

## 2010 Military Family Life Project

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to introduce a briefing based on the *2010 Military Family Life Project (2010 MFLP)*. Topics include housing and Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, education and employment, spouse's family, mental and physical well-being, financial well-being, life in the military, members' deployments, the effect of deployments on children, and reunion and reintegration. A summary of survey methodology is provided at the end of this paper.

### Summary of Topics Covered in Briefing

#### Housing and Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Moves

- 25% of spouses indicated living in *on* base military housing, 7% indicated living in *off* base military housing, and 67% indicated living in civilian housing.
- 77% of spouses experienced a PCS move during their husband/wife 's active duty career.
  - Of these spouses, 12% took *less than 1 month to find employment after last PCS move*, 25% took *1 month to less than 4 months*, 22% took *4 months to less than 7 months*, 11% took *7 months to less than 10 months*, 6% took *10 months to less than 12 months*, and 25% took *1 year or more*.

#### Education and Employment

- 26% of spouses are currently enrolled in school/training; 48% are not currently enrolled, but would like to be in school/training; and 26% are not currently enrolled, and do not want to be in school/training.
- 57% of spouses indicated they were in the labor force, meaning they were employed or had been looking for work
  - Of those in the labor force, 26% were unemployed.
- Of the 43% of spouses not in the labor force, the top two reasons for not looking for work were *wanting to be able to stay home to care for their children (73%)* and *not wanting to work (40%)*.
- Of the 42% of spouses who were employed, 38% worked part-time (fewer than 35 hours per week).
  - The top two reasons for working part-time were *other (24%)* and *could only find part-time work (21%)*.

- The top three career fields of spouses who had been employed at some point in their lives were *other* (25%), *retail/customer service* (18%), and *health care/health services* (16%).
- The top three sources used to find their current/most recent job were *contacting the employer directly* (45%), *information provided by a friend or relative* (28%), and *other* (28%).
- 77% of all spouses reported wanting to work and 57% reported needing to work.
- The top three reasons spouses gave for why working is important were *wanting to save money for the future* (89%), *desire for career* (68%), and *wanting extra money to use now* (67%).

### Spouse's Family

- About a quarter of spouses indicated that they and/or a family member have a *special medical need* (28%) or a *special educational need* (27%).
- 25% of spouses indicated they had special medical/educational needs, 24% indicated their child(ren) had special medical/educational needs, and 17% indicated their husband/wife had special medical/educational needs.
- About three-fourths of spouses (72%) indicated having children under the age of 18 living at home either part-time or full-time.
  - Of these spouses, 18% have a child(ren) from a previous relationship, 10% have a child(ren) from their husband/wife's previous relationship, and 7% were otherwise related to the child(ren).

### Mental and Physical Well-Being

- Overall, 11% of spouses rated the current level of stress in their personal life less than usual; 52% more than usual.
- On a scale from 0 to 12, the average frequency of mental health problems, measured using the overall Patient Health Questionnaire, indicated by spouses was 2.6.
- More than a third of spouses indicated experiencing feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge (52%); not being able to stop or control worrying (45%); feeling down, depressed, or hopeless (39%); and little interest or pleasure in doing things (37%) in the past two weeks.
- On a scale from 21 to 105, the average overall Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scale (F-COPES) score for spouses was 69.1 compared to the civilian average of 65.0. The average scores for the five F-COPES sub-scales were: *Reframing* (3.9), *Acquiring Social Support* (3), *Mobilizing to Acquire and Accept Help* (3), *Seeking Spiritual Support* (3), and *Passive Appraisal* (2.3). The average overall score was 3.3.



- The majority (84%) of spouses were satisfied with their marriage right now; 8% dissatisfied.
- About two-fifths (41%) indicated they have problems in their personal relationship with their husband/wife less often compared to six months ago; 14% more often.
- The average overall Marital Instability Index (MII) for spouses was 1.6 out of 5 where a higher total score indicates higher levels of instability in the marriage. For each of the MII factors, spouses indicated *they thought marriage might be in trouble* (58%), *they thought of getting a divorce/separation crossed their mind in the past 3 years* (41%), *they seriously suggested the idea of divorce within the past 3 years* (28%), *they discussed divorce/separation with a close friend* (26%), and *they talked to an attorney* (12%).
- About one-sixth (17%) of spouses indicated talking to a counselor in the past six months.
  - The top four issues they discussed in counseling were: *coping with stress* (80%), *family issues* (77%), *marital issues* (74%); and *problem solving* (71%).
  - The top three sources of counseling were *TRICARE* (52%), *Military OneSource* (36%), and *another source* (34%).
    - About half (51%) who used TRICARE found it very useful; 54% who used Military OneSource found it very useful; 58% who used another source found it very useful.
- Over three-fourths of spouses (78%) indicated having concerns that would factor into their decision regarding counseling.
  - Top three concerns were *would be difficulty getting time off work or child care for counseling* (21%), *it would harm spouse's career* (19%), and *counseling costs too much money* (18%).

### Financial Well-Being

- The average total household gross (before-tax) earnings in an average month indicated by spouses was \$7,401.
- Overall, 59% of spouses were comfortable with their financial condition; 16% not comfortable.
  - 66% have \$500 or more in emergency savings and 64% save regularly by putting money aside each month.
- Less than one-tenth (8%) of spouses used specific military-sponsored financial services in the past six months.

### Life in the Military

- Overall, 62% of spouses are satisfied with the military way of life; 14% dissatisfied.

- More than two-thirds (69%) of spouses favor their husband/wife staying on active duty; 19% favor leaving.
- Overall, 74% of spouses agreed deployed Service members are making a difference in the world; 8% disagree.
- One quarter (25%) of spouses agreed the American public supports the war; 43% disagreed.
- On a scale from 0 to 72, the average overall Social Support Index (SSI) score for spouses was 46.5. The average scores for the four SSI sub-scales were *Family Affection and Commitment* (4.3), *Emotional, Esteem, and Friendship Network Support* (3.7), *Family Community Connection* (3.5), and *Community as a Source of Support* (3.4). The average score on the SSI was 3.7.
- 25% of spouses used Military OneSource in the past 6 months to *obtain information*, 20% used it to *obtain Career Advancement Accounts (MyCAA)*, 8% indicated *another use*, and 5% used it to *obtain counseling*.

### Member's Deployments

- The majority (85%) of spouses indicated their husband/wife had been deployed for more than 30 consecutive days in their active duty career.
  - Spouses reported an average of 4.8 deployments during the member's career.
  - 74% indicated their husband/wife's most recent deployment was to a combat zone.
  - 60% indicated their husband/wife had been deployed to Iraq/Afghanistan.
  - About 73% of spouses reported experiencing multiple deployments.
    - About a quarter (24%) of these spouses found coping with deployments had become less difficult with each experience; 30% more difficult.
  - On average, it had been 25 months since their husband/wife's last departure for deployment.
  - The top two problems experienced, to a large extent, during their husband/wife's most recent deployment were *loneliness* (41%) and *being a "single" parent* (28%).
  - The top two communications methods used during deployment were *e-mail* (92%) and *telephone* (92%).
  - The majority of spouses used the *commissary* (84%) and the *exchange* (80%) during their husband/wife's deployment.
    - More than two-fifths of these indicated shopping less often at the *commissary* (42%) and/or *exchange* (45%) during their husband/wife's deployment.
    - The top two reasons indicated for shopping less often at the commissary and/or exchange during the most recent deployment were the *driving distance to commissary/exchange* (48%) and their *needs have changed* (46%).

