



Extension-Military Partnership United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) & Department of Defense (DoD)



Since its inception in 2010, the Extension-Military Partnership has focused on cultivating collaborations with educational institutions, non-governmental and community-based organizations, and other groups and organizations with expertise in early childhood education, youth development and family studies to support the family support programs, workforce development, and child care & youth development expansion needs of the Department of Defense (DoD). Through this partnership between the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) at USDA and Military Community & Family Policy (MC&FP) at DoD programs that are mutually beneficial to both military and non-military audiences are being evaluated and expanded to meet the needs of families. NIFA is engaging with Land-Grant University and Cooperative Extension faculty and staff through to accomplish the following primary objectives: community capacity-building in support of military families; workforce development; and strengthening family, child care, and youth development programs.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY-BUILDING IN SUPPORT OF MILITARY FAMILIES

Office of Military Community, Family & Youth Extension Programs (MCFYE) (Purdue University) - Military youth, families, and communities face increasing challenges and obstacles in today's world. Increasingly, communities in which military families and youth live are geographically dispersed across the country with a presence in nearly all communities in our country. The MCFYE office has been established with the mission of providing overall leadership and coordination for the Land-Grant University system to develop and implement strategies that lead to sustained support for educational programs, professional development, and priority setting to support military families. The Cooperative Extension system, with leadership provided through the Land-Grant Universities has a presence in nearly every county in the United States. Additionally, through the eXtension web portal, individuals may access educational materials at the time of their choosing.

Research & Evaluation

Land Grant University Faculty are engaged in a number of research and evaluation projects centered on military families.

University of Arizona – Study on the Impact of Deployment on Children

University of Georgia – Development of a system of key metrics regarding the Joint Family Assistance Support Program

Ohio State University & Johns Hopkins University– Assessment of autism services near military installations and national review of best practices around autism support

West Virginia University Law School – Review of Medicaid services to determine unmet needs of military families with dependents with disabilities.

Cornell University & University of Kansas – Benchmark study focused on current programs in the US that provide support to families with special needs to determine a basic approach for the military family support systems.

Communications & Outreach (Washington State University) - A comprehensive communication, marketing, and outreach plan will utilize contemporary tools and strategies to promote awareness of workforce opportunities. In addition, this effort will also serve as a vehicle to increase awareness of community-based educational programs, eXtension, and other web-based resources with military families and communities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Military Extension Internship Program (Purdue University) - The Military Extension Internship Program is an opportunity for college students to gain practical work experience in child development, school-age, and youth programs. Interns work on military installations around the world for 10 weeks to 6 months and receive a broad range of experiences, from working with children and youth and implementing programs, to

learning about the management of child and youth centers. Through the Spring of 2011, 89 interns have been placed working in military child and youth programs.

Youth Extension Service (Y.E.S.) (*North Carolina State University*) - Project Y.E.S. is a national service program that engages college students in service to meet the needs of military families facing deployment. In January of 2011, the initial Y.E.S pilot program will place Y.E.S. interns across the country focused on expanding resources around the Yellow Ribbon Program (YRP) and camps for military youth. The Y.E.S. program trains Y.E.S. interns in leadership, facilitation, programming and evaluation in order to offer high quality program opportunities for military youth whose loved ones have deployed.

Virtual Child Care Lab School System (*The Ohio State University & Johns Hopkins University*) – The Virtual Child Care Lab School will serve military child care programs with professional development and training opportunities focused on current issues experienced in child care settings. The Virtual Lab School will allow for DoD childcare professionals around the world to enter the system and develop customized training plans around their individual needs. A pilot of the virtual lab school system is expected in mid-2011.

University Passport Program (UPP) (*Kansas State University*) - This UPP initiative is focused on creating a partnership between institutions engaged in formal, on-line learning programs that lead to degrees or certificates from accredited colleges and universities in areas related to the workforce development needs within MC&FP. The overall goal of this initiative is to increase the number of military personnel and spouses enrolled in degree or certificate- granting programs, specifically those focused on child care, youth development, and related fields.

STRENGTHENING FAMILY, CHILD CARE, & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Multi-Disciplinary Partnerships for Strengthening Child Care & Youth Development Programs (*University of Arizona*) - This initiative centers on establishing a network of Land-Grant University and Cooperative Extension faculty and staff to support a multi-disciplinary partnership. More specifically, the objectives are to: (1) develop a comprehensive framework to support community-based youth development and child care program implementation;

(2) develop tools, resources, and strategies for community-based programs to use; (3) develop strategies for identifying evidence-based youth development programs; (4) develop and implement strategies to educate future leaders, current faculty, and community partners on high quality youth development program standards; and (5) develop and implement a competitive research program.

Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness (CMFR) (*Penn State University*) – The CMFR is focused on establishing a comprehensive repository of programs, curriculum and research studies focused on military family support. The CMFR has established a vetting system for all materials, identifying those materials that have a high evidence basis. The CMFR has partnered with several DoD offices including Reserve Affairs, Exceptional Family Member Programs and Family Advocacy Programs in the development of the Clearinghouse.

Child Care Technical Assistance (CCTA) (*University of Nebraska/Lincoln*) – The CCTA initiative is focused on increasing the professional competencies of child care providers and program staff at non-military youth development programs through training and technical assistance, thus increasing the availability of quality child care off installation in key states experiencing high deployments. Through these efforts, child care quality will be increased for both military and non-military populations.

Engaging Faculty Expertise: A primary objective of the partnership between MC&FP and NIFA is to develop and implement strategies that lead to sustained support for educational programs, professional development, and priority setting well into the future as the needs of military youth, families, and communities continue to evolve. To determine future priorities, implement and evaluate programs, and meet the immediate challenges faced in communities across the country, several key areas have been identified:

- Community Capacity Building
- Health & Nutrition Education
- Child & Youth Deployment Support
- Personal Worklife Skills
- Heartlink & Key Spouse Program Support

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