

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## Assessing Military Community Support: Relations Among Perceived Military Community Support, Child Psychosocial Adjustment, and Parent Psychosocial Adjustment

Conforte, A. M., Bakalar, J. L., Shank, L. M., Quinlan, J., Stephens, M. B., Sbrocco, T., & Tanofsky-Kraff, M. (2017). Assessing military community support: Relations among perceived military community support, child psychosocial adjustment, and parent psychosocial adjustment. *Military Medicine*, 182(9/10), e1871-e1878. doi:10.7205/MILMED-D-17-00016

**SUMMARY:** Military families often experience additional stress due to the military life style, and community support is an important factor that can reduce stress. This study had 198 primary caregivers in military families complete an online survey regarding their psychosocial functioning, perceived community support, and their child's psychosocial functioning. Results indicated that perceived community support played an important role in both military parents' and children's well-being.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Perceived military community support was positively associated with both parents' and children's psychosocial functioning.
- The more community support parents perceived, the more likely that they had positive psychosocial functioning, which in turn was associated with children's positive psychosocial functioning.
- Parental psychosocial functioning and perceived community support explained 24% of children's psychosocial functioning.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Disseminate information on military bases regarding available community resources and support for military families with children
- Engage military parents in workshops that focus on promoting their psychosocial functioning and parenting skills
- Help military families find community support when they encounter stressors associated with the military life style

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Raise awareness on military bases regarding the importance of community support on military families' well-being
- Encourage the development of community support programs to promote the psychosocial functioning of parents and children
- Recommend education of professionals who work with military families on the positive association between community support and military families' well-being

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## METHODS

- Participants were recruited through flyers, social media, and email.
- Participants completed an online survey; measures included parents' and children's psychosocial symptoms and parents' perceived community support.
- Data were analyzed to examine the associations between child psychosocial adjustment, parent psychosocial adjustment, and perceived community support.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 198 Active Duty Service members or other primary caregivers in military families (82% female); each participant had at least one child who was between six and 18 years old.
- The average age of the participants was 34.06 years (SD = 6.18) and most of them were White (86%); the race/ethnicity of the other 14% was not reported.
- The military branches of the Service members were Army (36%), Navy (29%), Air Force (24%), and Marine Corps (11%).

## LIMITATIONS

- The sample was relatively homogenous (mostly female and White), which limited the generalizability of the study.
- The cross-sectional design of the study made it impossible to examine the causal relationship between community support and psychosocial functioning.
- The study was mainly based on self-report data, so the results may be subject to social-desirability bias and memory bias.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Recruit more male and non-White participants so that the sample is more representative
- Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the causal relationship between community support and military parents' and children's well-being
- Use both subjective and objective data so that the findings are more reliable

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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