

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Air Force

## The Marriage Checkup: Adapting and Implementing a Brief Relationship Intervention for Military Couples

Cigrang, J. A., Cordova, J. V., Gray, T. D., Najera, E., Hawrilenko, M., Pinkley, C., & Redd, K. (2016). The marriage checkup: Adapting and implementing a brief relationship intervention for military couples. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, doi:10.1016/j.cbpra.2016.01.002

**SUMMARY:** The feasibility for adapting the Marriage Checkup (MC), a brief intervention for enhancing marital resiliency, for use in a clinic serving an Active Duty military population was assessed. This study presented an adapted MC protocol and sought the internal behavioral health consultants (IBHCs) feedback on the administration of MC sessions. In addition, the fifteen couples who participated in these sessions completed a post and one-month follow-up survey.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- IBHCs expressed satisfaction with administering the Marriage Checkup intervention, specifically noting that they felt the Marriage Checkup effectively captured the strengths of the couples.
- Couples stated after participating in the Marriage Checkup that the sessions helped them learn strategies to improve their relationship health.
- Couples noted that participating in the Marriage Checkup helped them better understand their relationship.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop online modules that focus on effective relationship building strategies for Service members and their partners
- Disseminate information regarding possible relationship stressors for Service members and the potential benefits of marriage education programs
- Engage young military couples in workshops that focus on developing healthy relationships and communication skills

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the development and continuation of programs that can promote resilience in Service members, their partners and families
- Recommend professional development for professionals working with Service members families and communities to better understand the effects of stressful experiences on the well-being of Service members and their relationships
- Continue to support marriage education programs that address the unique challenges military couples face

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## METHODS

- Participants were recruited in Air Force primary health clinics.
- Participating Air Force couples completed a survey upon completion of the sessions and one month later about how they felt the sessions benefited their relationship.
- IBHCs completed a survey upon completion of administering the sessions about how they felt the administration of the sessions benefited couples relationships.
- Data analyses assessed both IBHC's and participant's satisfaction with the adapted MC protocol and the sessions.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Thirty participants (15 couples) successfully completed the sessions and follow-up calls.
- Seventy-six percent of the participants were officers, 24% of the participants were enlisted with a military rank of E5-E9, and five dual Active Duty couples in the study.
- In terms of race, 41% identified as White, 17% as Latino, 14% as Black, 11% as Asian American, 5% as Multiracial, and 12% Other.

## LIMITATIONS

- The majority of the Active Duty participants in this study were officers in the Air Force; therefore, the generalizability to enlisted members and other branches can't be made.
- This study only had a sample of 15 couples; therefore, can't be generalizable to other couples.
- There was not a focus on the relationship outcomes for the couples; therefore, claims regarding the programs effect on specific relationship outcomes can't be made.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore the association between military families, military stressors, and relationship satisfaction
- Engage in process-oriented and longitudinal studies that help determine the factors that contribute to marital quality and stability over time in military marriages
- Investigate the degree to which dual-military couples are at increased risk for lower marital quality and greater instability

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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