevention also happens in everyday conversations. I recently sat down with my Soldiers, and that conversation reminded me how important leader engagement is. We talked openly about how anyone can find themselves in a situation where they feel unsafe at home and what to do if they hear about someone else being a victim of domestic abuse. They told me they would immediately report



Members of the Sun City Adjutant General's Corps Regimental Association at Fort Bliss, Texas, gathered for their monthly Coffee and Conversations session. This event gives AG professionals a space to connect, talk through challenges, and support one another both professionally and personally. (U.S. Army photo by Master Sgt. Brandy Jackson-Frazer)

concerns to senior leaders because they trust them to act quickly and protect the formation. That trust is a readiness enabler. I reinforced it, but I also made sure they knew they had multiple options. I walked them through resources like the Family Advocacy Program, MFLCs and chaplain services so they understood that support is available through several channels, not just leadership. Conversations like this build confidence, awareness and a culture where Soldiers feel safe speaking up for themselves or others.

Leaders play a key role in prevention. Staying engaged means knowing your Soldiers, paying attention to changes in behavior and creating an environment where people feel comfortable asking for help. Sudden withdrawal, increased stress, isolation or comments about trouble at home may signal deeper concerns. These signs may indicate a Soldier or Family member may need support. Leader involvement strengthens readiness enablers by increasing connection, reducing isolation and encouraging early intervention. When leaders take time to check in, they reinforce dignity, respect and accountability across the formation.

The Army provides tools to support Families before problems escalate. FAP teaches skill-building classes such as healthy communication, stress management, parenting and conflict resolution. MFLCs offer confidential counseling that helps Soldiers and Families work through challenges. Chaplains provide emotional and spiritual support at any time, whether Soldiers are deployed or in garrison. These resources are most effective when leaders actively connect Soldiers to them.

Preventing harmful behaviors such as domestic abuse is something we can all work toward every day. When leaders stay involved, when Soldiers feel safe seeking help and when Families are supported through the challenges of military life, the entire force becomes stronger. Prevention protects readiness. It protects Families and reinforces the culture of dignity, respect and accountability that defines our Army.

Fort Huachuca FAP Specialist Recognized for Prevention Work

By Heather Aguilar, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Katherine "Kate" Baker Curtis, a Family Advocacy Program specialist at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, has been recognized for her work to prevent child abuse, child neglect and domestic abuse in the military community.

To honor her hard work, Curtis was awarded a $1,000 financial gift during the 2026 Child Abuse and Neglect and Domestic Abuse Prevention Recognition Event held by the Department of War, Military Community Advocacy Directorate. One person from each service was honored.

"Ms. Curtis is a role model for innovative prevention education and outreach to vulnerable military Families," Col. Debra Stone, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness, Deputy Director for Readiness, who oversees the Army Family Advocacy Program, said. "Her dedication to educating people on preventing abuse, building awareness and connecting Families with resources makes a real difference in our military communities."

For Curtis, the recognition came as a surprise.

"I really feel like most of us in FAP, we don't do this work with any kind of recognition in mind," she said. "When I found out that I was chosen for the award, I was just shocked, honestly, and just incredibly humbled and really excited."

Curtis has six years of federal service and more than four years of specialized experience as a FAP specialist. At Fort Huachuca, she provides prevention education for Soldiers, Army Civilians and Families.

She also helped expand school-age education on safe touch and boundaries. For Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, she worked with the Middle School and Teen Center to develop age-appropriate education on healthy relationships, respect and boundaries.

"The work of our FAP is essential to ensuring a resilient and ready force," Dee Geise, DPRR Director, said. "When we have people like Kate working hard every day to support Army Families with care and empathy, we can fulfill our commitment to prevent harmful behaviors and build strong communities."

Curtis' work extends beyond Fort Huachuca. When West Point needed help providing child abuse prevention classes, Curtis developed training and delivered it virtually. She and her team have also assisted the Presidio of Monterey, California, when it did not have a FAP team.

Curtis credits her colleagues and leadership for helping make that work possible.

"You have to have leadership who care about the mission and support the mission," she said. "You have to have team members that encourage each other and are excited for each other's successes."

Curtis' connection to the Army community began in childhood. She grew up in an Army Family, later became an Army spouse and now serves as an Army Civilian. These experiences give her a personal understanding of the challenges Army life can present.

She finds it rewarding to help military Families overcome the confusion and stigma that can prevent them from getting help, connect them with resources and feel more confident about moving forward.

She hopes the recognition draws attention not only to prevention work but also to the resources and services FAP provides.

"I just really want this recognition to reinforce the direction we're already moving in, that prevention is accessible, that it is compassionate and, most importantly, collaborative," Curtis said.

AROUND THE FORCE

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- CYS



Chef Cummings' Visit Elevates Caribbean Warfighter Readiness Through Culinary Excellence
FORT BUCHANAN, Puerto Rico—Celebrity chef and global culinary mentor Marc Cummings, second from left, visited Fort Buchanan Aug. 14–18 to support a series of engagements aimed at improving food service capabilities across the joint force. His weeklong mentorship included hands-on collaboration with military culinary teams and youth-focused demonstrations designed to strengthen readiness, morale and community connection through food. (U.S. Army photo by Carlos Cuebas)



Fort Bragg Opens Children's Waiting Room to Help Families Prioritize Health
FORT BRAGG, N.C.—For military parents, making a medical appointment can sometimes require solving another problem first: finding someone to care for their children. A new children's waiting room at Fort Bragg aims to remove that barrier by providing no-fee child care for eligible Families while parents attend medical appointments at Womack Army Medical Center or installation health clinics. The Armed Services YMCA opened the new location Oct. 1 at the Laredo Child Development Center, marking the return of a program designed to make accessing health care easier for military Families in the community. (U.S. Army photo by Lauren Reho)



Shena Veale Receives Spirit Award at Army SHARP Basic Course Graduation
FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kansas—The Army SHARP Academy at Fort Leavenworth graduated 25 students from the SHARP Basic Course Aug. 14. During each course graduation ceremony, individuals are recognized by the Academy staff and their peers for their exceptional performance. Jeff Bevington, deputy director for the SHARP Academy at Fort Leavenworth, recognized each of the Class 26-013 graduates. Sgt. 1st Class Shena Veale, USARPAC, was the Jay Lee Hoffman Spirit Award recipient for the class. (U.S. Army photo)



JBLM Teens Brief Garrison Commander on Issues and Propose Solutions to Spur Changes for Youth
JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash.—Three Joint Base Lewis-McChord teenagers took the helm at garrison headquarters on Aug. 26, briefing garrison leadership on top issues faced by military youth and offering proposed solutions. Their presentation, including information from the 2026 Department of War's Joint Service Teen Council and Installation Management Command's Youth Leadership Forum, led JBLM's command team to begin addressing the issues—including ways to further prepare the base's youth for future success, prevent negative peer culture and substance misuse, and ensure teens have access to available programs and resources. (U.S. Army photo by Allison Hoy)

Spouse Resilience Isn't Just Grit, It's Also Support, Community and Information

By Antonieta Rico, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

River Lopez did not have time to socialize with fellow military spouses or participate in military events. Before her husband switched services from the Navy to the Army, the mother of five was focused on school and largely kept to herself.

"I was wrapped up in getting my degrees and raising my Family," Lopez said.

Then COVID hit. She was stuck on base with only her fellow military neighbors as part of her social bubble.

"We quarantined together and we would set out food in our little fold-out tables in the driveway and just sit and talk to each other," Lopez said. "It took being forced to be isolated like that to realize I'm not happy not having a community."

Military life is hard, and it can be harder alone. The Army asks a lot of Soldiers and of their Families. When a Soldier signs up to serve, it also means signing up their spouse and children for frequent moves that involve leaving friends and a community behind and constantly starting over. It means solo parenting and long-distance relationships during training and deployments, and an ever-present worry about the safety of their Soldier.

The strain can be financial, too. Military spouses have a 42% lower median yearly income ($35,000) than their civilian equivalents, largely driven by frequent relocations, according to a 2025 report by Syracuse University's D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families.

The Army has long recognized the sacrifices spouses make to support their Soldiers' service to the nation. To offset some of those challenges, the Army has established a network of Family support programs whose services range from spouse employment assistance to relationship and parenting skills building to child and youth programs to Family recreational opportunities. These programs strengthen the resilience of Army Families by helping them adjust to the demands of Army life, overcome challenges and maintain their well-being.

Despite the availability of these resources, there are many reasons spouses don't reach out for help, including what some say is the pressure to maintain a "resilient façade" by quietly enduring hardship. To them, reaching out for help—to their neighbors, fellow spouses or to the Army—can feel like a failure of "resilience."

"The traditional narrative of a spouse who's thought of as resilient, it often sounds something like 'She handles everything,' 'She doesn't complain,' 'She keeps the Family steady,' 'She sacrifices quietly,' and that story gets applauded and it starts to feel like a compliment that doubles as an expectation," said Katelyn Nixon, who is married to a field artillery officer and has been an active duty Army spouse for 13 years.

But that narrative misunderstands the actual meaning of resilience, which includes seeking help and support as an essential component.



River Lopez, right, and her husband, an Army NCO, pose for a photo with their children. Lopez has found community by volunteering at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, and sharing information and resources with other Army spouses. (Photo courtesy of River Lopez)

"This idea that resilience means … you don't need anyone is really kind of the opposite of what the literature says about resilience," said Dr. Catherine Mogil, associate director of the Nathanson Family Resilience Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. "Maybe it works for a time, but it has the potential to sort of take you out at your knees if you don't have a network of support."

And when problems arise, what spouses often say they need is a network of support. In the 2019 Today's Army Spouse Survey: How Army Families Address Life's Challenges, more than 8,500 Army spouses were asked what challenges they faced and what kind of help they needed. They reported that their top issues were related to work-life balance, military culture and practices, and challenges to their own well-being, said Carra Sims, a senior behavioral scientist with RAND, who was on the team that led the Army spouse survey. Of those spouses who reported needing help, most said they needed emotional or social support, especially for their own well-being but also frequently for work-life balance.

For challenges related to military culture and practices, spouses reported needing information as their top concern. While spouses were willing to use Army programs, those who did not often cited not knowing who to reach out to.

"For those who didn't use a military resource, oftentimes they didn't know that there was one available to them," said Sims.

Most information from the Army usually goes directly to Soldiers, not spouses, which contributes to the resource awareness gap.

"Getting the word out to spouses is definitely not as easy as communicating to Soldiers," Sims said. "The Army has an easy way to communicate with their Soldiers. They have their email; they can send stuff to them. Whether or not their Soldiers communicate that to their spouses is a perennial issue," Sims said.

Over the years, seasoned spouses learn on their own the resources available to them, but for spouses new to the military—often the ones who need resources the most—the lack of awareness can negatively impact their resilience.

Lopez has seen how a lack of awareness affects new military Families. After her experience feeling isolated as a Navy spouse, she was determined to do things differently as an Army spouse. She became involved in the Joint Base Lewis-McChord community when her husband was stationed there. One of her volunteer roles was with the Spouses' Club of Lewis-McChord (now the Community Club of Lewis-McChord). During her first year volunteering, she helped host a Photos With Santa event for Families in transitional lodging as they in-processed to the installation.

"We met a Family that had absolutely nothing," Lopez said. "They were brand new to the Army—an E-1 with a toddler—and had no Christmas meal set. They had no gifts. (They) had nothing for their Family to celebrate the holidays."

With only a few days before Christmas, the spouses' club came together to ensure the young Family had what they needed through the Holiday Block Leave.

That incident made Lopez realize how important it is for new military Families to know the resources available to them.

"All of these great programs exist, but when you're brand new—arriving with no vehicle, everything's still en route, and you don't know those things exist—who's going to be that steward? Who is going to bring you to those critical resources?" she said.

Lopez believes Soldiers and spouses have a responsibility to seek information themselves (she often encourages spouses to attend the newcomer briefing at their installation), and that leaders also have a responsibility to make information accessible to Army Families. While spouses often help each other, leaders are critical in bridging the resource awareness gap.

Unit commanders already have a tool for reaching spouses: the Soldier and Family Readiness Group. When SFRGs are run well and are used in a way that is inclusive of all spouses, including those of junior enlisted Soldiers, SFRGs can directly funnel information to spouses from commanders, said Sims. This includes sharing Family resources such as Army Community Service, the Family Advocacy Program and the Exceptional Family Member Program, among others, so all spouses in the unit get the information firsthand.

"You need to meet spouses where they are and Soldiers where they are," Sims said.

Spouses reported the top ways to get information to them were through mailed postcards, social media groups, email from a unit leader, email from the SFRG, or from their friends, extended family or coworkers, according to the spouse survey.

Read the full article on the DPRR website.

Knowing the Red Flags: Supporting Survivors and Preventing Abuse

By Megan Gilbert, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Leaving an abusive partner does not come easily for many victims. For Kathleen Coffey, a former Army spouse, it took serious criminal accusations against her spouse, along with an attorney showing her a multiple-page checklist of abuse indicators.

"It had everything from emotional manipulation, physical violence, financial control, etc.," Coffey said. "When I saw all of it in black and white, I had an eye-opening moment: Not everything listed on his checklist was a crime, but my situation clearly rose to an unacceptable level of abuse. My rose-colored glasses shattered, and I suddenly recognized all the red flags."

For Coffey, fear was the biggest barrier to leaving—fear of violence, financial insecurity, change and other people's judgment. The mother of three young children at the time, Coffey turned to the Army for help. In an October DPRR webinar, Coffey discussed how Army advocates and programs can counterbalance the intimidation and threats that often come from an abuser.

"When someone's being emotionally abusive, truth counteracts that, and that can come from a victim's advocate, that can come from medical professionals, that can come through a counselor, that can come through therapy," Coffey said in the webinar. "Having an SVC (Special Victims' Counsel) who can advocate for you and explain your legal rights is huge so that things aren't twisted."

A Domestic Abuse Victim Advocate guided Coffey through the process and acted as a liaison with various staff. DAVAs provide nonclinical advocacy services and support to Soldiers and Family members experiencing domestic abuse. They are part of a 24/7 community response to provide immediate assistance, safety planning, nonjudgmental support and information on available resources.

"The Family Advocacy Program office was very helpful in navigating the process," Coffey said. "They assisted with coordinating my move, communicated with command and put me in contact with counseling services."

Breaking the Cycle

Being aware of the warning signs of abuse is important for everyone in the Army community in order to break the cycle of violence.



The Transitional Compensation Program helps military spouses and children re-establish their lives after leaving an abusive relationship. The program provides temporary financial, medical and other military benefits to eligible dependents. (U.S. Army photo illustration)

According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, those warning signs can take time to emerge, and not every sign appears in every abusive relationship. However, one common red flag is that the abusive person tries to take power and control over the relationship.

Here are some ways a partner might try to take control:

- Showing extreme jealousy of your friends or time you spend away.
- Preventing you from making your own decisions.
- Controlling your finances without your input or a discussion.
- Insulting your parenting or threatening to take away your children.
- Intimidating you with threatening looks or weapons.

Coffey said going through a list of warning signs can be a powerful tool in helping people be honest with themselves, as it was with her.

"People aren't perfect, and so relationships are never perfect either—but when lots of boxes on the abuse checklists are getting checked, there's a real problem," Coffey said. "If those behaviors are generally hidden from Family and friends, that's an even bigger sign."

Coffey also recommended preparing a response if a friend does confide in you about abuse, asking yourself how you can be supportive and not controlling.

"We all need to consider how we can have a proverbial open door so that if someone in our circle of acquaintances does approach us, we respond in a way to help them accept their situation and end that cycle of abuse," Coffey said.

Support for Survivors

Despite the best prevention efforts, domestic abuse still occurs among Army Families. When it does, the Army is committed to supporting victims in getting the resources they need to be safe, holding abusers accountable and providing emotional, legal and financial resources.

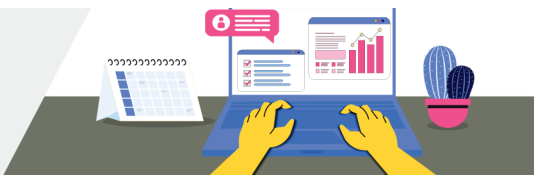
One of those resources is the Transitional Compensation Program, which provides temporary financial support and other help to dependent victims of abuse. Survivors who qualify receive monthly payments, access to military benefits and medical care. The process takes time—benefits begin after the service member is discharged based on a dependent-abuse offense.

"I'd given up job opportunities and put my career on hold for my spouse's military service, but because of the program, I was able to put myself in a better position to independently support my Family long term," Coffey said.

For more information on domestic violence resources and the Army Family Advocacy Program, visit www.armyresilience.army.mil/Family-Advocacy-Program.

Do you want to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter?

Submit articles and photographs by Dec. 4. For any questions, contact the editor at mgilbert@strategyconsultingteam.com.



Putting Parents in the Driver's Seat: Empowering Army Families

By Megan Gilbert, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

When Christy Miller moved to Fort Bliss, Texas, with her Family, finding employment was a challenge. As a military spouse, she was looking for a job that fit her experience but also worked for her Family. Miller found an opportunity with Child and Youth Services at a child development center.

"This was my first time returning to work since becoming a mom," Miller said. "The CDC gave me the opportunity to take that step while still having my son close by, which was incredibly important to me."

Once at the center, Miller realized how much time and effort went into training staff to ensure children at the centers were safe, learning and developing.

"As a mom, that gives me a lot of confidence in where my son spends his day," Miller said.

Miller, the 2025 AUSA Volunteer Family of the Year spouse, made those remarks during the Warfighter and Family Forum, "Empowering Parents and Children," at the 2026 AUSA Annual Meeting. The session was designed to provide Army Families with information and resources for child care, details about options for care and services provided by school liaison officers.

Speakers and panelists highlighted the Department's priority to always provide child care directly on the installation. However, for geographically dispersed Families or for those facing extensive waitlists, the Army Fee Assistance program provides a critical bridge to approved community-based care while ensuring children can thrive and Families can maintain readiness and well-being.

The session highlighted the Army's tiered approach to child care: maintaining on-installation care as the priority, while simplifying the process for Families to access approved community-based providers when capacity or distance requires it. Throughout the forum, panelists discussed the importance of making information accessible and processes easier to navigate.

Keynote speaker Tim Dill, Assistant Secretary of War for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, emphasized that strong Families mean a strong Army and that strong Families are anchored by parents. As the Army works to attract and retain Soldiers, Dill said Family support is the best predictor of whether a Soldier will stay in the force.

"A Soldier who does not have the support of their Family or is not confident their Family is well cared for cannot fully be in the fight," Dill said. "I know exactly the level of discipline and concentration it takes to do the things that we call young Americans to do, and the last thing you can afford to do is be wondering how your Family is doing when you are on the front line."

Dill said the Army cannot simply maintain the status quo but must instead put parents in the driver's seat to determine what is best for their children.

"We must offer parents affordable, accessible and high-quality child care," Dill said. "We are improving those offerings by refining the compensation system



Blanca Felix, right, the school liaison officer for the U.S. Army Garrison Presidio of Monterey, shares information about the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission at a Kindergarten Here We Come workshop at the Porter Youth Center in Seaside, California, July 28, 2025. (U.S. Army photo by Benjamin Ingold)

for child care workers. We need to make sure that we appropriately incentivize them and care for them and make it doable for them to accept employment at our CDCs."

During the panel discussion, Stephen Simmons, Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Military Community and Family Policy, encouraged the audience to think of Family support as an ecosystem. For example, Simmons said a child's educational needs cannot be supported without addressing child care issues.

"It's not as if you just fix this one thing right here, I'd be good," Simmons said. "It's multiple things."

The key, according to Simmons, is empowering parents. School liaisons are embedded at every base and installation to work with Families so they can access the educational resources parents need for their children. Simmons said they also have a plan to modernize and accelerate support for homeschoolers.

"One of the first steps we did was we educated our school liaisons," Simmons said. "We accelerated the training curriculum that our school liaisons all take so they are set up to support homeschoolers."

Panelist Josh Gwinn, Director, Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, U.S. Army Installation Management Command, said meeting child care needs requires expanded access to fee assistance. If a Family needs care at a specific installation and immediate care is not available or within a specified time, the waitlist is reviewed and Army Fee Assistance is distributed as appropriate.

"What we've seen is that that immediate need waitlist is probably the lowest we've seen in the last 10 years of the Army," Gwinn said.

Simmons said one of the benefits of addressing child care and education issues is that spouses are free to pursue employment opportunities. Finding those opportunities can be difficult, especially for spouses who move every few years. One solution is the SpouseWorks website, which Simmons said makes employment resources accessible.

"There's multiple options for military spouses," Simmons said. Those options include career coaching, resume building and SpouseWorks scholarships. "For spouses who are more in their early career stages, we also have a SpouseWorks Fellowship … it's a three-month paid fellowship of your choice."

For Soldiers with a Family member with special needs, panelist Col. Anne Chiquitucto, Chief of the Exceptional Family Member Program, said she and her team recognize that frequent moves can disrupt special education services for children and cause friction for parents. Chiquitucto said the Army has created a multitiered advocacy network to help parents, which includes EFMP support at installations.

"They're there to connect a Family member to the community and education services to ensure that the IEP requirements are being met," Chiquitucto said. School liaisons are another level of support. "They would be a good resource if a Family member was looking to see which school in a district would be a good fit for their child."

While additional resources and more options can better support Families, they are only useful if both Soldiers and spouses know about them. Panelist Command Sgt. Maj. Brett W. Johnson, Command Sergeant Major of the XVIII Airborne Corps, said the installation works to make information easily accessible for new Families moving to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He said it's also important to recognize that circumstances change as Families grow.

"The upstream effect that we are looking at on Fort Bragg (is) to connect all of those questions, resources and answers and make it very simple," Johnson said. "Here's a QR code for this, here are all the different resources, so when you come (here), you're more prepared to move into your position."

Whatever phase a Family is in, Johnson said it's essential for leaders to understand the range of support available.

"I always think: Are we treating the symptom or the disease?" Johnson said. "Are we hopping back and forth because we're playing Whac-A-Mole with people's problems, or are we actually trying to find a solution?"

Miller, who is pursuing her bachelor's degree, has moved with her Family three times in the last five years and understands the challenges many spouses face in pursuing their careers. She encourages them to take advantage of the options the military offers.

"What I've come to appreciate most is that CYS can support military Families in more ways than one," Miller said. "It provides care for our children, but it can also provide employment training and opportunities for military spouses who are trying to build their careers while navigating military life. Being part of that has also given me a much greater appreciation for the work that goes into caring for and supporting military children."

Watch the panel discussion in its entirety at DVIDS.

Army Takes Decisive Action to Improve Quality of Life

By Joe Lacdan, War Media Activity

Upgrades to HVAC systems and dining facilities, along with child care access and spouse employment challenges, were among the main topics at an Association of the United States Army Family Forum held Oct. 12 in Washington, D.C.

Acting Secretary of the Army Adam R. Telle said the Army has established an HVAC Task Force to improve the quality and condition of heating, ventilation and air conditioning in barracks across the force as part of its ongoing effort to upgrade Soldiers' living conditions. He said poor HVAC conditions have caused mold and crumbling structures at some Army barracks.

Telle said the Army has set aside $121 million for barracks HVAC upgrades, with a goal of awarding a contract to make upgrades on a national scale by spring 2027.

The task force was announced by Telle; Jordan Gillis, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment; and Marine Corps Sgt. Dakota Meyer, Special Assistant to Secretary of War Pete Hegseth.

"When we talk about modernization, we think about missiles or helicopters or tanks," Telle said. "But modernization also applies to quality of life. We have to use the same aggressive 'make everything better, every day' approach to our barracks and to our housing and to all parts of quality of life, like we do for our weapon systems; we have to use those same principles."

Telle, Gillis and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael R. Weimer recently visited Fort Benning, Georgia, to examine barracks conditions.

"If you can tackle HVAC, you can solve more than 50% of the mass of the problems of barracks," Telle said. "And, as everyone said, the Army is all about scale."

Dining facility upgrades

Weimer said that in recent years, Soldiers on meal cards reportedly did not use dining facilities at high rates. However, that has changed at select Army installations.

He added that the campus-style dining pilot program at Fort Carson, Colorado; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Drum, New York; and Fort Hood, Texas, has shown significantly higher usage numbers than traditional dining facilities, with 90% of meal card holders using the new venues. Weimer said Army culinary specialists have been gradually pulled from dining facilities to meet mission requirements, and the current contract system for dining facilities has not met Soldier needs.

"The reason (campus-style dining) is a completely different experience is because our traditional dining facility ecosystems have been failing for years," Weimer said. "So, we knew the change to campus-style dining is absolutely the solution to this."

Similar to college cafeterias, the new dining venues offer Soldiers a wider variety of options, longer and more flexible hours, upgraded seating and free Wi-Fi. Weimer said Soldiers at the pilot installations have even remained on post to eat at the campus-style dining venues on holiday weekends.



The Belvedere Bistro at Fort Drum, New York, features a variety of dishes during the soft opening of the new campus-style dining venue. The pilot program at four installations has shown significantly higher usage numbers than traditional dining facilities. (U.S. Army photo by Mike Strasser)

"That is unheard of for those of us who have been in uniform," he noted.

Improving access to child care

To help lower wait times at on-post child care facilities and reduce costs for those who must seek more expensive off-post care options, Weimer said the service has set a goal to staff 90% of its child development centers' capacity.

Weimer added that the service raised employee salaries and is assisting staff with permanent change of station moves to retain current CDC staff members. He said the next step is to help employees secure a new CDC position at their next duty station by contacting other Army and joint base CDCs.

"Maximizing our staffs to ensure that we're maximizing the capacity of each one of our child development centers is our No. 1 strategy right now," Weimer said. "We struggle to keep our employees sometimes because they'll have the credentials after serving in a couple of our CDCs, and you can go outside the installation and get hired quickly."

Weimer said the service is also seeking alternative solutions to provide better access to care at installations with high numbers of Soldiers working alternative shifts, such as drill sergeants, medical professionals or military police.

"This is a wicked challenge," he said. "We hear you; we also hear our drill sergeants and our medical folks, and all our folks that work odd shifts, because that's the other piece too. … So, we're trying to come up with unique solutions."

Since the hiring freeze on CDC employees lifted in March 2025, Commanders can now hire directly for critical needs, including CDCs.

Improving PCS support

The Army began reassessing how to improve housing for Army Families after the War Department ended the military's housing contract with HomeSafe Alliance in June 2025. As part of that assessment, the department extended the window to file itemized claims in the Defense Personal Property System from nine months to 12 months after the delivery date.

Army Maj. Gen. Lance Curtis, Commander of the Army Transportation Command and the Personal Property Activity, encourages service members to use the PCS call center, launched by the PCS Joint Task Force in August 2025. Soldiers can call 833-MIL-MOVE or email PCSCallCenter@mail.mil for assistance. They can also log on to www.ppa.mil, a multipurpose website that consolidates moving assistance and required paperwork.

"For the first time, we have a one-stop shopping website," Curtis said. "It has every single form. It has links to YouTube on how to do something the right way. Any question you could have, start to finish, to include the claims process, you can find on that website."

Finding stability for spouse employment

Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Christopher C. LaNeve said the Army has been actively working with other military branches to provide more full-time and part-time employment options for military spouses.

Military spouses face employment challenges when service members move to a new duty assignment, having to apply for new positions or relicense in a new state to maintain their professional standing. LaNeve said the Army is exploring different job options, including teleworking and remote work, to help address these problems.

On Aug. 3, President Donald Trump signed an executive order establishing the Military Spouse Commission to improve the quality of life for military spouses and Families and to strengthen readiness.

Chaired by Jennifer Hegseth, wife of Pete Hegseth, the commission will advise the president on policies related to military Families and spouses. The commission will engage directly with military spouses on quality-of-life challenges and make recommendations on housing, healthcare and child care.

Army Leaders Discuss Changes to Improve PCS Experience

By Kevin O'Brien, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Army leaders are working to give Soldiers and Families more time to prepare for a permanent change of station move and more support once they arrive. At the Association of the United States Army's Warfighter and Family Forum II on Oct. 13, they described changes to household goods shipments, in-processing, medical care and housing—along with work still to be done.

The forum, "Enhancing the Permanent Change of Station and Onboarding & Integration Experience," brought together leaders who oversee the transition. Their discussion returned to a central point: A move is not complete when the boxes are delivered. Soldiers and Families also need care, housing and a connection to their new unit and community.

Maj. Gen. Lance Curtis, commander of the Department of War Personal Property Activity, said the organization reduced a backlog of 18,000 shipments in May 2025 to zero currently. A joint operations center and a single call center help track and resolve moving problems across the services.

Curtis said: "If you leave here today with only two things that you remember, encourage service members, Families and spouses to call 1-833-MIL-MOVE, where they will talk to an active duty service member if they're having a challenge. We can solve almost any challenge on the spot from start to finish. Or use the website ppa.mil."

Curtis noted service members with orders can begin booking household goods moves 48 days earlier than they previously could. They also now have one year, rather than nine months, to file a claim for damaged property, and their spouse or dependent who is listed on their orders can also now file an inconvenience claim. The organization, which is in the process of becoming a full agency, plans to replace its moving system with a new platform that includes mobile tools for vehicle shipments, household goods bookings and claims over the next two years.

After Curtis' keynote address and audience questions, Sgt. Maj. Ruben Murillo Jr., senior enlisted advisor to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, opened a separate panel discussion on the PCS and onboarding experience. Lt. Gen. Charles T. Lombardo, the Army's deputy chief of staff, G-1, said the Army wants to move beyond sponsorship that amounts to a name and phone number. Using the Integrated Personnel and Pay System – Army as a backbone, the goal is to share information earlier, reduce duplicate paperwork and give leaders more time to welcome incoming Soldiers and Families.

"The biggest thing we can do is get you to your squad leader, your platoon sergeant, your platoon leader," Lombardo said. Getting pay and housing settled first makes it easier for a Soldier to focus on the unit, he added.

Lt. Gen. James M. Smith, commanding general of U.S. Army Installation Management Command, said installation personnel offices are working to process orders earlier so Families can plan their moves. His team also reviews Families displaced from housing and monitors how quickly homes are made ready for incoming residents. Smith said the standard between occupants is 10 days, though some homes require more work.



Lt. Gen. James M. Smith, center, U.S. Army Installation Management Command, speaks at the Warfighter and Family Forum II during the 2026 AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C. (U.S. Army photo by Antonio Turner)

Smith said his team holds housing providers to the turnaround standard. "We hold ourselves accountable," he added. He also highlighted the Civilian Employment Assignment Tool, which helps spouses working in Army Child and Youth Services seek positions at a new installation before they move.

David H. Dentino, deputy assistant secretary of the Army for installations, housing and partnerships, said tenant satisfaction surveys help determine where housing needs attention. Installations use low scores to develop improvement plans, while the results also inform longer-term investments. Dentino said barracks scored lowest among the housing categories surveyed and outlined efforts to assess barracks conditions, improve heating and cooling systems and identify conditions that could lead to mold.

"Those improvements are directly driven by the results we see in the tenant satisfaction survey," Dentino said of planned Family housing investments. He urged incoming Families to contact their installation's Housing Services Office, which can help with off-post rentals, deposits and landlord disputes.

That same advance planning applies to medical care. Lt. Gen. Mary K. Izaguirre, the Army Surgeon General, encouraged Families to review specialty referrals, prescriptions, ongoing appointments and records from civilian providers before leaving. She pointed to Tricare's moving checklist and said her team is working with the Defense Health Agency to improve the handoff between locations.

Izaguirre said the installation a Soldier is leaving remains responsible for behavioral health care during the move: "They are responsible for your care until you sign in at that new installation." She encouraged those already receiving behavioral health care to discuss the move with their providers in advance and noted that telehealth may help maintain access during the transition. Izaguirre also highlighted that spouses can now access the Exceptional Family Member Program system and acknowledged that access to older children's medical records remains a barrier the Army is working to address.

Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher C. Goodart, division command sergeant major, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, said reception and integration start when a Soldier is placed on assignment. A six-day reception process brings finance, transportation and other administrative support together before brigades tailor training and introductions to the Soldier's next unit. The aim is for a squad leader to receive someone who is "ready to go and ready to fight," Goodart said, while giving the Soldier and Family time to settle in.

The panel also looked beyond the installation gate. Smith said most Soldiers and Families live off post, making local schools, housing providers and community leaders part of the arrival experience.

In his closing remarks, Lombardo emphasized that Soldier and Family feedback will guide the Army's broader effort to make personnel and transition services easier to access by smartphone.

"The most important thing we have is our Soldiers and their Families and that feedback, because that's going to drive the speed and direction that we go as we continue to modernize these experiences," he said.

He described a goal of giving Families one place to look for housing, enroll their children in school and manage their transition. Helping Families navigate those changes, he said, can improve their Army experience and help retain the all-volunteer force.

Murillo urged leaders to ask incoming Soldiers what they need and carry that feedback into their work with local partners.

"Know your Soldiers, know what your Soldiers are saying," Murillo said.

Watch the panel discussion in its entirety at DVIDS.

Army Youth Programs Help Military Teens Find Their Voice and Lead

By Megan Gilbert, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

About two years ago, the director of the Hillside Youth Center at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington saw something special in Peyton Cryder. Her hard work, leadership skills and dedication made her a great candidate for the Joint Services Teen Council, so together they filled out the nomination form.

"The next thing you know, I was selected," Cryder said. "It's been life-changing ever since."

The JSTC is a year-round youth leadership program that empowers military-connected teens to turn the unique challenges of military life into leadership opportunities. As a member of the JSTC, Cryder presented at the Pentagon during the JSTC Summit and participated in volunteer opportunities and activities with the Honor Flight Network.

During last year's summit, she escorted Stephen Simmons, Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Military Community and Family Policy, to an event, giving her the opportunity to discuss life as a military teen with him.

"I got to talk about all the issues that I thought were important," Cryder said. "I just felt like my voice was really, truly heard and understood. Whether you're a young person or not, it's always nice to feel like someone's actually hearing you and listening."

Tyler Kaley, Cryder's father, joined the Army in 2013. The Kaleys have lived in El Paso, Texas, and Hawaii. They now live in Washington. Amanda Kaley, Cryder's mother, says their lives are built around service, sacrifice and adapting to change.



Peyton Cryder, left, a member of the Joint Services Teen Council, poses with her parents, Amanda and Tyler Kaley. (Photo courtesy of Amanda and Tyler Kaley)

"One of my biggest enjoyments is the fact that wherever we go, we always gain a Family, a community," Amanda Kaley said. "It takes a village. It also teaches our children resilience. But like everything, there also comes challenges."

Army programs help young people and Families manage those challenges. Tyler Kaley said watching his daughter challenge herself has been an amazing experience.

"I want my kids to grow up knowing that their voices matter, that leadership comes with responsibility and that they have the ability to make a positive impact wherever they go," he said. "Watching Peyton put those values into action makes me proud, not just as her dad, but as someone who knows how important it is to serve others."

Cryder's mother said parents want their children to have experiences that help them grow into confident, responsible and compassionate young adults, and JSTC is providing those opportunities.

"I absolutely love seeing Peyton grow through her involvement," Amanda Kaley said. "It has given her opportunities to build leadership skills and connect with other teens, all while teaching them to also be leaders. As her mom, one of the most rewarding things is watching her become more confident in herself and recognize that she can make a difference."

JSTC is just one of the programs offered to young people to support them as they navigate life as members of a military Family. The Army's Child and Youth Services also offers youth centers for children ages 11 to18.

These centers and other youth programs provide comprehensive, supervised activities and quality services for eligible youth in grades six through 12. Focus areas include leadership skills, academic support, mentoring and other life skills and recreational programs.

In addition to JSTC, Cryder is actively involved at the Hillside Youth Center. She said when she first started coming to the center, she was reserved and quiet, but with encouragement from her mentor, she joined clubs and planned center events.

Read the full article on the DPRR website.

Build Healthy Habits as a Family for Fun and Wellness

By Mia Holloman, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle takes commitment. With the demands of Army life, finding time to prioritize healthy eating and physical activity can be challenging for Soldiers. However, Soldiers do not have to develop healthy habits alone. Wellness can be a Family activity, and Soldiers and their loved ones can encourage one another to establish long-term healthy habits.

Building a healthy routine starts with intentional choices. Preparing meals together and participating in outdoor activities can make healthy living more enjoyable and manageable for the entire Family. Involving children in meal planning, grocery shopping and cooking also provides opportunities to teach essential life skills while encouraging healthier food choices.

"Centering the Family around building healthy habits usually creates predictable and stable environments to live in," said Kellie Hundemer, a health educator at the Armed Forces Wellness Center. "Structure with positive reinforcement has been shown to decrease personal stressors. Exercise and eating healthy are the building blocks of health, and that includes mental health."

Hundemer said healthy habits also help Families cope with stress. "Exercise and eating well has been proven to increase mood," she said. "Choosing to explore and change habits creates a sort of toolbox of ways to cope with stressors and connect with others."

While consistency is important, maintaining flexibility can prevent routines from becoming monotonous. Establishing fun traditions or fitness challenges can also make healthy habits something everyone looks forward to. Starting with sustainable goals and celebrating small accomplishments can encourage participation without making wellness feel overwhelming.

"It's important to be flexible, focus on fun activities and do something everyone in the Family can be involved with," Hundemer said. "To keep it interesting, it's about changing up things, such as trying a new recipe or a new walking path. Let Family members choose what activity they would like to do, such as go to the playground or find a new food to try."

The Army offers resources to help Soldiers and Families incorporate healthier habits into their daily lives. Armed Forces Wellness Centers provide health education, individualized coaching and fitness assessments focused on nutrition, physical activity, sleep and stress management. These services help individuals identify areas for improvement and make lifestyle changes.

Family members can access services through a healthcare provider referral or contact a center directly. Army Community Service provides Family support and resilience resources, including installation-specific workshops focused on health and wellness.

"Military OneSource and different DoW programs offer free, Family-friendly nutrition tools, coaching, recipes and access to affordable healthy food," Hundemer said. "MTFs (Military Treatment Facilities) are another resource. Multiple locations within nutrition care will meet with Families and generally offer nutrition classes, meal-prepping classes and assessments with the total Family to understand where they might need to improve their nutrition."

Creating lasting healthy habits doesn't have to be a burden. Little changes can make a huge impact. By prioritizing wellness together and taking advantage of available Army resources, Families can build healthier routines, strengthen their connections and establish a foundation for lifelong well-being.

Available services may vary by installation, and Families are encouraged to contact their local ACS office, AFWC or MTF to explore wellness opportunities.

Fort Carson Earns 2026 Department of War Red Ribbon Award

By Heather Aguilar, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The Army Substance Abuse Program at Fort Carson, Colorado, has been named the Army recipient of the 2026 Department of War Red Ribbon Award. The award recognizes the program's drug and alcohol prevention efforts across the installation and surrounding community.

The award was presented Oct. 15 during the 36th Annual Secretary of War Community Drug Awareness Awards ceremony at the Pentagon. Other recipients represented the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and National Guard.

The Fort Carson ASAP team's drug awareness efforts, using both digital and traditional outreach, connected with thousands of people during the past year.

The ASAP team held its Red Ribbon Week activities Dec. 3–12, 2025, under the theme "Life Is a Puzzle, Solve It Drug Free." The team spoke with 5,000 visitors during the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation WhoFest, sharing substance misuse and suicide prevention information and distributing educational materials.

The team also partnered with Centennial Elementary School, where staff spoke with 65 students about the history of Red Ribbon Week and the dangers of drug use. Students received Red Ribbon Week materials, including puzzles and pencil kits.

See ***RED RIBBON AWARD*** on page 13



Anthony McCollin, right, Prevention Branch Chief of Fort Carson Army Substance Abuse Program, accepts the 36th Annual Secretary of War Community Drug Awareness Award on behalf of Fort Carson from Anthony J. Tata, Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness, during a ceremony at the Pentagon. (Photo by Leroy Council)

MEO Forum Highlights Collaboration, Leadership in Prevention

By Chet Curtis, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Army leaders and prevention partners gathered Aug. 6 at Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., for the 2026 Military Equal Opportunity Modernization Forum. The event focused on a critical mission: strengthening equal opportunity initiatives and fostering an enduring culture of dignity and respect across all Army installations.

During the Prevention Stakeholders Panel, DPRR representatives from several key programs came together to discuss their respective roles, align their strategies and directly address concerns from the Army's MEO network. Throughout the panel discussion, a clear, unifying theme emerged: Preventing harmful behaviors cannot happen in silos. It requires seamless, cross-program collaboration and deeply engaged, active leadership at every level of command.

LaCresha Snow, Army MEO Program Director, opened the discussion by emphasizing that the key to reducing harmful behaviors lies in relationship building across the Army's diverse prevention portfolio.

"The goal of this panel is to help MEO professionals better understand the capabilities of their prevention partners at each installation," Snow said.

Snow explained that aligning MEO efforts with partner programs provides a stronger safety net. By working together, these programs can offer more comprehensive support and resources to Soldiers throughout the entire resolution process—ultimately enhancing outcomes and rebuilding trust.

According to Sarah Sullivan, a prevention specialist, the Senior Commander's Comprehensive Integrated Prevention Plan helps guide the interagency efforts at the installation level. It brings prevention partners together, including the Integrated Prevention Advisory Group, to coordinate activities and track their impact.

"It is good for MEO professionals to know who their Family Advocacy professionals are, where they are located and what services they provide," Dr. Carmen Leggett, representing the Family Advocacy Program, said. "That is going to be key to ensuring Family members know FAP is available to them, which in turn will help reduce domestic abuse and neglect in our communities."

Leggett informed MEO Forum attendees that FAP also includes prevention and response. For example, the New Parent Support Program provides home visitors who offer education and early, ongoing services to expectant and new parents. NPSP has been especially important at overseas installations, where younger service members and their spouses may experience isolation from traditional Family support systems during tours and deployments. Leggett noted that by establishing early support and maintaining open lines of communication, the Army can empower young Families to seek help sooner.

Representing the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program, Frank Hawkins explained his team prioritizes collaboration with other harmful behavior stakeholders to build a unified front. He emphasized that SHARP supports partners and senior leaders with structured, data-driven insights that strengthen decision-making. Hawkins added that the program continues refining data products to aid joint prevention efforts while protecting victim privacy. To ensure lasting progress, SHARP works with prevention partners to assess activities and target readiness threats and readiness enablers to improve command climate. He noted that evidence-based practices remain essential to long-term success.

According to LaToya Johnson, prevention evaluation specialist, the panel's emphasis on data highlights the need for leadership support, staffing and resources for integrated prevention evaluation planning, even amid competing priorities.

Early intervention and active leadership are also critical to substance misuse prevention and suicide prevention. Andrea Donoghue from the Army Substance Abuse Program emphasized that substance issues touch many military Families and directly impact readiness.

"Early access and early response are vital because substance concerns are progressive," Donoghue said. "We must encourage Soldiers to seek help early, and leaders must remain approachable, treating any substance issue as a readiness issue. Leaders must lead by example and consistently promote a message of support."

Renee Johnson, Army Suicide Prevention and Response program manager, took this a step further. Through dialogue with MEO leaders, forum participants agreed that a unit's culture cannot be transformed without active, visible and engaged leadership. Johnson thanked MEO leaders who have intervened in suicide attempts for their actions to preserve life.

"The MEO forum discussed times of transition through the lens of when Soldiers arrive at a new unit," Johnson said. "Soldiers at every level observe their immediate leaders and take notes of the organizational culture and climate. Engaged, present leaders set the standard and can turn the tide on culture, when necessary, through their presence and actions."

Ultimately, the forum made it clear that a healthy and supportive Army community relies on a unified front. True prevention is not a series of checklist requirements; it is a shared, active responsibility.

Leggett captured the overarching spirit of the event, saying: "When all leaders are actively engaged, we move beyond meeting basic needs to elevating the warfighter experience and ensuring lasting readiness across the force."

Reducing Holiday Stress

FAMILIES OVER THE HOLIDAYS Continued from page 1

"This process starts by establishing a firm, non-negotiable budget that covers all holiday-related expenses, including gifts, travel, food, decorations and hosting events, before the very first purchase is made," Woodhouse said.

> **"If readers take only one action this holiday season, it should be to reach out with a genuine, simple check-in."**
>
> —Dr. Carmen Leggett, Family Advocacy Program Specialist

Warning signs of financial strain include using credit cards for everyday essentials, making only minimum loan payments, borrowing against retirement savings or experiencing relationship tension over money. Soldiers and Families do not have to wait for a crisis to seek help.

Active-duty Soldiers can contact the Financial Readiness Program at an Army Community Service center. Army Reserve and Army National Guard Soldiers can use their local Family Assistance Centers. Army Emergency Relief offers grants and no-interest loans for financial needs, while Military OneSource provides free, confidential counseling.

If stress is interfering with daily routines, relationships or decision-making, a Family Advocacy Program professional, chaplain or behavioral health provider can help. Army Community Service, the Family Advocacy Program and the New Parent Support Program can also connect Families with activities and assistance.

"If readers take only one action this holiday season, it should be to reach out with a genuine, simple check-in," Leggett said. "Simple gestures, like inviting a Family to a holiday social, a walk or a trip to the park, can help them feel included and supported."

Fort Carson Earns DOW Award

RED RIBBON AWARD Continued from page 12

"Prevention is a force multiplier for our Army. Fort Carson's success demonstrates the power of meeting our community where they are—whether that is through media, during installation events or through hands-on activities," said Andrea Donoghue, program manager for the Army Substance Abuse Program. "Whether we're talking with Soldiers or visiting a school, we want people to walk away knowing something that could help them or someone they care about."

Prevention efforts continued throughout 2026. During Alcohol Awareness Month in April, 73 Soldiers participated in a 2K race intended to demonstrate a healthy, substance-free activity.

The ASAP team also created two "Buzz Kill" videos that received more than 22,000 views, displayed a DUI crash car at the entrance to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and held an escape room challenge for Soldiers and Army Civilians.

The team also used digital outreach to share prevention information. Digital message boards and installation billboards featured campaign messaging, including "Stay Alive, Don't Drink and Drive."

Across its broader prevention efforts, the ASAP team conducted 135 briefings reaching 7,351 Soldiers and Army Civilians. Its year-round campaign combines alcohol misuse awareness and suicide prevention under the message "Strength Starts With You, You Don't Have to Face Life's Challenges Alone."

"The best time to talk about alcohol and drug misuse is before there's a crisis," said Dee Geise, Director of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness. "The Fort Carson ASAP staff make those conversations part of everyday life. That work matters to Soldiers and their Families."

The Fort Carson ASAP is managed by Anthony McCollin and serves Soldiers, Family members, Army Civilians and military retirees. Through education and community resources, its prevention efforts help Soldiers remain ready for their missions.



Students at Mesa School Age Center at Fort Carson, Colorado, signed a Red Ribbon Week pledge to stay drug-free after meeting Army Substance Abuse Program team members and Soldier-athletes Oct. 26. (Photo courtesy Fort Carson Facebook page)

Giving Thanks This Holiday Season

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN Continued from page 2

Total Army. Read more about the importance of resilience for those who serve alongside our Soldiers, especially military spouses, on page 6.

This November, we are highlighting the contributions of Army Families through Military Family Appreciation Month. Awareness materials are available at the following link: www.armyresilience.army.mil/Resources/DPRR-Awareness-Materials. Please share these resources with audiences both inside and outside the gate as we recognize and thank those who serve alongside our Soldiers, not only in November but throughout the year.

The work of leaders at the installation level is integral to the Army's efforts to sustain and improve unit and Total Army readiness. To support local prevention planning and response efforts, our Integrated Prevention Advisory Group, or I-PAG, works alongside Senior Commanders and installation prevention program leads to develop and update an annual Comprehensive Integrated Prevention Plan, or CIPP. The CIPP serves as a roadmap for addressing locally identified risks to individual and unit readiness. Read more about this critical tool on page 2.

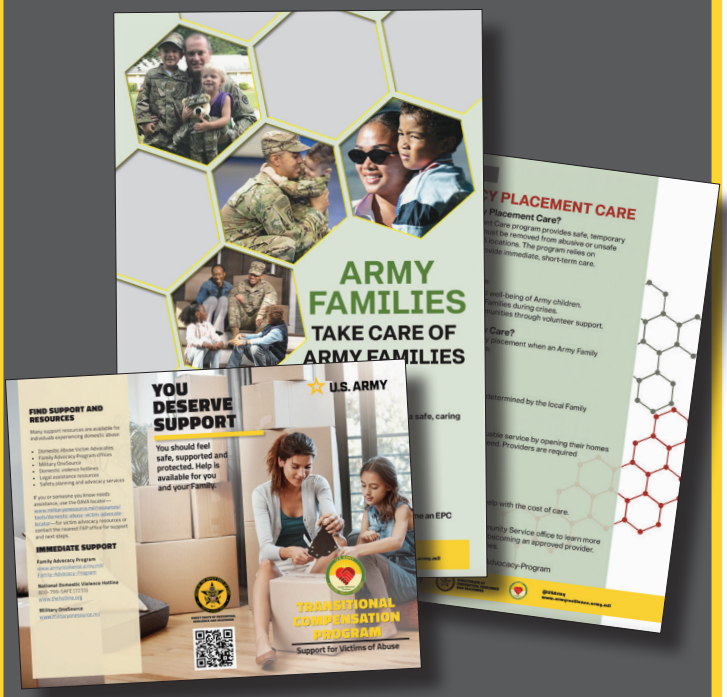
I also extend my congratulations to the individuals and teams recognized for their extraordinary efforts to prevent harmful behaviors. First, congratulations to Ms. Katherine "Kate" Baker Curtis, Family Advocacy Program Specialist at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, for being selected as the Army recipient during the 2026 Child Abuse and Neglect and Domestic Abuse Prevention Recognition Event. Read more about her achievements on page 3.

Additionally, congratulations to the Fort Carson Army Substance Abuse Program for being named the Army recipient of the 2026 Department of Defense Red Ribbon Award. Read more about Fort Carson's innovative efforts to reduce substance misuse on page 12.

As Thanksgiving approaches, I want to thank each of you for your dedication and commitment to Soldiers, Families and Army Civilians. I wish you and your Families a safe, happy and blessed Thanksgiving.

Dee Geise, DPRR Director

Emergency Placement Care and Transitional Compensation Program



New materials for Emergency Placement Care and the Transitional Compensation Program make it easier to provide support for Soldiers and Families in crisis. EPC provides safe, short-term care for military children through dedicated volunteer Families, while TC offers financial support to Families affected by dependent-abuse cases. Clear, accessible materials walk you through every step and show how you can make a difference or get support.

You can find the materials here: www.armyresilience.army.mil/Resources/DPRR-Awareness-Materials

HAIL AND FAREWELL

We invite the Army Prevention, Resilience and Readiness community to join us in welcoming new members to DPRR and congratulating current members on taking new positions while we bid a fond farewell to departing staff.

Hail

- Michael Andrews, CYSS Division
- Kelli Irish, CYSS Division

Farewell

- Dr. Sharon Cross, ACCESS/MFLC Division Chief
- Karoline Hay, SHARP Division
- Aaliyah Scott, Resource Management Division

UPCOMING EVENTS

DPRR Upcoming Events

Visit the new DPRR Upcoming Events page to find out about awareness campaigns, webinars and training sessions: www.armyresilience.army.mil/Newsroom/NewUpcoming-Events

NOVEMBER

Nominate ACS Volunteers for the Emma Marie Baird Award

Don't miss the opportunity to recognize an exceptional Army Community Service volunteer! Nominations for the 2027 Emma Marie Baird Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service must be submitted by ACS centers to their IMCOM directorate or ACOM. For more information, including eligibility requirements, see AR 608-1, Chapter 5, Paragraph 5-11, or contact DCS, G-1, DPRR.

DECEMBER

SHARP PRIMARY PREVENTION POSTER CONTEST

Each command (ACOM, ASCC, DRU, USAR, ARNG) may submit a maximum of four designs: one for junior enlisted, one for company-grade officers, one for Army Civilians and one for military Family members.

The concept development and design window opens Dec. 1 and ends Feb. 1, 2027. On Feb. 1, 2027, by 11:59 p.m., each command will upload the four authorized command-level winning submissions into the Enterprise Task Management Software Solution Tasker #HQDA-260827-97ZR.

Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness
DPRR COMMUNITYLINK
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Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness
2530 Crystal Drive, 6th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202
www.armyresilience.army.mil

Director
Dee Geise

Senior Enlisted Advisor
Sgt. Maj. Edgar Monsanto

Deputy Director for Operations—Military
Lt. Col. John Schlicht

Deputy Director for Operations—Civilian
Blake Smith

Chief, Communications & Outreach Division
LeWonnie Belcher

Managing Editor
Lytaria B. Walker

Editor
Megan Gilbert

Design Editor
Liz Briones

Copy Editors
Heather Aguilar
Sarah Skodak



Do you want to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter?

Submit articles and photographs by Dec. 4. For any questions, contact the editor at mgilbert@strategyconsultingteam.com.

Connect With DPRR!

Contact DPRR Communications & Outreach at
usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-1.list.dprr-comm-and-outreach-div@army.mil

@USArmy
www.armyresilience.army.mil