EVENT BRIEFING MEMO: Experience of Active Duty Military Families

Military Child Education Coalition ★ 909 Mountain Lion Circle ★ Harker Heights, TX 76548

EVENT DATE AND TIME: July 20, 2018 | 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm
HOST: [Redacted] Military Child Education Coalition

Military Children Engagement
Staff Lead: [Redacted] Commissioner Lead: Davidson Commissioner Co-Lead: Skelly

Military Spouses Engagement
Staff Lead: [Redacted] Commissioner Lead: Wada Commissioner Co-Lead: Barney

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:
The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), was founded in 1998. The MCEC was created in response to the educational needs of military-connected children and youth and has a vision that every military-connected child is college, workforce, and life-ready. The MCEC is acting as a convener for the Commission to connect directly with local spouses and children. There are over 30,000 military family members in the Ft. Hood area.

The purpose of this meeting is:
- To better understand the experiences of military families
- To better understand the perspectives of military families on military service

2017 Military Family Lifestyle Survey
Blue Star Families conducted its 8th annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey in April-May, 2017 with over 7,800 respondents including military spouses, active duty service members, veterans, and their immediate family members. Please note that it is likely that those who take the survey are amongst the most active and vocal military spouses and family members; this kind of participation may introduce a bias to results. The survey sample cannot necessarily be considered a direct representation of the entire military family population and may not be reflective of the community as a whole.

A Select Few Top Trends ands Findings from 2017
Willingness to recommend service to one’s own children continues to decrease; however, regular civilian community engagement was associated with a greater willingness to recommend service. 60% were unwilling to recommend service to their own children this year.

Concerns about the impact of military service on family was the top driver for exiting service. 22% of service member respondents indicated they plan to transition out of military service in the next two years. Their top reasons for exiting service, after controlling for retirement, were: “Concerns about the impact of military service on my family” (30%) and “The military lifestyle did not allow me sufficient time with my family” (25%).
High rates of family separation continue. Time away from family surpassed pay and benefits as top concern for military families. Nearly half (46%) of military family respondents ranked time away from family as their top concern. One-third of military family respondents had experienced at least 25% of the last 16 years away from their families and 40% reported experiencing more than 6 months of family separation in the last 18 months.

Concerns about the impact of service on dependent children are increasing. Military child education and impact of deployment on children ranked as Top 5 concerns for both service members and military spouses for the first time in the history of this survey. Two-thirds of military families could not reliably find the childcare they need and the majority (56%) indicated DoD does not provide adequate support to help children cope with the unique challenges associated with military life.

The majority of military families do not feel they belong in their local civilian communities. 51% of military family respondents indicated that they did not feel a sense of belonging within their local civilian community and 53% felt they were not valued members of the local community. The majority of military families lack adequate time to form local community bonds on their own, as 72% of military family respondents indicated living in their current community for two years or less.

Veteran respondents indicate many positive impacts of military service on their lives. 95% of male and 93% of female veteran respondents indicated that military service had a positive impact on their life. Similarly, 97% and 96% of male and female veteran respondents, respectively, reported feeling pride from their accomplishments during military service. 88% of both male and female veteran respondents indicated they appreciate the little things in life more now, and male (96%) and female (97%) veteran respondents reported having matured as a result of their service.

Caregivers requested more diverse forms of support, with mental health and financial support especially acute needs. 30% of military caregiver respondents reported being unemployed (seeking work) and 50% reported feeling isolated. Of those caregiver respondents who reported caring for someone with emotional or mental health problems, the majority (53%) reported having been diagnosed with anxiety or depression (45%). Financial assistance was ranked the most helpful resource and 43% reported debt repayment was their top financial goal.

The full report can be found at: bluesstarfam.org/survey.

PARTICIPANTS:
The Commissioners will participate in two concurrent sessions at the MCEC headquarters. One session will be 8-10 military children ages 16-20; Con-current session with 8-10 military spouses (spouses of active duty, national guard, and reserve servicemembers all ranks).
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
The questions below are provided for guidance only and are not intended to serve as a protocol or script for the meeting.

Questions for children:

Other questions related to the Commission’s mission:

• Is a military draft or draft contingency still a necessary component of U.S. national security?
• Are modifications to the selective service system needed?
• How can the United States increase participation in military, national, and public service by individuals with skills critical to address the national security and other public service needs of the nation?
• What are the barriers to participation in military, national, or public service?
• Does service have inherent value, and, if so, what is it?
• Is a mandatory service requirement for all Americans necessary, valuable, and feasible?
• How does the United States increase the propensity for Americans, particularly young Americans, to serve?
Questions for spouses:

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- Is a mandatory service requirement for all Americans necessary, valuable, and feasible?
- How does the United States increase the propensity for Americans, particularly young Americans, to serve?