

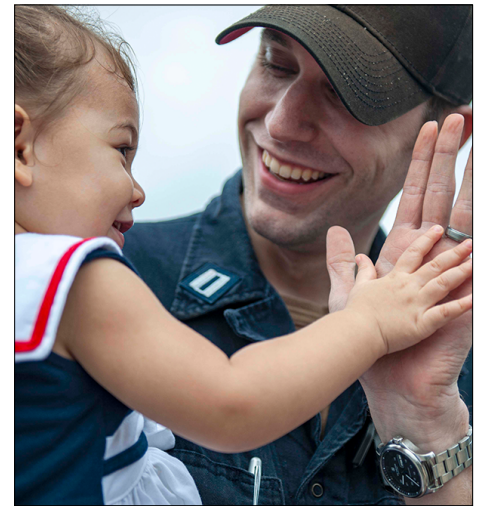


Key Message

Many states do not adequately recognize service members and their families as a separate and unique demographic. By recognizing the military community as a demographic, states can leverage expertise on military family needs, priorities and available resources. States can appoint those connected to the military to serve on state councils and to develop plans and other documents related to military affairs, nutrition and food security, economic workforce development, early childhood education, child care, suicide prevention and mental health.

Discussion Points

1. Governors establish state boards and councils, often through appointments. State boards and councils can offer recommendations on significant issues affecting military families.
2. Including military community representation on such bodies provides a basis for a wider reach and understanding of the needs military-connected families have in relation to important advisory functions.
3. To help ensure that mission and family readiness, economic security and quality of life concerns in the military community are considered, states can incorporate the following on boards, councils, subcommittees, panels and the like:
 - **Military-connected population:** Appoint a representative of the military-connected population to the state suicide prevention board. This can provide a forum to create synergy between federal and state resources and can better support military personnel and their families within the state.
 - **Service members:** Name a service member to the state's health improvement board to contribute to enhancing the overall health and wellness of state residents. By incorporating state and local military demographics and a military perspective on health improvement boards, it can improve quality of life scores, health outcomes and increase readiness and retention. States can also identify locations with significant inequities or social vulnerabilities to help policymakers know where interventions can be applied.
 - **Military-connected parent:** Include a military-connected parent or child care provider on panels that coordinate early childhood development programs to increase opportunities for collaboration and extension of vital services for military-connected children. Additionally, designate military-connected parents or providers to serve on disability-related boards; often, they can share relevant military demographic data and provide insight on barriers that state legislation can help them overcome.
 - **Military spouses:** Invite military spouses to serve as liaisons on workforce development boards to assist in the understanding of the military family lifestyle and inform the military community of state initiatives. Military spouses have unemployment rates nearly seven times the national average.



Adding a military perspective to state health improvement boards and other councils promoting wellness, nutrition and mental health can improve community-level, health-related, quality of life scores, increase readiness and retention and address the needs of isolated service members and their families.