

## Military OneSource Podcast — Military Family Readiness Academy

**Program title: OneOp and the Military Family Readiness Academy**

### **Episode transcript**

#### **Intro voiceover:**

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast.

Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department, with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit [MilitaryOneSource.mil](https://militaryonesource.mil).

#### **Bruce Moody:**

Hi, Bruce Moody with you on the Military OneSource podcast.

I'm talking today with Rose Anderson. Rose is a colleague and a program analyst with the Office of Military Family Readiness Policy.

And Keith Tidball. He is assistant director of the Cornell Cooperative Extension at Cornell University, serving as the principal investigator for the OneOp community capacity building team. Today we're discussing OneOp and its 2022 Military Family Readiness Academy. Welcome to the both of you.

#### **Keith Tidball:**

Thanks very much, Bruce. Great to be with you.

#### **Rose Anderson:**

Thank you, Bruce. Thank you for having us.

#### **Bruce:**

Oh, it's great to have you with us today. This is really interesting work because, although this is an academy for service providers, it's really important to understand the lengths to which we go, frankly, to provide a system of support around military families. Part of that system includes something called OneOp, and Keith, if you could kind of just explain to us what OneOp is, and from there, that allows us to kind of pivot into talking about the Military Family Readiness Academy.

#### **Keith:**

Sure. I'd be happy to. I am Keith Tidball. I'm from Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment is

where I'm a faculty member. I say that because Cornell University is a land-grant university, and land-grant universities have cooperative extension systems or services.

The OneOp is, I think, an incredibly unique and useful force multiplier in the space of military families, because OneOp features cooperative extension across this nation and utilizes its expertise and its unique networks to work with military families' practitioners to develop programming for military family practitioners, those service providers you mentioned, and to do that in a way that brings evidence-based literature review, science, the best technologies and the best approaches to educational delivery to those service providers both on installations and those serving our geographically dispersed.

OneOp is this interesting amalgamation of land-grant university expertise and cooperative extension experts and practitioners; [it] brings them to the fight, frankly. Brings them to the military family readiness equation, if you will.

I've been involved in OneOp, which was formally known as the Military Families Learning Network for about eight years. The reason I'm involved in it is because I'm a veteran myself and I have a background in working with not only military families, but veterans, as far as their transitions and community capacity is concerned. That's OneOp.

I would love to hear Rose's perspective on that from where she sits over at NDOD.

**Rose:**

Thank you, Keith. Yes. OneOp is a Defense Department and the Department of Agriculture partnership. As Keith just shared the offer, the research base and evidence-informed resources to service providers, and the way they do this is through life webinars and virtual learning events and podcasts, and so much more.

In my current position as a DOD program manager for this project, I get to work with all these great people, faculty and staff from land-grant universities, partners such as Keith, and a team of DOD subject matter experts, as well. They all work together. They all collaborate to create this great programming that covers a full spectrum of family service subject areas. It's relevant to the work of the providers to support the overall military community.

All of these resources that we're going to talk about today can help you as service providers build upon the skills that you have to be better prepared to address the needs of military families.

**Bruce:**

Let's break that up into two things. There's the focus of the training of the series this time around, and then, when it's going to be, where it's going to be, and how people will link into it, but the series this year, the focus is "Family Well-Being: Navigating the Social Justice Landscape."

Who would like to take that? Who would like to explain what this title is about? I know that we're going to be talking about diversity, equity and inclusion, because our military

is so diverse. Keith and Rose, can you each have a turn at explaining what this series is all about?

**Rose:**

I'll go first, and thank you, Bruce, for bringing that up.

With the Military Family Readiness Academy, it's an annual programming series that every year covers one multidisciplinary topic that we further dissect and build programming around for service providers to take a deeper dive in a complex issue that military families may be faced with.

As you mentioned, this year's series is called "Family Well-Being, Navigating the Social Justice Landscape." This series will focus on individual's understanding of social justice and equity, and it will help service providers locate social justice in their work within the family service provision. I think, Keith, as one of our authors for one of our courses that will be offered, you may bring some different perspectives and help share with us how they came to the courses that were developed. Keith?

**Keith:**

Sure, Rose. The Military Family Readiness Academy is the culminating activity or series of presentations for OneOp. During the rest of the year, there are a handful of concentration areas within OneOp, such as family transitions, nutrition [and] the one I'm in charge of, which is community capacity building and so on.

But the MFRA, the Military Family Readiness Academy, is this opportunity for us all to come together around a topic, as Rose mentioned, and really drill down on it.

This year, for the first time, we're doing that in an asynchronous learning environment, having learned the lessons of the pandemic and so forth. Hopefully, that will make this programming available to many more people. The focus is on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, because we recognize that there are a number of mandates coming from the highest levels in our government right now, having to do with a focus on that in the military context, and also because we recognize that as many of the senior leaders in the Defense Department and all of the branches are recognizing, that Total Force Fitness requires coherence.

You can't have cognitive dissonance around subjects and still be fit and still be ready to meet the challenges of the battle space, whatever that is. Military families need to be on board with Total Force Fitness and this notion of fitness.

The diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility focal areas are an opportunity for us to help practitioners navigate this space. This is interesting territory. There are some risks. There are vulnerabilities when engaging in this. There are various cultural values and cultural narratives that have to be understood in order to put forward the best educational product that we can, and in order to help provide for military families and their service members, again, evidence-based information and resources, so that they can experience the kind of clarity of mind and the clarity of practice that they need as

practitioners to help families and help their service members navigate the social justice landscape.

**Bruce:**

When we talk about social justice, it's pretty clear to understand the tie between that and the health and well-being of the individual. What's interesting about this course, and I'd like you to talk about it, is the degree to which that concept is brought down to the individual level.

In other words, you are identifying strategies for what an individual has the capacity to do on a one-to-one basis with regard to social justice and the well-being of military families. Can you explain that a little bit to us?

**Keith:**

I think that the idea is, if practitioners aren't well-versed and haven't actually done the work themselves in the space of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility as it relates to the unique cultures of the military and of military families, if those practitioners haven't done the work themselves, they are not going to be in a position to actually provide the kind of service and be of assistance and engage those military families and their service members to their own satisfaction, never mind to the broader goal of family readiness.

The individual approach is required to get us all on the same page in terms of understanding why this focus is important and how it is that it has to be treated, has to be shaped, how those narratives have to be thoughtful in order for there not to be more cognitive dissonance instead of less.

Clearly, the goal of the military is pretty straightforward. We understand across the branches what our jobs are, what the mission is, and we also understand that it's all about teamwork. It's all about having the capacity to work together, link up arms, see the unified vision of the commander and execute. The diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility portfolio is a way to enhance that ability and to ameliorate any unnecessary conflict or a cognitive dissonance around that space that is injected via political discourse, via other cultures that are colliding with the military culture, which is "out of many one," "e pluribus unum."

That's the reason, Bruce, for starting at the individual level and then allowing that to be applied further out in terms of who we provide service to.

**Rose:**

Keith, if I can add to that, too, with the academy, the goal is to provide an opportunity, like you mentioned, to the service providers. The opportunity to broaden their knowledge and help to be more, in this case, more comfortable with this topic.

We all acknowledge this can be a topic that it's a little uncomfortable to talk about, but with the academy, with the series, we hope to help service providers identify barriers that may impact families' health and well-being. We will walk out of this academy series

with a broadened awareness of opportunities that may exist within your actual work to assist service members.

And again, Keith said it: We can't do this alone. This is a network, an integrated network of support that helps to support military service members and their families.

**Bruce:**

I do see the need. This is one of those topics that really demands the sharing of perspectives and also the scholarship on that topic and really what to do in these situations.

Let's get down to the specifics, though. This academy is getting started June 1, so tell us, Rose, where this academy is taking place and who can attend and how long does it go on?

**Rose:**

Yes, of course, Bruce. The academy series will kick off on June 1. What we are excited about this time is that it is a month-long of learning opportunities.

As we said earlier, the courses are offered asynchronously, so "on demand," so you can take them at your leisure throughout the month of June, but starting on June 1, I would like to invite everyone to attend the kickoff event.

We will provide you the link to the registration because you have to RSVP, so you can get the link to attend the kickoff event on June 1 at 11 a.m. If you attend, you will get all the information you need on how to register for the courses.

We'll talk about the courses, as well. In addition to the courses, we will have two live sessions, live panel sessions on June 15 and June 29 that you can register to attend. This would be a great opportunity to talk with the course authors like Keith and ask him questions about the courses. I would encourage all of you to sign up for the live panel discussions.

In addition, I do want to say, we want you to attend these courses throughout the month of June. But, after June, these courses will also be accessible through the event page, through our archived materials.

Bruce, I also wanted to share who this is for. The academy series is open to all family service providers who support military families. These are military service providers, cooperative extension educators, community partners out there. Basically, everyone who takes part of the overall Military Family Readiness system is encouraged to attend this year's academy.

**Bruce:**

We'll go ahead and get a link for registration information about the course. We'll get that link in the program notes. Final thoughts. Keith, I'll invite you to go first.

**Keith:**

Well, I think it's important to keep in mind what I said at the outset [about] how our land-grant universities and cooperative extensions systems state by state are well positioned to act as force multipliers in this broader Military Family Readiness mission.

In particular, in this area of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, we have the unique attribute of being able to cut through some of the noise out there, whether that comes from media, whether that comes from very divisive politics or what have you. We're able to cut through that in such a way that I believe that military families practitioners are going to find comfort and a safe space to explore these ideas and come to a place where they are feeling much better equipped to service military families in this space with their questions, with their concerns, in order for those families and the service members that they support to be ready, to be capable of executing their important missions and doing their duties and upholding their oaths without the noise or the dissonance of competing narratives or discourses in this space.

I'm really excited about what we're going to be doing. I'm excited about my colleagues who have developed the materials and the curriculum. I'm super excited about the support we've received from [the] DOD, Rose and her colleagues, and all the subject matter experts, and up the chain all the way to the top, where we've experienced a lot of support and a lot of encouragement. Grateful for the opportunity to be in this space.

As a veteran, also grateful that we're addressing these issues and looking forward to seeing many of you in those asynchronous courses coming up here next month.

**Rose:**

Keith, I share your thoughts. I am super excited about this opportunity to take part in this awesome academy series coming up, and for all the service providers out there, no matter what your discipline is, the academy series will have something for you. You will be able to connect, network with other professionals, share experiences [and] exchange ideas, so basically connect with your fellow family service providers. I invite all of you to join the month-long academy experience.

**Bruce:**

Well, thank you very much to the both of you: Rose Anderson, with the office of Military Family Readiness Policy, and Dr. Keith Tidball, assistant director of Cornell Cooperative Extension at Cornell University.

Thank you for listening to the Military OneSource podcast. We're an official resource of the Defense Department and we have all kinds of topics. We really want you to subscribe. [We have] all kinds of topics helping military families navigate military life. Stay with us.

[I'm] looking forward to talking to you next time. Thanks for joining us today. Bye-bye.